

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Supplementary Guidance for non – curriculum policies document (covering Philosophy & Ethos; Audience, Monitoring & Evaluation; Assessment, Recording & Reporting; and Supporting Learning Beyond the School) The Curriculum, Planning, Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy for Key stages 1-4 (CPARR Policy) and The Attendance Addendum Policy (during the COVID -19 pandemic)

Aims

The Loyne Specialist School is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this. It relates to all young people aged 2-19 in education in this setting.

Due to the on-going pandemic this policy has an addendum. The addendum applies from the start of the Autumn term 2020 until the end of the 2021/2022 academic year. It sets out the changes to this policy and should be read in conjunction with it. This Attendance Policy will apply unless the changes are addressed in the addendum. The addendum will be reviewed every 2 months and in line with DfE and LA guidance.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance

- Remind parents/carers at least annually of our attendance expectations through the 'Celebrating Pupil Attendance' leaflet.
- Celebrate good or improving attendance, where appropriate, by:
 - Celebratory postcard home from the Headteacher for all pupils achieving 100% attendance during each half term.
 - A certificate will be given to all pupils that have a 100% attendance for each

term.

- At the end of each academic year, a certificate, and a reward with the Headteacher will be given to all pupils that have 100% attendance for that academic year.
 - Positive discussion at annual review
 - A letter home
- Regular updates/reports on your child's attendance where appropriate.
 - Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school. This work will also be supported by our specialist HLTA, Fiona Gemson, who will liaise with families and ensure they have a regular and consistent point of contact in discussing attendance, associated concerns and agreed strategies.
 - Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.
 - Set targets, where appropriate, to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.
 - Carry out transition work with pupils moving to The Loyne Specialist School.

Understanding types of absence: Please see further information in the addendum to this policy

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school 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 such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

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

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- shopping trips, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

List not exhaustive.

Parents/carers should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents/carers before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved with the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

From September 2015 a pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. We expect parents/carers' fullest support and co-operation and to engage in a dialogue regarding their child's absence.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be given priority consideration, and parents/carers will be informed of this.

School may:

- Involve the class team if attendance starts to become a concern
- Involve our specialist HLTA if attendance then falls below 90%
- Involve senior management if concerns continue
- Visit the home address
- Consider using parenting contracts or panel meetings in order to identify barriers to regular attendance and agree targets for improvement

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an individualised Action Plan. This plan may be written or a verbal agreement. The nature of the PA will be taken into account and the Attendance Panel will decide on actions accordingly. At all times we will seek to be supportive and maintain a positive dialogue between school and home. In cases where PA is due to an underlying medical condition the Attendance Panel will consider all absence reasons. Due to the serious nature of persistent absence, school do have recourse to support from the local authority attendance team in order to address the matter. School will also consider requesting that the local authority issue penalty notices, or use other sanctions, as a means of improving attendance, taking into careful consideration their personal circumstances. If school is concerned regarding the possible reasons for absence, due to the context of the situation, then police/social care may be contacted as appropriate.

Absence Procedures (*please see addendum for procedures from September 2021-July 2022*)

We expect all parents/carers to notify the school office on the first day of any unplanned absence. The office is staffed from 8.00 a.m. and parent/carers should phone

as early as possible on or after this time. Unplanned absence, along with a reason and expected return date, must be reported by telephone to the school office **9.00a.m. at the latest**. **We can not accept notification of absence from drivers/escorts or via Class Dojo**. Any planned absence for reasons of appointments etc. should be notified in advance and this can be reported either by telephone to the school office or via Class Dojo along with proof of appointment letter if necessary.

Office staff will make note of the reason for absence directly onto SIMS as a permanent record. For pupils who use county transport parents/carers will also need to inform the Transport Office on 01524 581260 or 01524 581261 to avoid the need for transport to call at the house.

If home has made no contact with school by **9.00a.m.** the office staff will try to contact parents/carers, in the first instance, initially by text message **by 9.30 a.m.** If there is no response from parents/carers telephone contact will be attempted **as close to 10.00 a.m. as possible**. If there is still no response to the text message, we have been unable to make contact and have not received a telephone call about the absence of your child by **10.30 a.m.** the Designated Safeguarding Leaders (DSL) will be alerted and office staff will attempt communication with the emergency contacts provided to school for your child. If by **11.00 a.m.** no contact has been made your child will be classed as a Child Missing in Education (CME) and the absence referred back to the Designated Safeguarding Leaders (DSL) for further action. This may include contact with an allocated Social Worker/Family Support Worker (where applicable) and/or a home visit by staff. See [page 6](#) for further information on CME.

Absence from school without a valid reason is a safeguarding issue and will be treated as such by the DSL. Please refer to the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

NB. We understand that in some instances there may be exceptional circumstances that apply but we will endeavour to comply with these time scales as far as possible.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have up to date contact numbers for parents/carers and emergency contacts – if we don't then something important may be missed.

The Local Authority School Attendance Service:

If difficulties cannot be resolved using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). PAST will also support school in trying to resolve the situation by agreement and will work to support school and parents in achieving improved levels of attendance.

Use of Legal Measures:

The Loyne Specialist School defines irregular attendance in line with the thresholds set out for the use of penalty notices within the Local Authorities Code of Conduct.

If other ways of trying to improve the attendance of an individual pupil fail, and we consider attendance to be irregular, where absences are unauthorised the case may be referred to

the School Attendance Legal Team (SALT), who can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the magistrates' court.

Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the local authority.

Penalty Notices

A penalty notice for non-attendance can only be issued by the Local Authority in cases of unauthorised absence. School follows the guidance set out in "[Advice on school attendance](#)" when marking the school registers, including recording unauthorised absences. The circumstances in which a penalty notice for non-attendance may be issued include:

- Parentally condoned absence
- Unauthorised leave (code O)
- Unwarranted delayed return from authorised leave
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed (code U)

A minimum evidential requirement of ten school sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by any pupil in any one term, and/or fourteen sessions (7 school days) lost to unauthorised absence over two consecutive terms, will trigger the process.

At the Loyne Specialist School, requesting the issue of a Penalty Notice is a last resort and will only be used when other steps taken have been unsuccessful. Prior to requesting a Penalty Notice is issued school will have:

- Made contact with both parents/carers to discuss any barriers to learning and will keep a record of any attempts by the school to resolve the issue, including support offered whether successful or unsuccessful – information will be recorded as a minimum on CPOMS;
- Offered a meeting in school and/or home visits, for parents/carers and the pupil if appropriate, to try and address and resolve the attendance issue and will keep appropriate evidence of the meetings/home visits (CPOMS);
- Issued a letter to each parent/carer individually with regards to the attendance issue, included in this letter would be a warning of potential legal intervention should the attendance issue remain unsolved;
- Where sickness is alleged, parents/carers will have been notified in writing of the requirement for medical proof and this would be recorded on CPOMS

If no contact can be made with parents/carers, or parents/carers are non compliant with working with the school to address attendance issues, evidence of this will be kept and used in order to support an application for a Penalty Notice to be issued by the Local Authority.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Pupils miss out on their established routine, pastoral support and the greeting from friends and staff. All of our pupils benefit from a clear structure to the day. Lateness prevents routine systems from being implemented which could cause distress and anxiety for the rest of the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8.55am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by 9.05am and your child will receive a late mark (L) if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark (U) that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. 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 asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the pastoral support team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Registers are also marked by 1.05pm.

Where a class register is missed due to a visit, a visit register will be completed.

Leave in Term Time:

Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to support us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.

All applications for leave **must** be made, in advance, by the parent/carer of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office. Requests will only be authorised if the circumstances surrounding the request are considered, by the school, to be exceptional. Any late or retrospective requests (unless in highly exceptional circumstances) will not be granted and your child's absence will automatically be classed as unauthorised.

It is important that you understand that leave in term time will not be agreed by school at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents/carers, to be exceptional.

In considering the request we will also look at various factors such as:

- The timing of the request;
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence;
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already a cause for concern, or could become one, as a result of taking leave;
- Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year.
- Previous special leave requests that have been agreed as 'exceptional'.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. In some circumstances, agreement may only be for a specific part of the whole request rather than the whole request.

In certain circumstances, parents/carers risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date. Re-admission cannot be guaranteed.

The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in [Regulation 8 \(1\) \(f\) \(i-iii\) of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (as amended).

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carer is a member) and this will be marked as R in the register. Parents/carers must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstance apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C')

Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons

The introduction of new statutory guidance in September 2014 places much more emphasis on the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils; whether their condition is short or long term. The school will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be as a result of specific practices or resources used within school or by sourcing more appropriate provision at another establishment. When education is to be provided at an alternative location, this will always be done via the use of a direction.

Child Missing from Education

All children and young people, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to 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. It is essential that we, as a school, 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.

The Local Authority's procedures for CME are currently being updated in line with national guidance. Contact Lancashire CME for further advice at:

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/practitioners/supporting-children-and-families/education/children-missing-education/>

Expectations of attendance for those students aged 18 and above remain high and the triangulation between student, parent/carer and school is pivotal to this. The HLTA responsible for parental liaison will work alongside family and other professionals, taking into consideration the implications of the Mental Capacity Act, to ensure attendance levels meet school thresholds. Where young people fall below attendance expectations, it may be necessary to inform the local SEN office and hold an interim Review to discuss possible

barriers and potential strategies. In extreme cases, where attendance does not improve within 12 weeks, a young person may be removed from roll.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents/Carers:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Ensure children have proactive home routines to provide them with enough sleep so that they are ready for the school day
- Contact school before 9.00am on 1st day of any new absence, providing an expected return date and a follow up call if their child is not to return on the expected date previously provided.
- Avoid any leave in term time but apply in advance using the 'Request for leave of absence' form if the reason for leave is unavoidable/exceptional
- Attendance at meetings in school or via Zoom if virtual
- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Acknowledge, where possible, behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/carer/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher:

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents/carers of this decision
- Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process
- Celebrate and reward good or improving attendance

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Contact parents if a phone call has not been received by 9.00am and log this information accordingly on SIMS and on CPOMS if necessary
- Input and update the attendance registers including any relevant comments surrounding absence/medical appointments etc on SIMS.
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual

attendance, following Absence Flowcharts (available in school), and using Parenting Contracts where appropriate

- Inform relevant staff members by email of daily absence

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Governors

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures
- Authorise the Headteacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

Expectations regarding regular attendance:

As a school, we aim to have all our pupils in school everyday. Whilst we recognise that pupils may have unavoidable absences at times due to illness and other unavoidable causes, we aim to reduce unauthorised absence and to work with parents and pupils to minimise absence where possible.

The minimum expected level of attendance is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares, where appropriate.

However, our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. This can be found on our ['Celebrating Pupil Attendance'](#) flyer on our website. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Reviewed By: S Campbell, F Gemson & N Walton

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