



# **Longmoor Community Primary School**

## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

Date of adoption: January 2020

Date of next review: January 2021

## 1. Introduction

This policy is based upon the model attendance policy for primary schools written by Liverpool School Improvement's Education Welfare Team.

Longmoor Community Primary School recognises the clear link between the attendance and achievement of pupils. The aim of this policy is to support teaching and learning by encouraging the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding issues. It is important to see our children every day and provide an educationally safe and secure environment.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that all pupils attend regularly and on time. Pupils should aim to attend every day that the school is open. We set a target for all pupils to aim for 100% attendance with the expectation that all pupils achieve at least 97%. ***As a school we define regular attendance as 97% or above.***

Our school believes Teachers, Parents, Carers, Pupils and all members of our school community have an important contribution in improving attendance and punctuality to ensure pupils benefit fully from the high-quality education we offer them. This Policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

## 2. Aims

- Maximise the overall percentage of pupil attendance and punctuality.
- Reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent and raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community.
- Provide support advice and guidance for parents, pupils and staff.
- Develop clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for pupils.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data.
- Ensure a whole school approach to ensure consistency of intervention strategies.
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children's Services, Health and other partner agencies.

## 3. Promoting regular attendance

This is everyone's responsibility: all members of staff, parent/carers and pupils. To help us all focus on this, we will ensure:

- Appropriate interventions are in place to improve punctuality.
- An appropriate curriculum is provided and will be reviewed regularly.
- The need for high quality teaching and learning throughout the school is recognised as being essential to the promotion of attendance.
- Pupils are provided with appropriate support to minimise absence from school. This includes school and multi-agency provision as appropriate.
- Special Educational Needs, disadvantaged and Looked After pupils and other vulnerable groups are given appropriate support, and attendance is monitored rigorously.
- Effective partnerships with parent/carers are encouraged through regular contact and support provided.
- Parents/carers are kept informed of pupils' attendance and punctuality through first day contact, termly progress reports, individual letters and meetings when required.
- Good attendance and punctuality is rewarded through regular incentives.
- Attendance and punctuality is regularly discussed with pupils in class and at assemblies.
- Staff attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff should ensure these are followed.
- Throughout the year parents will be kept informed of school expectations and procedures through newsletters, the website and other communications.

The school employs a range of strategies to encourage good attendance including but not limited to:

- Class and individual attendance rewards.
- Rewards for 100% attendance e.g. certificates, badges, medals and trophies.

The school does not sanction children who have poor attendance or punctuality; however, we have a duty to ensure they are receiving their full educational entitlement and to assist them where they are falling behind their peers due to non-attendance or regular lateness. For this reason, where a child has missed significant amounts of learning time or has poor punctuality affecting their attainment and progress, we will help them by giving them the opportunity to catch up with their work at those times which are reasonably available to us e.g. during non-curriculum time. For the same reason, children who are persistently absent without good reason and have been referred to the Education Welfare Officer do not participate in school residentials.

#### 4. Attendance Expectations and Absence Procedures

A child not attending school is considered to be a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is required and why school will take appropriate action if unable to ascertain the reason for a child's absence.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Please assist the school by ensuring the following:

- Your child arrives for school on time (8.50am).
- Telephone school if your child is to be late.
- For routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments please ensure they are made outside of school hours.
- Contact school by 9am on the first day and every subsequent day of absence if your child is unable to attend through illness, giving an indication of the illness and expected duration.
- If a phone call is made to you as a result of your child's absence it is important that you respond to this to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.

**In case of emergency** we need up to date contact numbers at all times so please ensure you inform us of any changes, especially to mobile telephone numbers. (As a school we request a minimum of two emergency contact details be provided and preferably three or more).

Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing to the Headteacher and can only be authorised by the Headteacher. Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school include general holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts and birthdays. Absence Forms can be requested from the school reception.

#### **If a pupil is absent we will:**

- Telephone the parent/carer on the first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence if we have not heard from them by 9am.
- If no response is received, we will phone all contact numbers available to us.
- If we are still unable to contact anyone and the absence is unauthorised a member of school staff will conduct a home visit. If there are safeguarding concerns, contact will be made with the family as soon as possible. If we are unable to determine the whereabouts or wellbeing of the child, a referral will be made to Children's Services and/or the police will be contacted to request a home welfare visit be made.
- If a pupil's absences are increasing and we are not aware of a good reason the parent/carer will be invited to a meeting in school to discuss this.
- If absences persist the school will discuss actions with the Education Welfare Officer and may make a referral for further action.

#### 5. Understanding types of Absence

The school has to record every absence that a pupil takes from school and this is why it is important that parents/carers advise school about the cause of any absence, preferably by calling the school on the first day and every subsequent day of absence and in writing on the pupil's return.

##### ***Authorised Absence***

Authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. It is the Headteacher, not parents who make the decision to authorise absence from school.

##### ***Unauthorised Absence***

Unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes but is not exclusive to:

- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings.
- Absences which have not been explained.
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get their mark.

Opportunities for children to attend school outings, visits and residential trips are provided. If they do not go, the children **are expected in school**, where alternative arrangements will be made for them.

This type of absence may lead to the use of Penalty Notices or other sanctions from the Local Authority. From September 2018 the school can issue warning letters (in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct) to parents where their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any one term. The warning period will cover a period of 20 school days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time the school will refer the case to the local authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued.

### **Persistent Absence**

- Pupils are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DFE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DFE expects schools to intervene well before pupils reach a level of persistent absence.
- Whilst we understand that pupils can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. If a pupil is reluctant to attend or a parent/carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school as soon as possible to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution.

### **6. Why Regular Attendance is very important**

Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect pupils' learning. Pupils who have time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

**90% attendance is equivalent to a pupil missing one half day per week or approximately 118 lessons per year.**

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

### **7. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)**

The Education Welfare Officer provides support for parents/carers and advice on problems relating to attendance, and encourages good communications between home and school.

The EWO will always try to resolve the situation by agreement with the family but, if a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists the EWO will be required to give consideration to the instigation of legal proceedings which include: Penalty Notices, Parental Prosecution and Education Supervision Orders. Details regarding attendance law, penalty fines and legal interventions are available from the Local Authority.

### **8. Leave of absence in Term Time**

The Law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in truly exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Parents/carers can receive a Penalty Notice for taking their child on holiday during term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

### **9. Lateness**

The school takes persistent lateness seriously. Children coming into school late are disadvantaged because:

- They may feel awkward or embarrassed to arrive when everyone else has already started the day;
- They have missed important input from the teacher on the day's activities;
- Small group or 1:1 interventions are often timetabled for the morning session;
- They have missed the start of lessons and need to catch up with the work others have started.

In addition, late arrivals disrupt the class and take up the time and the attention of the teacher who has to settle the child and explain the work the class has started.

- The school day begins and the doors open at 8.50am.
- After 9am you will need to accompany your child to the school office, give a reason for their lateness and sign them in. 'Doors closed' is not an acceptable reason – our doors close at 9am, ten minutes after the school day begins.
- Arrival after the close of registration may be marked as unauthorised absence in line with DfE guidance.
- We will let you know if we have concerns about your child's punctuality.
- Punctuality will be reported to you at parents' evenings and on your child's school report.
- Children who remain uncollected at the end of school time will be referred to a place of safety if not collected or the school contacted by school closing time. Children collected late will have to be signed out and a reason provided.

## **10. Removal from Roll**

From the 1st September 2016 changes were introduced to the Pupil Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

### **As a school we are now required to:**

- Inform the LA in **every** circumstance when deleting a pupil's name from the admission register
- Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school.
- Provide information to the LA when registering new pupils, including the pupil's address and previous school.

If your child is leaving our school parents are asked to:

Give the school office comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.