

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Lakenheath Community Primary School



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| Version Number | 2 |
| Date of Policy | June 2018 |
| Review Date | June 2019 |
| Head Teacher's Signature |  |
| Chair of Governors' Signature |  |

Document Change History

| <i>Version</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Change Details</i> |
|----------------|----------------------|--|
| <i>1</i> | <i>November 2017</i> | <i>N/A</i> |
| <i>2</i> | <i>June 2018</i> | <i>Format update and content review.</i> |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 *Our school is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils / students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.*
- 1.2 *The whole school community – pupils / students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone’s part in this.*
- 1.3 *The policy has been drawn up after consultation with the whole community and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.*

2. School’s roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 *All staff (teaching and support) at our school have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils / students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.*
- 2.2 *A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school’s work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person, known as the Attendance Leader, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared weekly with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils / students and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body half termly. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.*
- 2.3 *Registration*
 - i. *The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers / form tutors are responsible for the completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown overleaf).*

REGISTER CODES

| CODE | DESCRIPTION | MEANING |
|------|--|-------------------------------------|
| / | Present (AM) | Present |
| \ | Present (PM) | Present |
| B | Educated off site (NOT Dual registration) | Approved Education Activity |
| C | Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) | Authorised absence |
| D | Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment) | Approved Education Activity |
| E | Excluded (no alternative provision made) | Authorised absence |
| F | Extended family holiday (agreed) | Authorised absence |
| G | Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement) | Unauthorised absence |
| H | Family holiday (agreed) | Authorised absence |
| I | Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments) | Authorised absence |
| J | Interview | Approved Education Activity |
| L | Late (before registers closed) | Present |
| M | Medical/Dental appointments | Authorised absence |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence | Unauthorised absence |
| O | Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description) | Unauthorised absence |
| P | Approved sporting activity | Approved Education Activity |
| R | Religious observance | Authorised absence |
| S | Study leave | Authorised absence |
| T | Traveller absence | Authorised absence |
| U | Late (after registers closed) | Unauthorised absence |
| V | Educational visit or trip | Approved Education Activity |
| W | Work experience | Approved Education Activity |
| X | Non-compulsory school age absence | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Y | Enforced closure | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Z | Pupil not yet on roll | Not counted in possible attendances |
| # | School closed to pupils | Not counted in possible attendances |

Pupils should attend school on time and be ready to learn.

- ii. The register will be called promptly at 8.50 am and 1pm/1.25pm by each classteacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.
- iii. The registers will close at 9.00 am and 1.15/1.40pm pm. Any pupil / student who arrives after the closing of the register will count as absent(U). Pupils/students who arrive after 8:50 but before the register closes will be counted present(L) but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para. 4.4 on P.6).

2.4 Categorising absence

- i. A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head Teacher.
- ii. Our school recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, Staff at our school will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their children's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.
- iii. If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 2 weeks, the absence will remain unauthorised.
- iv. Absences will be authorised in the following circumstances:
 - a. where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
 - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's / student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - b. where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
 - c. where the pupil / student has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand).
 - d. where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
 - e. the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's / student's parent belongs;
 - f. the pupil / student lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
 - g. the pupil / student is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the pupil / student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months.
 - h. in other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a family bereavement) and for a very limited period.
- v. Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:
 - a. no explanation has been given by the parent;
 - b. the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
 - c. the pupil / student is staying at home to mind the house;
 - d. the pupil / student is shopping during school hours;
 - e. the pupil / student is absent for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday;
 - f. the pupil / student has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

2.5 Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.6 Staff training. The School Attendance Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. Collection and analysis of data

- 3.1 *The Attendance Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. (See para. Above). The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.*
- 3.2 *Attendance is monitored by year group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils / students with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.*
- 3.3 *Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.*

4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

- 4.1 *Attendance has a very high profile at our school and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in class. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment. Attendance figures are shared in the fortnightly newsletters.*
- 4.2 *First-day calling*
Our school has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil / student is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils / students who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will send a letter to them by first class post.
- 4.3 *School Strategies to Tackle Absence*
The Attendance Leader is responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that our school intervenes in non-attendance at an early stage.
Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's / student's absence the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil / student to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.
- 4.4 *Referral to the Education Attendance Service*
If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specified time (or sooner if the pupil / student is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Attendance Service). Regulations (Education Pupil Regulations 2006) require schools to inform the LA of every pupil who has been continuously absent without a good reason (i.e. the absence is unauthorised) for 10 school days or more. Schools must also inform the LA of every pupil who fails to attend regularly which is interpreted to mean those pupils who have patterns of unauthorised absence without amassing 10 continuous absences.
- 4.5 *Lateness and punctuality*
Pupils / students are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils / students who arrive after the register closes (see para. 2.3.(iii) on page 4) will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil / student to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil / student who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other student with an emerging pattern of absence. (See para. 4.3). If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

4.6 Pupils / students who arrive late for school but before the register closes will be marked as late. The Attendance Officer will monitor the pattern of these 'late' marks. If there is a pattern emerging a meeting will be called with the parents and support given as necessary.

4.7 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils / students arriving late should therefore report to the school office and sign in the pupil late book. **It is important that all pupils / students arriving late follow this procedure.**

4.8 For the same reason it is important that pupils / students leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day report to the school office and sign in/out in the pupil book.

5. Term-time holidays

Our school will consider every application individually, its policy is **NOT** to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances Time off school for family holidays is **not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended holiday. **The school policy is to unauthorise any requests for term time holidays, but may consider:**

- i. service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;
- ii. when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- iii. parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

Requests for holidays for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- i. cheaper cost of holiday;
- ii. availability of the desired accommodation;
- iii. poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- iv. overlap with beginning or end of term.

Our school will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

Our school will **NOT** authorise a holiday during periods of national tests ie: SATS & GCSE examinations.

6. Extended leave of absence

In considering absence for extended trips overseas our school will take account of the following:

- i. a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- ii. such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- iii. parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- iv. the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved.
- v. Where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

7. Fines for unauthorised absences

From 1st September 2014, a new policy came into force. Any absence which is not authorised (see number 5) will be unauthorised. If your child has more than 8 unauthorised sessions (half days) in a year, then you will receive a £60 fine from the Local Authority per child, per parent. This must be paid promptly, otherwise it will increase to £120 per child, per parent.

8. Parents' / carers responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by our school

Lakenheath School expects Parents/Carers will:

- i. ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- ii. support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- iii. not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents will also be expected to:

- i. notify the school on the first day of absence by calling the school office
- ii. ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- iii. work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- iv. contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. We will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

9. Pupils' / students' responsibilities

All pupils/students should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher or form tutor.

Pupils/students should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher or office a note from their parents to explain the absence.

10. Governors' responsibilities

Section 175 (2).

The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school. An Attendance Governor monitors school attendance alongside the Attendance Officer.

11. Conclusion

Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring the outcomes of *Every Child Matters* –

- i. **be healthy** –
 - a. attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
 - b. the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy
- ii. **stay safe** –
 - a. schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
 - b. the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly
- iii. **enjoy and achieve** –
 - a. good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings
- v. **make a positive contribution** –

- a. *membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others*
- iv. **achieve economic well-being –**
 - a. *good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style.*

LAKENHEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL

AN ATTENDANCE GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. **When does my child need to be in School?**

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at 8.50 am and the afternoon register at 1pm (Early Years & Key Stage One), 1.25pm (Key Stage Two)

2. **What happens if my child is late?**

Registers close at 9.00am in the morning and 1.15/1.40pm in the afternoon.

If your child arrives between 8.55am and 9.00am he/she will be marked late(L).

If your child arrives after 9.00am he/she will be marked as absent(U).

If your child arrives after 1pm/1.25pm he/she will be marked late(L).

If your child arrives after 1.10/1.35pm he/she will be marked absent(U).

[Pupils who arrive after registration should report to the school office, and sign the Late Book.]

3. **Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?**

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence. If you do not phone us, we will phone you. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of year report.

4. **What reasons will the school accept for absences?**

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment (Please make routine appointments after school or during the Holidays) Evidence of this medical appointment will need to be supplied, such as an appointment card or prescription.
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

5. **What is unacceptable?**

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays or looking after brothers or sisters etc.

6. **What happens if my child has an unauthorised absence?**

From 1st September 2014, a new policy came into force. Any absence which is not authorised (see number 5) will be unauthorised. If your child has more than 8 unauthorised sessions (half days) in a year, then you will receive a £60 fine from the Local Authority per child, per parent. This must be paid promptly, otherwise it will increase to £120 per child, per parent.

7. **Will the school contact me if my child is absent?**

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we are concerned about an aspect of your attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

8. **I am thinking about sending my child on an extended absence for an overseas trip to visit relatives. What should I do?**

The school recognises that such absence can be important for children to keep in touch with their extended family. Contact your child's form tutor as soon as possible to discuss the best time for such a visit.

The school would strongly recommend that such absences do not take place during your child's SAT's (Years 2 and 6) examinations. You need to complete an application form for extended leave of absence and if the Headteacher then approves the visit, the school will set work for your child to complete while away.

As far as possible we will ensure the work set reinforces the educational value of such a visit.

9. What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. Your child will bring home a school diary each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day.

10. My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer. The school may also refer you to an Education Welfare Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise. The Education Attendance Service is based at:

West Suffolk House

Western Way

Bury St Edmunds IP33 1RX

Tel: 01284 352000

