



Lakeside
School
Learning for life

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Introduction

The attendance policy of Lakeside school in common with all of the school's policies is to be seen in the context of the ethos of the school. There is a strong emphasis on the fostering of positive attitudes to school and the creation of a climate based on mutual trust and support in which students may flourish. The school expects its pupils to develop a sense of responsibility, discipline and pride in their school attendance.

Unauthorised absences are in fact few and do not present a problem at Lakeside. There are therefore no extra monitoring arrangements in place other than those required by the LA for their information. Should records show an increase in unauthorised absences more detailed and formal monitoring will be introduced.

Although pupils do not have the opportunity to truant owing to the clearly defined transport arrangements it is still important that pupil attendance is carefully monitored because a pupil's absence from school may indicate any of the following:

- θ Unhappiness at school
- θ The parent's lack of confidence in the school
- θ Problems at home.

By following up on non-attendance immediately the cause is more likely to become known before matters become entrenched.

Unhappiness at School.

A child who is unhappy at school may feign illness to be allowed to stay at home. Teachers should be observant of a pupil who has a series of 'off days' which do not culminate in a genuine illness. Should such a pattern be observed teachers should use sensitive discussion and discreet observations to ascertain if there are any problems at school which may be the cause - dislike of certain lessons for example or problems with other children.

The school will discuss any worries with parents.

Parental Lack of Confidence in the School

If parents lack confidence in the school they will place little importance on school attendance. A child may feel divided loyalties and be uncomfortable at school because of this and so be reluctant to attend.

If such a situation becomes apparent the head teacher will attempt to have discussions about any perceived or real problems with the parents. The school may wish to involve the attendance officer in the process. In the long term the School Complaints procedure may need to be evoked.

Problems at Home.

Absence may reflect problems at home. Marital discord, for example, may make a child feel insecure and loath to leave home. Teachers need to be aware that there could be sensitive issues behind non attendance and although follow up must be made of absences they should be careful in their approach.

Non attendance can also be the outward sign of abuse. If non attendance and other factors mean that abuse is suspected the matter must be reported to the designated teacher for Child Protection.

Illness.

The school has a problem with parents who send their children to school even when they are unwell. This appears to be a problem in many special schools and is linked to the caring attitude the school displays towards its pupils and the fact that some pupils do have long term medical needs.

The school tries to make a distinction between children who have a medical problem and those who are ill. Children who are unwell should not be in school. We have many frail children who are susceptible to infection.

Following advice from the NHS we ask that children who have been sick or had diarrhoea should not return to school for 48 hours after the end of the illness. If pupils are sent to school and are unwell the school nurse is asked to assess them. If she feels it necessary parents are asked to take the child home.

Children who have had operations under general anaesthetic should not return to school for at least 24 hours after the operation, in order to have time to recover fully.

We are anxious not to exclude children from school because they have a medical condition e.g. epilepsy. For these children it is important that the class teacher and the school nurse establish a known norm of functioning for this child - how they normally are in the light of their condition. For example if a child has seizures and requires a short sleep on a regular basis they have to be dealt with in school or miss a great deal of schooling. However if these children show signs of falling below their norm then parents will be contacted.

We have learnt that there are many grey areas in trying to establish the difference between medical problems and illness, but we are usually guided by the degree of discomfort suffered by the pupil. The views of the school nurse are always sought and her decision is the one the school adopts.

If a pupil requires a length of time away from school because of illness the school will contact the LA to try and arrange home tuition.

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Lakeside School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise the often complex health problems faced by many our pupils and will make every effort to support pupils with medical conditions to achieve a high level of attendance . See Children with Medical Conditions Policy.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

The Home/School agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

We will ensure that our pupils are made aware of the importance of good attendance and how this will benefit them.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken from 9am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.30pm and will be kept open until 1.40pm.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Parents/Carers should telephone the school office, leaving a message on the answerphone if necessary.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Parents/Carers will be contacted by telephone or via the Home/School Link Book regarding ongoing punctuality issues.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

A member of office staff will telephone Parents/Carers to ascertain the reason for absence in the event no contact is made to the school on the morning of each absence.

3.6 Reporting to parents

Absence records will be shared with parents annually in the EHCP review meeting.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Leave of absence during term time will be discouraged. Parents will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement.

Parents must get permission from the head teacher and can only do this if:

- they make an application to the head teacher in advance
- there are *exceptional* circumstances

The school will consider any application for leave of absence and will only agree to authorize the absence in exceptional circumstances. The head teacher can decide how many days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. Term time holidays are not considered as exceptional circumstances.

Parents can be fined for taking a child on holiday during term time without the school's permission.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

4.2 Persistent Absence & Legal Sanctions

Local councils and schools can use various legal powers if a child is missing school without a good reason. These include:

- Parenting Order
- Education Supervision Order
- School Attendance Order
- penalty notice

A parent can be given one or more of these orders but the council doesn't have to do this before pursuing a prosecution.

Parenting Order

This requires the parents to attend a parenting classes and to improve the child's school attendance.

Education Supervision Order

If the council thinks a family need support getting a child to school but the family are not co-operating, they can apply to a court for an Education Supervision Order.

A supervisor will be appointed to help the family get the child into education. The local council can do this instead of prosecuting, or as well.

School Attendance Order

A School Attendance Order is issued if the local council thinks a child isn't getting an education. Parents then have 15 days to provide evidence that they have registered their child with a school or that they are providing home education.

The order will name a specific school. Failure to comply can lead to prosecution.

Penalty notice

Instead of being prosecuted, parents can be given a penalty notice. The penalty is £60, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the fine may lead to prosecution.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

Prosecution

This can be a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court also issues a Parenting Order.

5. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a termly basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call the school each day a child is ill.

If a pupil's absence goes above 10% we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 15%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 15%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Attendance Link Governor is Patrick Taylor. Governor attendance termly monitoring will be carried out in conjunction with Safeguarding committee dates.

6.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

6.3 The attendance officer

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

6.4 Class teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

6.5 Office/Reception Staff

Office/Reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school SIMS system, including annotations for each absence.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed on a two yearly basis by the Head Teacher/Deputy Head Teacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

7. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Safeguarding and safeguarding policy, AND Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy (currently being updated by School Nurses).

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day