



Longford Primary Academy

Member of staff responsible: Tracey Machin

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

Principles

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

This Policy should not be seen in isolation but is a strand that underpins all other policies related to the wellbeing of children including safeguarding, behaviour, bullying, and support for children with medical needs.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staffs are committed to working with parents supportively to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

We value your support in helping us to maintain the high standards to which we always aspire and making sure that every day counts.

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Information for Parents*

As a school we aim to:

Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 96%.

Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

Maintain good time keeping.

Good attendance is important because:

Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance.

Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.

Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with.

Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.

Regular attenders settle into High school more easily.

Your child's Individual School Attendance Target is 96% or more.

**Throughout this policy any reference to 'parent/s' refers to the person or people with Parental Responsibility.*

As a parent you can help us by:

- Ensuring your child attends school regularly. Absence should only happen when your child is significantly ill and therefore unfit to attend school, or if there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty/period of difficulty.
- Telephoning on the first morning of any absence to give us the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school.
- Arranging all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.
- Sending us a note confirming the reason for your child's absence when s/he returns to school.
- Frequent absence claimed as illness must be supported by medical evidence.
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has any extended period of absence.
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers, child minders and emergency contact details.

We shall:

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as necessary.
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in our letters, the school brochure, open evenings, Home-School Agreements and pupil annual reports.
- Publish our attendance rate in the school profile and the reports to the Local Governing Committee.
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance and punctuality.
- Publish your child's attendance rate on her/his annual school report.
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance and punctuality.
- Work with you to resolve issues that may affect your child's attendance, including referral to external support agencies where required
- If we continue to have concerns make a referral to our Independent Attendance Consultant or to the Local Authority Education Welfare Worker, who visits the school regularly to review and support attendance and punctuality issues. These officers may visit you at home to investigate the reasons for your child's poor attendance.

School Registers

School registers are a legal document and we are required to take the attendance register twice a day. This is coded to show whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised Absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised Absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes;

- Waiting for a delivery
- Going for a family day out
- Children who arrive at school after the registers have closed
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Term time holiday/Cheap flights
- Parent's illness

Where there is no explanation for an absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory, absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. Unauthorised Absences have to be

reported to the Local Authority. The Local Authority or our Independent Attendance Consultant may contact you where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem. Unauthorised absence could result in a Penalty Notice Fine or other legal action.

Safeguarding

Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Local Authority Safeguarding Board / Education Welfare Worker.

Our first day contact procedures ensure that by contacting parents to establish the reason for your child's absence, parents are made aware that the child is absent from school. This enables the parent where necessary to establish their child is safe.

Children Missing Education

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect.

Our school follow the procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

Our school has in place appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions.

Our school will inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education;
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or, have been permanently excluded.
- All staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage.

Our school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority.

Punctuality

- It is important to be on time as the first part of the school day is used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest that day. It is also a time for children to settle into the school day so they are ready for lessons immediately after registration.

- **Morning registration is at 8.50am.** Your child will be registered as 'late' if they are not in school at 8.50am. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child. We take the view there are no late children, only late parents.
- Arrival after the close of registration (9.20am) will be marked as an unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with the DfE guidance.
- All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness if known will also be recorded. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report, should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness.

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns with other agencies.

Supporting and encouraging your child's school attendance.

All children can sometimes be reluctant to attend school; it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to the pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by the parent.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems.

Parents may also contact the Local Authority support services / Education Welfare Worker directly to request support / advice.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. This is defined by the Department for Education. Absence at this level (90% or below) is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents/carers full support and co-operation to tackle this.

Referral to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer

When an individual pupil's attendance is 90% or less, without a good reason, our Attendance Consultant will offer voluntary support to help you to improve the situation.

If school attendance difficulties cannot be improved the school will then consider a referral to the Education Welfare Officer, Local Support Team, Staffordshire County Council. If other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance has failed, the Education Welfare Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents (under the Education Act 1996 s444 (or s4441a,)) or seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and / or 3 months imprisonment.

Exceptional Leave - Term Time Leave of Absence

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of term time leave. There is no entitlement to time off during term time. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Principal in accordance with the DfE guidance.

It is our policy:

- Only in an exceptional circumstance will term time leave be allowed.
- Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form well in advance and before booking tickets or making travel arrangements. The Principal will advise you of their decision to authorise or unauthorise the absence - this may require you to attend a meeting to discuss this.

- The cheaper cost of holidays in term time is not an acceptable reason for an application.
- We will always weigh up the exceptional circumstances of your situation with the effect the absence will have on your child's education, your child's current and previous attendance levels and whether any absence will adversely affect any assessment periods in school.
- Do not assume that because permission was given for someone else, you will be given permission as well. Every request will be treated on its own merits and the full circumstances will not be made public.
- Alongside your request of leave for 'exceptional' circumstances we may require written evidence/confirmation of the detail of the exceptional circumstances eg information from your employer / evidence of a special one off occasion.

Please remember that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. Valuable learning time is lost. A good understanding of the work and good progress can only take place when the child is in the classroom regularly and on time.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and you may be liable for a penalty notice fine (issued by the Local Authority.) If you choose not to pay the fine you may face prosecution if the absence meets the criteria set out in the Local Authorities Code of Conduct.

You have the right to make representations to the Chair of Governors if you feel the Principal's decision is unjust, however the final decision lies with the Principal and the Local Authority.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are fines, only issued by the Locality Support Team, on behalf of the Local Authority, for a child's unauthorised absence from school.

Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence. (Per child.)

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority will prosecute for the original offence, unless there are grounds to withdraw the notice.

Schools follow the Staffordshire Local Authority code of conduct for the procedures of Penalty Notices.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of Year 6 to go to High School) parents are asked to give the school comprehensive information about their plans including:

- any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers,
- your child's new school and the start date when known.

This should be submitted to our school in writing

When pupils leave and we do not have information, about where they have gone, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services (formerly Social Services), the Police and other agencies, to try and locate your child.

By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Colour Coded Attendance Guidance

We have adopted the below colour coded guidance for a child's school attendance. We have found this to be a good visual indicator to parents of the meaning of their child's level of attendance. We would like all of our pupils to achieve at least the 'green' category of attendance, where possible. Our aim for this high level of attendance links the importance of attendance with children's potential learning and attainment.

100% attendance	A fantastic attendance level – you are giving your child the best chance of success & getting them off to a flying start
96% and above	Attendance is good – you are getting your child off to a great start and giving them a good chance of success. Up to 8 days of learning have been lost.
Below 96%	Requires Improvement – attendance is worrying, your child has less chance to succeed and it is harder for them to make progress in their learning. Up to 19 days of learning have been lost.
90% or less	Serious concern - This level of attendance is not fair on your child. Persistent Absentee – (as defined by the Department of Education). This is the equivalent of up to 4 weeks off school or more/a day off school per fortnight. Your child's attendance will be closely monitored and considered for further action. Penalty Notices can be issued for persistent absence.

***Note – all cases are looked at on an individual basis and some children are unable to avoid lower attendance due to genuine circumstances.**

Attendance Data Analysis

We conduct a full attendance review of our school at least every half term of all pupils with 90% attendance or less, or those with a concerning level of 'broken weeks' attendance.

We analyse class attendance, whole school attendance, annual / termly attendance, vulnerable groups and we conduct a code analysis for comparative purposes of specific coded absences.

Persistent Absence pupils are tracked and procedures are in place to ensure we are aware of the circumstances of the pupil's poor attendance and that support processes are in place to tackle the issues.

We also compare our attendance data with other similar schools and trust schools.

Our attendance figures are published publicly and our Ofsted report is also available for parents to view.

School Staff Responsible for Attendance matters are:

Principal
School Attendance Officer
Your Child's Class Teacher

Mrs L Lawrence
Mrs T Machin

Appendix 1 – Changes to Penalty Notices for Absence from School



Families First

Staffordshire County Council
2 Staffordshire Place
Tipping Street
Stafford
ST16 2DH
Email: paul.senior@staffordshire.gov.uk

Please ask for: Paul Senior

Date: 21 September 2017

Dear Parent / Carer

Changes to Penalty Notices for Absence from School

Ensuring your child has access to a good education is very important to us.

A key part of this is for all children and young people to regularly attend school, as this gives each learner the best chance to achieve their full potential. In light of the recent Isle of Wight court case and the subsequent Supreme Court ruling on school absences, we wanted to clarify our position for parents where there may be the potential for any ambiguity and to also ensure we are fully compliant with legal requirements.

As a result, we have made a few changes to our previous guidance to schools, parents and carers regarding absence from school. The new guidance will come into force from **1 January 2018** and is detailed below:

Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

From 1 January 2018 **any** period of unauthorised leave may result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. Your head teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence will be referred by your head teacher to the local authority.

Penalty Notice for persistent lateness

Previously a pupil had to achieve 20 unauthorised late marks before a penalty notice warning could be issued. **This has now changed to 10 marks**, and late marks do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued. You are therefore encouraged where possible to ensure your child attends school on time. However, if your child is late you must inform the school of the reason(s) why, as they may be able to offer you some form of advice or support.

Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness

If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence or is late 10 times over a twelve week period, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

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These changes have been agreed with local head teachers and have been implemented to help promote and support good attendance to school. Further details and a copy of the revised Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices can be obtained from the council's website www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education.

The vast majority of children and young people in Staffordshire have an excellent record of school attendance, and we recognise the efforts of so many parents to ensure their children attend school regularly.

The Local Authority will continue to take appropriate action for absences during term time when we are notified by head teachers, both to support them in their role and to ensure local children can continue to achieve the best possible outcomes from attending local schools.

Yours faithfully



Paul Senior
Head of Education Vulnerable Learner Services 0-25

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