

Linton Primary School

Attendance Policy

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# Attendance Policy

## Introduction

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. Parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Linton Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. We take a whole school approach to achieve excellent attendance for all pupils.

Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school. School attendance is expected to be 100% for all pupils. We work to ensure that all parents are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits for their children.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, therefore, we will continue to prioritise creating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as a strong and trusting relationships with pupils and families.

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential. Parent/carers have a legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is the duty of any person with day-to-day responsibility for the pupil. Pupils need to attend school regularly, in accordance with the rules of the school, if they take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

## Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, governors and parents in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Promote and model high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensure equality and fairness for all.
- Ensure this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils, and families.
- Intervene early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Build strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Work collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- Ensure families follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Regular monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

The attendance officer at Linton Primary School is Catherine Hollis, Headteacher.

Staff, families, and pupils will be expected to contact the school attendance officer or the school office for queries or concerns about attendance or absence.

## Definitions

### **Absence**

Arrival at school after the register has closed

Not attending school for any reason

### **Authorised absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate unavoidable reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.

*Only the Headteacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if absence is supported by parent, an absence will be unauthorised.*

## **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without a legitimate reason
- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the knowledge or authorisation of the school, even if the absence is supported by the parent.

## **Procedures**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Families must contact the school office before 9.00am on the first day and subsequent day of their child's absence - it is a legal requirement that they will be expected to provide an explanation for the reason for absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g one school day.
- Where a pupil is absent, and their family has not contacted the school by the time the registers have been checked, to report the absence, staff will contact the family as soon as it is practical on the first day and every subsequent day that they do not attend school without contact. The school will contact the family via text, phone call or email.

The school will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school system.

## Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### Class teacher/Staff

Class teachers/Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling and encouraging good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated and recorded on My Concern.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

### Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The day- to - day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school
- Appointing a member of the Senior Leadership Team to oversee the attendance in school and an attendance officer (these maybe the same person in a small school). Both people must be trained as a designated safeguarding lead. At Linton, it is Catherine Hollis, Headteacher and DSL.
- Ensuring all families are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.
- Ensuring the correct recording, notification and reviewing of the pupils on part-time timetables, temporary managed placements or at dual placements.

## Administration staff

Administration staff are responsible for:

- Collating daily registers.
- Contacting families if no contact or no reason has been communicated as to why their child is absent from school.
- Updating Arbor if and when family details change.
- Inputting known absences into the daily registers.
- Receiving and replying to leave of absence requests.

*Only the Headteacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if absence is supported by parent, an absence will be unauthorised.*

## Families

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up to date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school promptly if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting and encouraging good attendance with their children.

## Registration

The school doors open at 8.20am and children are expected to be in school for the register at 8.30am. This gives plenty of time for all pupils to come into their classroom and be ready to begin lessons at this time.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for marking the attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

All attendance records are documented using Arbor. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved in line with the relevant retention schedule

## **Lateness**

Children who are persistently late after close of register soon fall behind with their learning.

Any pupil who comes into school after 8.30am will be marked as late. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school later than 8.45am will be marked as late after close of register (Attendance code U). This is an unauthorised absence for the whole session and will affect your child's overall attendance percentage and can be used to calculate absence thresholds for legal decision making.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 8.30am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

If a child is persistently late, the attendance officer will talk to parent/s in the first instance.

This would then be monitored by the administration staff, who would then inform the attendance officer of any improvement or reason for concern. It would then be the decision of the attendance officer of the next steps to help the family improve their child's attendance.

## **Absences**

Families must contact the school office before 9:00am on the first day and every subsequent day of their child's absence - It is a legal requirement that they will be expected to provide an explanation for the reason for absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g., one school day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their family has not contacted the school by the time the registers have been checked, to report the absence, staff will contact the family as soon as is practical on the first day and every subsequent day that they do not attend school without contact.

The school will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school system.

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable concern about the authenticity or impact of the illness.

Where a child has been absent without explanation, we will contact the family requesting the reason for absence. If we are unable to get the reason, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

In the case of a persistent absentee, arrangements will be made for families to speak to the attendance officer. The school will inform the LA, if a child has missed 10 consecutive school days or more without authorisation.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 90 percent, the attendance officer will be informed and attendance monitoring will be commenced. Parents will receive texts and letters informing them of each stage of attendance monitoring.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries.

## **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any contact from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers each morning to identify those pupils who are absent without explanation and, as a safeguarding requirement, make contact with the parents of these children by text, email and or telephone.

## **Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time**

In September 2013 the government introduced new regulations making it clear that Headteachers **must not** give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any requests for term time leave should be made on a Leave of Absence Request Form available from the school office and handed in 6 school weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. (Attendance code G).

## **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns.

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents, carers and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will offer early help or

liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g., social care and the school nurse.

We will support families by working together to improve attendance by building effective relationships with families.

These could include;

- Regular parent drop ins, parent forums
- A welcome for parents
- A positive environment for parents and an open-door policy for parents
- Celebration events
- Attendance rewards for pupils and celebration messages for parents

The school will ensure that there are two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation. Both contact numbers will be used if necessary.

The school will ensure that parent/carers are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education - families will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, unless in certain circumstances, e.g., sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parent/carers about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that they are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the attendance officer will work collaboratively with the pupil and their families to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, the attendance officer will work with the headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g., the DSL and SENDCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of

the school's control, e.g., they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the attendance officer will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g., through an early help assessment, children's social care or the local authority, and will encourage families to access the support that they may need.

If a child's attendance does not improve and absences are unauthorised this may lead to consideration of parental responsibility measures which include the issue of penalty notice fines or other statutory action.

## **National framework for penalty notices**

The new national threshold for consideration of legal action 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. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence, including lates after close of register (Attendance code U) and unauthorised leave in term time (Attendance code G).

If your child's absence falls into this category the school will decide if further offers of support is likely to improve the situation or if a request for legal action should be submitted to the Local Authority.