

Policy Connections

The policy should be read in conjunction with the Child Protection Policy and Supplementary Guidance for policies document (covering Philosophy & Ethos; Audience, Monitoring & Evaluation; Assessment, Recording & Reporting; and Supporting Learning Beyond the School).

Aims

This 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.

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, 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 regularly of our attendance expectations through the 'Celebrating Pupil Attendance' leaflet.
- Celebrate and reward good or improving attendance by:
 - Celebratory postcard home from the class team 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 will be given to all pupils that have 100% attendance for that academic year.
- 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 School.

Understanding types of absence:

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 like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

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 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, 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

Parents 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 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 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' fullest support and co-operation and to engage in a dialogue regarding their 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 will be informed of this.

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 are subject to an individualised Action Plan. 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.

Absence Procedures:

Parents/Carers should ensure that the absence along with a reason and expected return date is reported by telephone to the school office by 9.15am. For pupils who use county transport then you will also need to inform the passenger assistant, and wherever possible this should avoid the need for transport to call at the house.

Office Staff note the reason for absence in the 'pupil absence' folder and if none is given, parents will be contacted by school, initially by text message and then if required by telephone, on the same morning to establish the reason for the absence and, if necessary, parents will be sent a copy of the Whole School Attendance Policy.

We expect 100% response on the first day. The context of the situation will be taken into account and further steps may be taken which may involve a visit to the home address and contacting the police and/or Social Care as appropriate.

School may also:

- Invite you in to discuss the situation with a senior member of staff if absences persist;
- 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;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol;
- Consider requesting the local authority issue penalty notices or use other legal sanctions, as appropriate, in order to improve attendance.
- 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.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers at Annual Review Meetings and reminders in newsletters.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality

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. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the Headteacher;
- Home visits;
- Parenting contracts;
- Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority School Attendance Team);
- Use of attendance panels;
- Use of penalty notices.

The Local Authority School Attendance Service:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out 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.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your 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 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 handed to the school office.

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 to help 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 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.

It is important that you understand that leave in term time will not be agreed by us 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.

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 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 is a member) and this will be marked as R in the register. Parents 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 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.

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

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

Expectations of attendance for those students aged 18 and above remain high and the triangulation between student, parent 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:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence
- Avoid any leave in term time but apply in advance using form if the reason for leave is unavoidable/exceptional
- Attendance at meetings in school

- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/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 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
- Send a letter at the end of each spring term to those pupils who have 100% attendance to incentivise full year 100% attendance

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Contact parents if a phone call has not been received by 9.15am and log this information accordingly
- Input and update the attendance registers
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
- 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.

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

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

Our target is to achieve better than this however 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 and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

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

Reviewed By: S Campbell, F Gemson & K Ellison

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