Longman's Hill CP School Attendance Policy

September 2024

The Benefits to Good Attendance at School

Good attendance at school is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

Expectations for Attendance at Longman's Hill School

At Longman's Hill Primary School, we expect children to attend school every day unless they are unwell or in exceptional circumstances where parents have successfully applied for term time leave of absence to the headteacher. See Appendix 1.

Children should arrive promptly for school; doors open at 8.45am each morning. By law, we must take the attendance register at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion we must record whether every pupil is:

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

Attendance and Absence Codes

A set of national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics through the School Census system. The data helps our school, the local authority and the government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reason for, absence and the delivery of education. The codes used in our registers can be seen in Appendix 3.

The register opens at 8.50am and closes at 9.20am. Children arriving after 8.55am but before 9.20am will be classed as arriving late after the register has closed and will be given code L. Attendance of children who are persistently late for school will also be monitored and addressed by the Attendance Officer, Miss Emma Hardcastle.

The school day ends at 3.20pm.

Staff Responsibilities

The Attendance Officer, Miss Emma Hardcastle, is responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of attendance and punctuality and will be the main point of contact with parents.

Mrs Jan Elcock, the headteacher, is the member of Senior Leadership Team with overall accountability for improving school attendance.

It is the responsibility of every staff member to promote the benefits of good attendance and bring any concerns regarding attendance to the attention of the Attendance Officer.

Parental Responsibilities

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

"The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school."

From DfE publication 'Working Together to improve School Attendance' February 2024

Reporting Absences

If a child is too unwell to attend school, parents must ring school before 9am on the first day of absence. The telephone number to call is 01757 706841. Parents can leave a voice recording on the answering machine when prompted to do so or can hold to speak to a member of the admin team.

Requesting Term Time Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances

The headteacher makes the decision about whether to authorise term time leave requests. **However, statutory regulations make it clear that headteachers are not allowed to class any term time holiday as exceptional.**
Therefore, headteachers can only grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances'.

Detailed information about applying for term time leave of absence and the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices can be read in Appendix 1.

Longman's Hill Procedures for Managing Attendance

First day Absence procedures

In circumstances where a parent fails to contact school by 9am, and a child's absence is therefore unexplained, a member of school staff will make attempts to contact one of the listed contacts on the pupil records:

1) By phone call initially
2) By text message requesting parent to call school

If by 10am we have failed to contact a parent by phone or text to establish a child's whereabouts or reason for absence, we will send a member of staff to the home address to establish these facts. It is vital that school know where children are if they are not in school and the reason for absence to ensure that children are properly safeguarded.

Strategies to reduce severe attendance issues or persistent absenteeism

The DfE class pupils with an attendance rate below 90% as persistent absentees.

We use a stepped approach to monitor and improve attendance, in line with DfE guidance (see Appendix 2).

We **expect** all pupils to have good attendance at school. We create a welcoming environment where pupils want to be, where they can learn and be social. We have appointed an Attendance Officer, who regularly **monitors** the attendance of every pupil in school.

We will **notify** parents when we have concerns regarding a child's attendance or punctuality by letter and will work with families to ensure attendance improves. We will l**isten** to parents' views to **identify and understand any barriers** to attendance. We will **offer and facilitate support** to overcome these. Text messages or telephone calls from the Attendance Officer will ensure the lines of communication are maintained.

Sometimes, the support may involve the completion of a supportive action plan or a **referral to Early Help**.

In rare circumstances where this type of support fails to improve attendance, the school may consider **formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order**.

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, we will **enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution** to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Pupils are given different codes depending on the reason for absence. See Appendix 3 Absence Codes.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. At Longman's Hill, we will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

APPENDIX 1

Term Time Leave of Absence- FAQs for Parents- from September 2024
This document has been updated to reflect changes from September 2024 in the law and information from the new National Framework for the issuing of penalty notices for unauthorised absence from school.

1. **Who can make the decision not to agree / authorise the requested leave of absence?**

The headteacher at the school makes the decision about whether to authorise term time leave requests. **However, statutory regulations make it clear that headteachers are not allowed to class any term time holiday as exceptional.**
Therefore, headteachers can only grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances'. There is no statutory criteria for exceptional circumstances but some of the following reasons may apply:

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis

Leave is only authorised where such 'exceptional circumstances' apply and cannot be granted on the basis of attendance record, academic performance or the 'experience' offered by being out of school. The potential savings made by travelling on holiday during term time are also not a factor which can be considered.

2. **What evidence is required for meeting the criteria for 'exceptional circumstances'?**

Supporting evidence **must** be submitted if parents wish the headteacher to consider their application as an 'exceptional circumstance'. This would be in the form of a letter (must be dated and on official headed paper) or email from a verified email account. Examples may include:
Deployment records
Correspondence from an employer stating that no other dates are available for their employee to take leave during any of the 13 week school holidays available
Medical records or a letter from a medical practitioner

This evidence forms part of the legal record for authorising absence. The headteacher reserves the right to independently verify the source of the source of the evidence and may make contact with employers, if required.

If the request for leave of absence does not have supporting evidence then leave of absence will be unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be issued if the leave is taken without the permission of the Head teacher.

3. **Can a leave of absence be agreed/ authorised retrospectively?**

No. If parents/carers have not applied to the school in advance then the request cannot be agreed / authorised retrospectively and should be coded as unauthorised absence. Leave of absence cannot be applied for retrospectively. Parents must apply for leave of absence at least 6 weeks prior to the first date of absence. Parents must obtain permission from the school before making any arrangements for leave.

4. **When are penalty notices (fines) issued by the Local Authority? (This has changed from September 2024)**

Penalty notices will be issued when the threshold is met. The threshold is:

10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. A session is a morning or afternoon- each school day consists of 2 sessions.

This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence :
e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks.

These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week)
or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).
The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

*** NEW From September 2024 * Two penalty notice limit and escalation in cases of repeat offences**

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

From the start of the autumn term 2024, **only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate**:

• The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. (previously £60 if paid within 21 days)

• A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

• A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first.

In a case where the national threshold is met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks) for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. **This will often include considering prosecution**, but may include other attendance legal interventions.

Once 3 years has elapsed since the first penalty notice was issued a further penalty notice can be issued, but in most cases it would not be the most effective tool for changing what may have now become an entrenched pattern of behaviour.

5. **How do I apply for term time leave of absence?**

   Parents must complete an official request form and submit it to school at least 6 weeks prior to the first day of absence requested. Forms are available from the school office or can be downloaded from the school website. Evidence must be provided if parents wish the headteacher to consider any exceptional circumstances.

6. **How will I be notified of the decision?**

   The headteacher will respond in writing to your request. As the letter is key evidence in any possible future court case, the letter is posted out to you. This ensures that the letter is deemed as served to you, the parent, with regard to legal requirements.

   We will address the letter to both parents if they live in the same household. If parents live in separate households, we will also send the letter to the absent parent.

7. **Will children under 5 years be issued with a penalty notice if un agreed leave of absence is taken in term time?**

   Children become of mandatory school age the term after their fifth birthday Only children of mandatory school age come under the regulations. This means that some children in EY may not be of statutory school age and therefore no penalty notice would be issued.

8. **Does the school or the LA make the decision to pursue the issuing of a penalty notice?**

Following parents/carers taking the child/ren on un agreed/ unauthorised leave of absence which meets the criteria for the issuing of a penalty notice i.e. 10 school sessions within rolling 10 school weeks, the Headteacher must submit relevant documentation to the LA as follows:

- Certificate of absence for un agreed leave of absence for the period in question
- Witness statement written and signed by the Head teacher
- Copy of leave of absence application form from parent/carer including reason for request and the Head teacher's reply (if possible)

The LA will then determine whether a penalty notice should be issued.

9. What if I take my child out of school without completing prior a written application?

No request for leave of absence can be granted retrospectively so in such circumstances, leave would be unauthorised.

10. Is the Penalty Notice issued per parent per child?

A penalty notice of £80/ child is payable within the first 21 days and rises to £160 thereafter. The Local Authority will consider taking legal action if the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days of date of issue. Legal action may result in a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record for each parent/carer.

Legislation indicates that the LA can issue penalty notices per parent per child. However, current NYCC policy is to issue penalties per child per family. The authority will determine on a case by case basis which option is most suitable based on information received but can still exercise its legal right to issue penalties per child per parent.

11. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, what happens next?

The LA would consider progressing the case to the magistrates' court under the Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1). An officer of the Education Social Work Service would present the case initially but, if a not guilty plea is entered by the parent, then the initial hearing would be adjourned to prepare for a full trial.

APPENDIX 2

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

APPENDIX 3 : Register Codes (From DfE publication 'Working Together to improve School Attendance' February 2024)

Attending the school

Code / \: Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session

Code L: Late arrival before the register is closed

Attending a place other than the school

Code K: Attending education provision arranged by the local authority

Code V: Attending an educational visit or trip

Code P: Participating in a sporting activity

Code W: Attending work experience

Code B: Attending any other approved educational activity

Code D: Dual registered at another school

Absent - leave of absence

Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.

Code M: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment

Code J1: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

Code S: Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination

Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school

Code C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

Absent - other authorised reasons

Code T: Parent travelling for occupational purposes

Code R: Religious observance

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment

Code E: Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

Code Q: Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements

Code Y1: Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

Code Y2: Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel.

Code Y3: Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Code Y4: Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed

Code Y5: Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Code Y6: Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

Code Y7: Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Absent - unauthorised absence

Code G: Holiday not granted by the school

Code N: Reason for absence not yet established

Code O: Absent in other or unknown circumstances

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Administrative codes

Code Z: Prospective pupil not on admission register

Code #: Planned whole school closure