

Policy and Procedure: Attendance (Pupils)

Date of Board Approval: April 2018

Review date: February 2019



Attendance Target – 97%

School opens at – 08:50am

Registers close at – 09:30am

Mission

Attendance is defined as the participation in a programme of educational activities arranged by the school, which might include an off-site provision. A child's attendance record will follow them throughout their statutory education.

Excellent attendance and punctuality is the key to ensuring that children and young people have the best life chances and opportunities. As a Cluster we strongly believe that having access to and receiving a good education is the best way we can ensure that all children achieve the best possible outcomes, empowering them to make the best and most positive choices about their future lives.

It is the responsibility of all schools, parents/carers and pupils to work in partnership to ensure that all our children and young people receive an appropriate education suitable to their needs. We need to work with families to identify reasons for poor attendance and support them to resolve difficulties.

Our attendance policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is part of all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on Safeguarding, Anti-Bullying and Behaviour.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%;
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically;
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying;
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training;
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers.

Safeguarding and Attendance

Children and young people may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child and young person is everyone's responsibility and within the context of the A.R.M Cluster, promoting the welfare and life opportunities of all children and young people encompasses: Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-Bullying.

Principles

- Children must attend regularly to achieve their full potential
- Children who miss out on school can feel vulnerable and left behind
- Absence in term time is disruptive and can seriously affect a child's education
- Unauthorised absence can lead to prosecution

% Attendance expressed in number of days absent

Attendance/absence is presented as a percentage figure, but it's helpful to equate this to number of days off:

| |
|---|
| 98% = fewer than four days absent in one school year |
| 95% = fewer than ten days absent in one school year |
| 90% = 4 weeks absent in one school year (equates to a ½ day each week) |
| 85% = 5.5 weeks absent in one school year (approaching a whole half-term in the school year) |
| 80% = 7.5 weeks absent in one school year (equates to one day each week or a whole half-term) |

Over 5 years, children with an average attendance of 85-90% will have missed half a school year of education while children with an average attendance of 80% will have missed a whole school year.

Parental responsibility on reporting absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- Medical evidence may be required if your child has above average illness, this could be a copy of a prescription, labelled medication or an appointment card

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you, this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- We may refer the matter to the Leeds City Council School Attendance Service if absence falls below 90%
- If we believe that your child is absent due to a holiday you may be issued with a penalty notice, £60 per parent per child

Persistent absences

The Department for Education regards attendance of 90% or below as persistent absenteeism.

| HALF TERM | 90% |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | 7 sessions |
| 2 | 14 sessions |
| 3 | 20 sessions |
| 4 | 25 sessions |
| 5 | 31 sessions |
| 6 | 38 sessions |

Authorised absence is defined as:

- Genuine illness;
- Medical or dental appointment (routine appointments should be arranged out of school time);
- Bereavement (Principal's discretion);
- Religious observance (no more than 2 days per academic year);
- Approved leave in term time where there are exceptional circumstances, as agreed by the Principal.

Unauthorised absence is defined as:

- Holidays in term time (following the Department for Education's Guidelines);
- Absence in term time where permission has **not** been given by the school in accordance with the A.R.M Cluster Attendance Policy. This means that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school during term time;
- Any absence that the school has not been informed of by letter or by telephone;
- Unexplained absence – any child whose absence is on-going and remains unexplained for an extended period (10 days) will be referred to the local authority as a child missing education (CME);
- Taking the rest of the day off before or after a medical appointment;
- Staying at home to care for younger children or sick relatives;
- Going shopping or having a haircut;
- Birthdays, weddings or anniversaries;
- Transport issues e.g. car broken down;
- Travelling to airport to meet relatives/friends;
- Translating.

Punctuality

Being late to school has a significant impact on the amount of learning time lost over a school year. The table gives you an indication of how much time is lost if regularly late.

| Minutes late per day | Number of days over a year |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 5 minutes | 3.4 days |
| 10 minutes | 6.9 days |
| 15 minutes | 10.3 days |
| 20 minutes | 13.8 days |
| 30 minutes | 20.7 days |

Pupils arriving after the register has closed will receive a 'U' code 'Late' an unauthorised absence mark. In the A.R.M cluster schools actively discourage late arrival and are alert to patterns of late arrival, which could provide grounds for prosecution or a penalty notice being issued.

Exceptional circumstances

Parents do not have the right to remove their children from school during term time. Absence in term time will only be considered if parents/carers make a request to the school on the appropriate form giving exceptional reasons why the application for absence has been requested and provide information to support their application.

Please note that the definition of 'exceptional' means 'very unusual'. Therefore, a second request for absence based on 'exceptional circumstances' is extremely unlikely to be regarded as such and therefore will not be authorised.

The Principal will decide whether or not the absence will be authorised.

Parents/carers who take their children out of school during term time without authorisation, may be issued with a penalty fine of up to £120 and face a possible prosecution in court.

Continuing concerns regarding attendance

If attendance or punctuality continues to be of concern then this will lead to a referral being made to the A.R.M Cluster, Guidance and Support Group. This is a multi-agency meeting where concerns are discussed and appropriate support is then offered. Alternatively a referral may be made directly to The Leeds City Council, School Attendance Service.

Ultimately parents/carers can be held to account for failing to ensure that their children attend school punctually and regularly. Leeds City Council, School Attendance Service carries out this statutory function on behalf of the local authority in order to uphold the right of children and young people to access their education.

Where necessary statutory action can and will be taken under s444 Education Act 1996 or Education Supervision Order under the Children's Act 1989 this may take the form of a penalty notice, prosecution of parents in the Magistrates Court resulting in a fine, or a statutory order.