



Part of Brighter Futures Educational Trust

# ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

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## 1. Introduction and Background

Larwood School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

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, on time. 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.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Procedures reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance, which is also outlined in our Trust Attendance Policy.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school.
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

It has been developed in consultation with trustees, teachers, local Headteacher Associations, the Local Authority and parents and carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance being everyone's responsibility. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance. It is over-arched by our Trust Attendance Policy, which is referred to throughout for more statutory framework guidance from Hertfordshire.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued.

- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the Head Teacher not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

## 2. Promoting Regular Attendance

At Larwood School, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our Trust's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools.
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families.
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters.
- Promote the benefits of high attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual achievements via communications home as well as rewarding individuals (half-termly) with certificates in our Friday praise assembly
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting class achievements via the weekly newsletter as well as rewarding the class with a certificate in our Friday praise assembly, alongside the cumulative points for our half-termly 'Attendance League' where the winning class are rewarded
- Reward good or improving attendance, again this is recognised in the weekly newsletter and the most improved class for the week receives a certificate in our Friday praise assembly.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress. This can be in the form of supportive letters where improvements are required but also through celebratory letters for children with outstanding attendance figures.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.

### 3. Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

These are referred to in more detail in the Trust Attendance Policy.

### 4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a **'persistent absentee'** when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as **'severely absent'**. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

### 5. Absence Procedures

We monitor and review all pupils' absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

**If a child is absent from school the parent must complete the following**

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before **9:30am**, when our register closes;
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorized.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before **9:30am**;
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested (*where school have reasonable doubt as to the authenticity of the absences*) where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS Guidance on School Absence and Childhood Illness see Annex C of our Trust Attendance Policy.

### If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us.
- If we are unable to make contact with parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding.
- The Local Authority will be informed if no contact has been made with parent/carers by the 10<sup>th</sup> day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate) as The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 Section 13 requires schools to inform the local authority of any pupils absent from school and where absences amount to more than 10 or more **days**, either consecutively or irregularly and have been unauthorised. This means school will have unauthorised 20 am/pm sessions of absences. Schools are also under a safeguarding duty, under **section 175 of the Education Act 2002** to investigate any unexplained/unauthorised absences. At this point your child will be considered to be "absent from education".

### If absence continues, we will:

- Notify you through class DOJO (class team) if your child's attendance dips below 92%.
- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 90% / causing concern (persistent absenteeism), and/or where punctuality is a concern.
- If 10 sessions (equivalent of 5 days) are missed (authorised or unauthorised) within 10 weeks from receiving the notification letter we will do the following:
  - Obtain pupil voice to try and establish any potential barriers.
  - Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with our SLT Attendance Lead (Todd Baines - Stevenage, Joe Scales - CBC) or one of the Attendance Team, parent voice is obtained in this meeting and pupil voice shared.
  - Consider and offer reasonable adjustments.
  - Offer a Families First Assessment or Early Help Assessment through our in-house Larwood procedures to ensure appropriate support is considered.
  - Create a personalised, robust support plan, such as an attendance contract, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child.
  - Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate.
  - Seek advice, guidance and support from the Local Authority Statutory Attendance Support Team and consider appropriate legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.
  - If after the 6-week period sufficient improvements haven't been made or 10 unauthorised absences take place within a 10-week rolling window, a 'Notice to Improve' may be issued (these are reference in our Trust Attendance Policy).

## 6. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

### **The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Larwood School are:**

Gates open: **9:00am** (both sites)

Registration starts: **9:00am** (both sites)

Registration closes: **9:30am** (both sites)

End of the school day Monday - Thursday: **3:00pm** (CBC site) **3:20pm** (Stevenage site)

End of the school day Friday: **2:00pm** (CBC site) **2:20pm** (Stevenage site)

#### **How we manage lateness:**

- The school day starts at **9:00am** when children can begin to come into school;
- Registers are taken at **9:00am**;
- Children arriving after **9:20am** are required to come into school via the school office.
- At **9:30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site - 'U', but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence;
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns;

If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with Joe Scales or one of the Attendance Team, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we celebrate good class and individual punctuality. Unauthorised lateness could result in the school seeking advice and guidance from the Local Authority.

## **7. Understanding Barriers to Attendance**

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents, and the child. This is why we obtain both pupil voice and parent voice as part of the initial attendance meeting. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can consider a Families First Assessment, use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Family Support Worker, or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

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, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils; however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

See our Trust Attendance Policy for DfE summary tables of responsibilities for school attendance.

## **8. Local Authority Attendance Support Team**

Local Authority Attendance Support Specialists work strategically by offering support to schools, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents/Carers are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parent/Carers should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken which may be in the form of a Penalty Notice or other legal options available to the Local Authority such as prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

## **9. School Attendance and the Law**

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parent/Carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parent/Carers may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

## 10. National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent/carer may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent/carer is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

See our Trust Attendance Policy for the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct.

**There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours.** In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. **The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.**

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Hertfordshire Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

**At Larwood School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:**

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parent/Carers are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

## 11. Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Larwood School, other than at the end of year 6, parents/carers are required to complete a *'Pupils moving from school'* form which can be obtained from the school office. This provides school with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all our pupils, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parent/carers keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for the pupil and key family members, in case of emergency.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point - when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

## 12. Absence Data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit pupil attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.