



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

September 2024

To be reviewed annually with staff

We are a Rights Respecting School and this policy supports the following articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child

Article 28 – every child has the right to an education. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity.

Article 6 – survival and development. Every child has a right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

Article 19 – protection from all forms of violence. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are free from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 29 – goals of education. Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures and the environment.

Introduction

Lawdale Junior School is committed to providing every child with the best education offer. We believe that all children benefit from the education that we provide and, therefore, from regular school attendance. Irregular attendance and late arrival will inevitably undermine the children's learning and is not fair on the child concerned, the other children in the child's class or the school staff.

We recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

This policy is written with the above statements in mind and underpins our school aim to:

- promote every child's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every child has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that children succeed whilst at school
- ensure that children have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that children must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the Headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any child's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The law states that parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure that children within their care attend school regularly. Schools and local authorities have a duty to ensure that poor school attendance is dealt with swiftly and fairly.

The school will do all that it can to encourage the children to attend by putting in place appropriate procedures. The governors and staff believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, everybody involved in the life and work of the school strives to make the school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. The school expects all children to be able to talk with their classteacher or another adult within school about any problems that may affect their school attendance.

This policy has been developed in consultation with school governors and the Local Authority. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor attendance of all children.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- support children and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality
- ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that the school can offer in order to increase learning
- enable children to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities
- promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which children feel safe, secure and valued
- raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, children and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report
- contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below targets for attendance
- celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- reward good or improving attendance

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. These absences will be reviewed.

Children leaving school during the school day

During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and, therefore, must know where the children are.

- children should not leave the school premises without authorisation
- whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time
- where a child is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the school office before the child is allowed to leave the school premises.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absence includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark on the attendance register • shopping trips
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time without leave -
- day trips
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

School Attendance and the Law

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

At Lawdale Junior School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as... being of unique and significant emotional, educational value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse, Local Authority Officers as well as our own family support service..

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need a parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a school based meeting and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Local Attendance Adviser, Home School Liaison Worker, Local Authority, or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities such as sports club and or breakfast club to support us in raising attendance.

Children absent and missing in education

Children who are on roll but not attending are now called "children absent from education". Children who are not attending school and are not on any school roll are now termed "Children missing education"

These groups of pupils are of concern as they are not receiving their educational entitlement. These pupils may also not have contact with education, health and social care professionals and if there are additional needs in the family these pupils may not be receiving required support.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.30 am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or call into school personally and speak to the office staff
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.30am
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with our School Welfare Officer, Child and Family Support Worker or Headteacher if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority to request a formal Attendance Meeting if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority in the form of the Attendance Welfare Advisor. Attendance welfare advisors work with schools, families and other professionals to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice, prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of an Education Supervision Order, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

The school may refer a child to the Attendance Welfare Advisor where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. They will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve the legal intervention process will be used.

Punctuality - Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving children also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Registration arrangements and how we manage lateness:

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations, the Governing Body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

The Attendance Register is marked with a O if the child is absent. This will be annotated by the office when the reason for absence has been ascertained. A list of codes which show the reason for absence are used and will be entered inside the O. See Appendix B for Attendance Codes. The Attendance Register is a legal document.

The school day starts at **9.00 am, the children can gather in the ground floor hall from 8:50am** Morning registration takes place as soon as practicably possible after the classroom doors are opened and children are in the classroom. Any child arriving after the classes have departed the hall will receive - code L. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record you will be contacted by the school and / or AWA where appropriate, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Children who arrive later after the hall doors are shut are required to come to the school office, accompanied by a parent or carer, so that the reason for their lateness can be ascertained and the register can be appropriately marked. The parent/carer will be required to provide a reason for their lateness which is then recorded. The school may send home letters in order to keep parents and carers informed. .

Afternoon registration takes place at 1.15pm.

Rewards for good attendance and punctuality

The school is committed to working with parents to encourage good attendance in school.

Certificates for 100% attendance are given regularly and class prizes and rewards given for the best overall attendance.

Annually: The school publishes its absence figures to parents (legal duty).

Attendance targets

The school sets an annual attendance target at the start of each academic year.

Changing school – Removing from roll

It is important that if parents / carers decide to send their child to a different school that they inform Lawdale Junior School as soon as possible. A child will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received in writing and investigated:

- the date the child will be leaving the school and starting the next
- the address of the new school
- the new home address if appropriate
- the new school has requested the common transfer file (CTF)

The child's school records will then be sent to the new school as soon as practicable. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to Attendance welfare Advisor. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our children.

Any child transferring within term time will be notified to the local authority and the appropriate paper work completed.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor overall attendance, and they receive a termly update report from the Headteacher. The Governing Body also has responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. Parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time every day.

Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Senior Leadership, who will contact the parent / carer.

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body annually, or earlier if considered necessary.

Date approved:

Review date: