

Larkswood Attendance Policy

Adopted by: Larkswood Academy Council

Date: January 2017

Review date: September 2019

Our unique approach

We pride ourselves on being an inclusive school, where we celebrate diversity and difference and acknowledge the richness that this brings to our school community.

We aim to provide opportunities for all children to access a broad, balanced and creative curriculum, regardless of age, attainment, ethnicity, language or background that is personalised to meet children's individual needs.

Introduction

We are 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.

Regular school attendance is crucial if a child is to achieve their full potential and research shows that raising pupils attendance has contributed to raising achievements.

Overview

The policy is set out to reflect statutory requirements and the most recent guidance from the DFE. We expect all our children to attend school, on time everyday, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. As a school we aim for all children to have 100% attendance.

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 child'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.

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have .Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'. The Law relating to safeguarding Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.*

Parental Responsibility

As a parent/carer it is your responsibility to ensure that your child gets a full-time education that meets their needs (e.g. if they have special educational needs or a disability). You can send your child to school or educate them yourself.

Children must get an education between the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday in June in the school year they turn 16.

You will be contacted by either:

- The school - if your child is enrolled in school and does not turn up (even if they are only absent for a day)
- The council's Behaviour, Attendance and Children Missing Education (BACME) Officer - if they think your child is not getting a suitable education at home

You can be prosecuted if you do not give your child an education. You will normally get warnings and offers of help from the local council first.

You can get education and attendance information from your council.

Your child's absence will only be authorised if:

- They are too unwell to attend
- You have gained advance permission from the school

There is extra support available if your child cannot go to school for long periods of time due to a health related concern.

Please meet with the school Attendance Officer with queries.

What is the role of the child?

Children are expected to attend school regularly, punctually and appropriately prepared for lessons. The target attendance for all children is 100%. We aim to make children aware of these responsibilities and ensure that they want to come to school by offering a safe and stimulating experience when they are here.

What is the role of the Headteacher?

The Headteacher will ensure that the school meets all legal requirements, sets targets for attendance and publishes attendance figures. The Headteacher has a duty under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 to make a return to the London Borough of Waltham Forest where there is a poor pattern of attendance or a child has had an unauthorised absence for a continuous period. Details of attendance and any connected initiatives are reported to the local Academy Council in each of the Headteacher's reports.

The role of the Academy Council

The Academy Council has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance in school and should be familiar with the current legislation and the school's registration system. They can request reports on attendance and procedures as necessary. They must ensure that the school is working above the government's benchmark of 96% attendance for primary schools. One Academy Council member has particular responsibility for attendance and liaison with the Headteacher.

The role of the Behaviour, Attendance & Children Missing Education Officer

The Behaviour, Attendance & Children Missing Education Officer (BACME) meets with the Headteacher/Head of School and is the point of contact between the Local Authority BACME and the school.

She/he advises the school and monitors performance in relation to attendance and punctuality. She/he also takes referrals from the school for more focused interventions with particular families. Intervening with children who are causing concern because of punctuality or attendance

These interventions include home visits, interviews at school, support for families with particular problems which affect attendance and punctuality. Where necessary, appropriate, legal action against families who are not fulfilling their responsibilities under the Education Act will be taken. These include penalty notices, fines (£60 per parent per child, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days (Anti-social Behaviour Act 2004) or prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court.

The role of the Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team and the Academy Council will monitor attendance on a weekly and half termly basis. They will make sure that parents and carers are aware of their responsibilities around attendance.

The Role of the School Office

The school office is the first point of contact for parents/carers in connection with attendance. They have a crucial role in communicating reasons for children's absence given by parents/carers. They will note any reasons for absence given in a phone message, text, email or in person to them and record them on SIMS. If a child arrives after the register has been called, the appointed staff members will record the child's name and their time of arrival electronically and enter the number of minutes late on the SIMs Register. These records need to be kept accurately as they may be required as evidence, should a case of persistent lateness be taken to court by the BACME Service.

Children arriving late for school will be accounted for at the school office and issued with a late pass which must be handed to their class teacher.

Class registers officially close at 9.20am. Children who arrive after this time will be recorded with an unauthorised absence, 12 or more unauthorised absences in any term will result in a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

The school office is responsible for ensuring all daily registers are complete and for monitoring individual attendance and punctuality on a daily basis, referring any concerns or queries to the Senior Leadership Team.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in newsletters
- Report on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements via the school newsletter and by holding a 'Tea with the Head' event every half-term to celebrate with the children and their families
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions and certificates
- Promote with parents/carers, children and staff, raising attendance levels across the school

Understanding types of absence

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason like illness.

Medical/dental/optician appointments should be made outside of school time when possible. The appointment letter should be shown to the school office in advance. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. This type of absence can lead to the London Borough of Waltham Forest 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 too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

We recognise that there are cases where children may be reluctant to attend school. In these circumstances please contact the school as soon as possible for advice. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents/carers and the child.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academic year (this includes authorised and unauthorised absences) for whatever reason. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absent mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately. Persistently absent children are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic monitoring where absence affects attainment.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the London Borough of Waltham Forest BACME Officer.

Attendance Thresholds

Thresholds	The following are suggested actions at each threshold:
100%>	Reward regular attendance
<96%	<p>Pupils with attendance at, or below, 96%</p> <p>For each absence, a designated member of staff makes a telephone call to the family home as early in the day as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unless a satisfactory explanation has been received, a letter is sent to the parent regretting the absence and asking for an explanation for every session missed. • Send a standard letter to parent pointing out the deterioration in attendance levels. • Remind the parent of the school's target levels for attendance and the negative effect of irregular attendance on learning. Require the parent to provide an explanation and comments. • Keep in contact with parents on a weekly basis. Provide encouragement where improvement has been made. • Discuss the likelihood of referral to the BACME Service unless improvement is made.
<90% (PA)	<p>Pupils deteriorating to 90%</p> <p>Make first day calls as above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is referred to as Persistent Absence to the BACME Officer. • Maintain the approaches set out at the previous thresholds. The Head teacher or Attendance Lead should be involved and should add weight to any interventions already in place. • Ask parents to attend a school based meeting with Attendance Lead and chaired by the BACME Officer, Use the meeting to investigate why pupil has not attended regularly. • Discuss detrimental effect on learning. • Reach agreements for rapid improvements over the next half term. • Remind the parent that full attendance is the aim and that anything less than 96% will cause concern. • Consider using a parenting contract between school and parent. <p>Monitor attendance very closely and keep in regular contact with the parent, either to praise attendance levels or to show ongoing concern.</p>
<85%	<p>Pupils deteriorating to 85%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If pupil has not been referred to the BACME Officer this should be done (if this has not already taken place) and meeting to create a plan of action.

Registration

Class registers are legal documents and must be treated accordingly. They must not leave the school premises. The class teacher will ensure that the registration period is orderly and calm and that the registers are called promptly and accurately every morning and every afternoon. Registration should be taken at the same time to ensure consistency in identifying latecomers.

Daily Registers

The school day starts at 8.45am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by 9.00am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Children who arrive after 8:45am, but before 9:00am, are coded "L" (late) in the register. Those children who arrive after 9:20am are coded "U" which is an unauthorised absence.

Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. When a pupil arrives late to school, there are many consequences:

- They will miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the day
- Pupils often feel awkward and embarrassed going into the classroom when everyone else is already settled
- When one person arrives late – the class is disrupted and the teacher must take time away from the other pupils to explain what has been missed
- Arriving 5 minutes late each day adds up to missing 3 entire days of school by the end of the academic year.
- Poor punctuality can also encourage absence
- The school must ensure every child is recorded in case of emergency evacuation
- Children arriving late for school must go directly to the school office to be recorded in the Late Book and will be recorded as late on the register. They will be given a late pass to hand over to the class teacher before joining the rest of the class.

The school monitors punctuality on a weekly basis. Persistent lateness over a half-term will result in the following actions:

- 3-5 Late arrivals – text message sent to parents / carers
- 6-10 Late arrivals – a letter will be sent to parents / carers and recorded onto the child's record
- 10+ Late arrivals – parents will be invited in to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team

Children receiving 12 unauthorised absences (which includes arriving after 9:20am) within a school term will be reported to the BACME team and this may result in a Penalty Notice Warning being issued by LBWF.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence and keep us informed thereafter via the absence line or directly at the school office
- If your child is due to have a planned medical appointment or procedure/operation, you must notify the school in advance and provide documentary evidence in the form of an official letter or appointment card, where available make appointments outside of school hours.

Absent without contact

The school will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team if absences persist
- Ask you to provide medical evidence, for example a doctor's letter or prescription medication, if attendance falls below 95%
- If attendance moves below 90% we will refer the matter to the BACME Officer.

Attendance of Looked After Children

The school has a designated teacher responsible for overseeing the education of children in public care. This role will include the monitoring of attendance rates which are reported to the Behaviour Attendance Children Missing in Education (BACME). Any concerns should be notified as soon as possible to the carer, social worker and School Attendance Officer for vulnerable children.

The designated LAC teacher at Larkwood Primary Academy is : Quynh Hua.

Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

School Term Time

Our term times are set in accordance with our Academy Trust and with consultation with the Local Authority recommendations.

The confirmation of our school term dates are available from our websites or the main school office. Please do not refer to any other sources as these are not confirmed by ourselves.

<http://larkwoodlime.london/term-dates/>

Exceptional Leave in Term Time

Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence. All applications for exceptional leave must be made in writing to the Headteacher in advance. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a penalty

notice.

The criteria that the school will apply to determine 'exceptional' is a circumstance that has unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another, each individual request will be considered on its own merits and must be put in a letter directly to the Headteacher.

No authorisation for leave of absence can be given retrospectively, which means permission must always be sought beforehand.

In the event that leave for exceptional absence is granted, any further days of absence will be regarded as unauthorised. The school must be informed in all instances and where the cause is sickness a doctor's certificate must be produced. If a child fails to return on the agreed date, the Local Authority will be informed. The child will remain on roll whilst an investigation is carried out. If the child does not return to school the school will then contact the 'Children Missing from Education' Officer and will liaise regarding the correct common transfer file. If your child does not return to school he/she may lose their school place.

If the child is subject to child protection plans, social services will be immediately notified. The Academy Council will not authorise any leave at times when children are scheduled to take public examinations. Parents/carers will be notified as soon as these dates are known. If children are on leave without authorisation, the London Borough of Waltham Forest has the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices of £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days (Anti-social Behaviour Act 2004).

Special Leave Requests in Term Time

We understand and encourage participation in external school activities and pursuits. This can sometimes lead to pupils requiring special leave from school to attend additional training, competitions and other events.

The school will grant a maximum of 5 days special leave throughout the academic year to support the development and aspirations of the children. Any child requesting special leave must supply a letter in writing to the Headteacher, accompanied by an official invite on headed paper from the organisers / providers.

Any days additional to this or absence due to sickness prior to or after the requested date will be marked as an unauthorised absence, unless medical evidence is provided.

Child License – if your child is modelling / performing for film / TV / publications etc. legislation sets out that in addition to the above guidance the parents must obtain a Local Authority License.

Monitoring attendance and punctuality

The Senior Leadership Team works closely with class teachers, the school office and the London Borough of Waltham Forest Education BACME Service. School registers are monitored daily to identify class attendance and punctuality percentages. Individual attendance and punctuality is monitored on a daily basis.

Every week in the achievement assembly, the classes with the best punctuality and attendance for the previous week are given class certificates. Each term, the classes with the best attendance are invited with their parents to an attendance tea party with the Headteacher.

During visits with the School's BACME Officer from the London Borough of Waltham Forest, all children's punctuality and attendance are discussed. After determining whether there are valid reasons for lateness or absences, parents/carers can be written to or invited to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team

or School Attendance Officer to discuss how to resolve any identified problems. If there is a pattern of poor attendance the school will refer the child to the BACME Service for a School Attendance Panel meeting (SAP).

Co-ordinating responses to concerns about attendance & punctuality

School attendance officers check the registers weekly for outstanding unauthorised absences. Parents/carers are contacted to explain the reason for absence. Only the school may authorise this absence. Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school can refer the child to the BACME Officer from the London Borough of Waltham Forest. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, court proceedings to prosecute parents can be used.

Change of Address

If a family are moving to a new address, parents/carers must provide the school with their new address and contact numbers. If the family are moving overseas, parents/carers must provide travel documents and a forwarding address. Failure to do this will result in a referral to the 'Children Missing Education' officer at the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

Telephone Numbers/email

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers. You must provide the school with up to date numbers/email addresses if you don't then something important may be missed. There will be checks made on telephone numbers/email addresses and contact details throughout the academic year.

Transferring to Another School

Parents/carers must notify the school immediately if they are removing their child to start at another school. The parents/carers must provide the name of the new school. If a family are moving to a new address, which requires the child to attend a new school but the child is not yet registered then parents/carers must provide school with their new address. Occasionally children may move away from the school without notifying us. We make every reasonable effort to locate the child and their family. Removal from roll may be backdated if we subsequently receive proof of dates of attendance at the new school. If we are unable to make communication with the family, the child is kept on roll until we receive confirmation from the new school and then the BACME Service and Children Missing Education Service are notified.

Families moving abroad

Parents/carers must notify the school immediately if they are moving abroad and the parents/carers must provide the new home address and new school address. The parents/carers must provide flight details. Failure to provide this information to the school, will result in a referral to the child/children to Child Missing From Education (CMFE) and will also communicate with 'Home Office' and other child safeguarding agencies.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents /carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and children; this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Children picked up late after school

Such incidents can cause distress to children who are keen to see their parents/carers at the end of the school day and should be avoided at all cost.

Parents/carers must telephone the school office if they are running late and advise on the time of their arrival in school. On arrival, the school office will ask parents/carers to fill in a brief form detailing the reason for late collection.

The school will make all reasonable effort to contact parents/carers who fail to collect their child after school.

Please refer to the school's Dropping Off and Collection Policy which states if a parent/carer or an authorised adult has not collected the child/children from the school by 3.30pm on more than two occasions it will trigger the activation of child protection procedures including making a safeguarding referral to Social Care at LBWF.
