



Leechpool Primary School - Attendance Policy and Strategy

Leechpool Primary School gives a high priority to children's educational achievement and believes that excellent attendance and punctuality are essential in order for all pupils to achieve their full potential.

This policy has been written to help our school achieve this aim and the staff are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that it is effectively and appropriately implemented.

There are strong and evidence-based links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. We are committed to working in partnership with the Local Authority to reduce overall absence and persistent absence. The school supports local initiatives and strives to ensure all staff, students, parents, and carers place a high value on school attendance. We are committed to actively promoting Early Help and promoting multi-agency support for vulnerable children and their families.

When children are supported to attend school punctually and on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. Regular attenders usually leave secondary school with more qualifications and access to greater employment opportunities: this journey begins at primary school as poor attendance creates learning gaps that are hard to plug.

Legislation and guidance

All children of compulsory school age (5–16) should receive suitable education, either by regular and punctual attendance at school or through other arrangements. If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.

Registers are legal documents, which may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance.

The Education (School Day and Year) (England) Regulations 1999 state that the school must provide education for 190 days.

Parents are legally responsible for their child attending regularly.

All children of compulsory school age must receive a suitable full-time education.

Parents:

- Must make sure their child is regularly attending school or 'otherwise' (i.e. another suitable alternative),
- Are guilty of an offence if their child does not regularly attend school.

What is good attendance?

At Leechpool Primary School, we define good attendance as consistently over 96%, although good attendance for children with underlying medical conditions or who experience a severe illness will of course look different. Children with on-going medical conditions may have an Individual Health Care Plan in place that outlines



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reasonable adjustments to a student's timetable where current medical evidence to support this is in place.

Definitions of Absence

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable or has been agreed in advance by the school.

The school gates open at 08:30 so that children can be on time for the start of the school day in class at 08:45 (for Juniors) and 08.55 (for Infants). Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late (see section on Punctuality below).

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information and evidence about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably by phone, email or in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as:

- Illness
- Medical/emergency dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (for non-urgent appointments, we ask these are attended out of school)
- Emergencies or other unavoidable cause
- Funeral of an immediate relative
- Religious observation on a date that cannot be moved.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily,
- 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 which have not been authorised,
- Cases of recurrent illness causing frequent absence, with no medical evidence provided, may be recorded as unauthorised.

This type of absence is likely to lead to the school referring cases to the Local Authority for fixed penalty notices and prosecution.

Each child's attendance can be broadly summarised as:

97% +	Well done! This will give your child a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic. Your child's attendance is at, or above, the school target.
96% - 95%	Strive to build on this. Your child's attendance is below the school target and will be monitored.
94% - 90%	Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. This is a cause for concern and will be closely monitored. The school and an external Attendance Support Team may work with you to improve your child's attendance and/or punctuality.
Below 90%	This level of attendance is known as persistent absence and is



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	unacceptable. Absence is affecting attainment and progress and disrupting your child's learning. Your child's attendance is now a major concern. A formal discussion with senior leaders and the Attendance Support Team may take place.
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Absence Procedures

If your child is absent, you must:

- Contact us via phone or email at 08:00 on every day of absence (unless a medical professional has given advice to take a specified number of days absence from school and this has been shared with the school). We ask that you please leave a voicemail on the absence line.
- Provide medical evidence if the reason for the absence is sickness and it is likely that the absence will continue for more than a week.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone you on each day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Call all authorised emergency contacts to try to establish your child's whereabouts.
- Carry out a home visit to ensure the safety of the child if no contact is made.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if a period of absence persists or absences are regular.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Team if the situation does not improve.

Punctuality

While all families may on rare occasions be unavoidably late, **general poor punctuality is not acceptable**. The school gates open at 08:30 so that children can be on time for the start of the school day in class at 08:45 (for Juniors) and 08.55 (for Infants). Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late.

How we manage punctuality:

- Children arriving after close of registers (08:45 or 08.55) will arrive to the school office and be signed in by Year 6 leaders.
- Office staff will enter each child onto the appropriate class register with a 'L' (late) mark.
- Children signed in late after 09:15 will receive a registration mark of 'U' which means that although a child is now present in school the absence will count as a half day unauthorised absence. Obviously if there was a genuine need to be late (i.e. something medical) then the lateness would be authorised as described above.
- If your child is persistently late, you will be contacted by the school Attendance Officer who will discuss the concerns with you. Any child who continues to be late after this meeting may be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Team resulting in a fixed penalty notice.



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Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil is defined as a 'Persistent Absentee' if they miss 10% or more of all possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

365 days in each year	175 non-school days a year 175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments					
	190 School days in each year	10 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence HALF A TERM MISSED	38 days absence	47 days absence
		180 Days of education	171 Days of education	161 Days of education		
					152 Days of education	143 Days of education
	100%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%
	GOOD Best Chance of success Gets your child off to a flying start		WORRYING Less chance of success Makes it harder to progress		SERIOUS CONCERN School will seek support from Pupil Entitlement or other outside agencies	

If a child has attendance that has fallen below 93%, their parents will be notified that this is a cause for concern and their attendance will be regularly monitored, to prevent them becoming a Persistent Absentee. If attendance does not improve, the school will follow attendance management procedures - this will involve raising awareness of the attendance concern with parents/carers, seeking medical evidence to explain low attendance, consistently reviewing attendance every two weeks, and inviting parents to attend an Attendance Support Meeting to discuss concerns.

Attendance Support Meetings will be used to explore barriers to attendance, both in and out of school, agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support to the child in school, or Early Help intervention if the needs are wider and whole family support is more appropriate.

Parents and carers will receive standard letters at every stage in the process to inform them of the school's concerns and any potential consequences of a failure to improve attendance.

If there is little or no improvement in attendance, despite the intervention and support detailed above, the school's Attendance Officer will refer the case to the Local Authority Attendance Team to request that a fixed penalty notice be issued. A family may receive up to three fixed penalty notices in a 12-month period.



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Support For Pupils with Medical Needs, or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Some pupils will face greater barriers to school attendance than their peers. These include children with physical and mental health conditions and special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any child, therefore our attendance ambition is the same as for any other pupil. However, we recognise that additional support may be needed to enable them to access their full-time education. This may include:

- Making reasonable adjustments and putting an Individual Health Care plan in place where needed,
- Accessing additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) where appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services,
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including (where applicable) ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan is accessed,
- Strategies to reduce in-school barriers such as concessions regarding uniform, access to support during the school day, break and lunch time arrangements,
- Joined-up pastoral care, especially for those affected by anxiety around school attendance.

Part-time timetables may be considered in exceptional circumstances, for example, as part of a re-integration package to support a pupil returning from long-term sickness absence. However, this should be in place for the shortest time possible and not used as a long-term solution, as in West Sussex guidance. There will be formal arrangements in place to regularly review this with the pupil and parents/carers, with a time-limit when the pupil will be expected to return to school full-time.

Holiday Requests/Term Time Absence

The Head Teacher can only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances (see below). Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis by the school's Attendance Officer who has oversight for attendance. If a parent feels there is an exceptional reason for which their child needs to be granted leave from school, permission must be sought 2 weeks before the planned absence (contact the school office). No absence can be authorised retrospectively.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The school adheres to the Local Authority's Code of Conduct with regards to pupil attendance and Fixed Penalty Notices.

Circumstances when penalty notices might be issued: Unauthorised Absence/Truancy:

- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed amounting to 10 more sessions in 10 weeks).
- Pupils whose attendance has not reached a satisfactory level following intensive



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support.

- Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification in a fixed term suspension or permanent exclusion.
- Persistent absence (below 90% over a period with no reasonable or medical explanation)

Unauthorised Leave:

- Penalty notices will always be issued for all unauthorised leave taken during term time. Unauthorised absences will be issued with a fixed penalty notice to any adult with parental responsibility who takes the child out of school for the absence.
- This includes excessive delayed return from holiday without prior school agreement (beyond one additional school day).

If the decision is made not to authorise, the School Attendance Officer will send a letter to the parent/s confirming that a leave of absence has not been authorised and will include a warning that a penalty notice may be issued. If an unauthorised absence is taken, the Attendance Officer will complete a request that consideration be given to the issue of a penalty notice. The request will be sent to the Local Authority within two weeks of the pupil returning to school. The Local Authority will then issue a penalty notice.

Withdrawal of Penalty Notice

Penalty notices may only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- When it is issued to the wrong person,
- When issued outside the terms of the Local Authority Code of Conduct,
- When an offence has not been committed,
- If a parent can prove it was delivered to the wrong address,
- If there are unforeseen exceptional circumstances and the leave of absence becomes authorised

Prosecution For Non-Payment of a Fine

The prosecution would not be for non-payment of the fine, but for the original offence of failing to ensure child's regular attendance at school. The Council may use the fact that a penalty notice has been issued and remains unpaid as evidence. The Council's Pupil Entitlement Team would look at all the circumstances of the case when assessing the likelihood of securing a conviction for the original attendance offence.

If the decision is made to proceed with prosecution then as a matter of good practice, in any interviews with parents, the Local Authority will act in accordance with the spirit of the Codes of Practice set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), ensuring that the parent understands the basis for the interview, their needs are taken into account, their rights are explained and the interviews are conducted fairly.



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Summary of Roles and responsibilities

We use the guidance from the DfE Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (August 2024 page 5) [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/954222/Summary-table-of-responsibilities-for-school-attendance-19-August-2024.pdf)

Pupils will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time.
- Be appropriately prepared for the school day.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem which is making it hard for them to attend school regularly.

Families will:

- Encourage their children to attend school every day and on time.
- Ensure that they contact the school by 8am whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Ensure that their children arrive in school fully prepared for the school day.
- Provide the school with up-to-date home, work, and emergency contact numbers.
- Request absence in exceptional circumstances at least 2 weeks in advance (unless an emergency) via the school office (reception@leechpool.w-sussex.sch.uk).
- Make arrangements to complete curriculum work if an extended period of absence has been agreed.

Teachers will:

- Ensure that registers are completed accurately and on time at the start of each morning and afternoon session.
- Promote good attendance and punctuality within the class.
- Ensure all notes and messages received are sent to the office.
- Report any concerns relating to attendance to the school Attendance Officer /Headteacher /DSL as appropriate.
- Inform parents/carers of attendance percentages for their child/children via the annual report.
- Maintain positive links with families whilst communicating concerns.

School Attendance Officer will:

- Monitor all pupils whose attendance has fallen below 93%.
- Generate absence/punctuality letters to parents/carers and organise Attendance Support Meetings with parents/carers.
- Support the Headteacher/school attendance leads in monitoring and identifying levels of absence/lateness causing concern.
- Liaise with the Headteacher/DSL to refer children and parents/carers to appropriate agencies for intervention and support where needed, eg Early Help services.
- Liaise with the Local Authority Attendance Team to issue fixed penalty notices.
- Positively promote good attendance within the school.
- Generate awards/certificates etc. to celebrate good attendance.



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The Head Teacher will:

- Set annual targets for attendance.
- Positively promote good attendance within the school.
- Oversee the implementation of the attendance policy and procedure.
- Ensure the collection of accurate statistical data.
- Develop efficient monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Report to the Governing Body.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the school has a whole school attendance policy in place.
- Review termly reports from the Head Teacher in respect of attendance data and trends.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the whole school policy.

The Local Authority will:

- Support and challenge schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- Upon the request of the school, the Local Authority has the power to issue parents or carers with a fine for unauthorised absence under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- The Local Authority also has the power to prosecute parents or carers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if the fine is not paid

Flow Diagram for monitoring attendance



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Daily Attendance checks by Office staff and reported to SLT for identified pupils.



Weekly discussions at Leadership Team meeting of pupils to monitor and actions to carry out.



Week 4: Attendance check (Autumn 1) (Spring 1) (Summer 1)

If attendance is below 95% then a letter setting out attendance expectations will be sent.



Week 8: Attendance check (Autumn 2) (Spring 2) (Summer 2)

If a child who received the letter in Week 4 has had no further days off, they will receive an updated letter.

If a child who received the letter in Week 4 has had more days off and therefore their attendance percentage has fallen further, they will receive a letter, followed by a phone call from the Attendance officer to discuss attendance concerns.

The letter set out in Week 4 will also be sent to any children who were above 95% at the previous check but who have now fallen below.



Attendance check in the final week of Autumn 2 (Spring 2) (Summer 2)

Letters and phone call as set out above.

If a child who has received both a letter and a phone call still has declining attendance at this point then a discussion will be held with our Dedicated Schools Team to discuss if a referral to Early Help or Enabling Families is appropriate.

A meeting will then be arranged with parents and school to discuss next steps.



These 4 weekly checks will continue through the Spring and Summer term following the structure above. Mrs Pippa Asprey, Miss Emma Payne and Mrs Erin Short will work alongside agencies such as Early Help, Pupil Entitlement and CAMHS where it is felt additional support for families is needed.

Please note that if the above staff have concerns about declining attendance of specific children, they will take earlier action and will not wait for the attendance checks to be completed. Fines may also be issued for extended periods of unauthorised absence (ten sessions of unauthorised absence, including lateness, in a ten-week period).



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Monitoring attendance

Leechpool Primary School will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- For some pupils of concern, their attendance may be monitored more often to ensure it is closely tracked.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually or as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Children Missing in Education policy