



## **School Attendance Policy**

### **Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Old Leake Primary & Nursery 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.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

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, including the Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct dated January 2014.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head Teacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

### **Aims and Objectives**

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

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Local Authority so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised absence**

An absence is classed as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate 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.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### **Unauthorised absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

### **Non-Attendance**

To count as non-attendance at school the absence must be unauthorised.

### **Parent**

For the purposes of education law and this code of conduct a "parent" means all natural parents whether they are married or not; and includes any person having parental responsibility for a child (a person under 18 years of age) who, although not the child's natural parent, has care of that child. Having care of a child means an adult with whom the child lives and who looks after the child on a day to day basis. Any reference to a "parent" in this code of conduct is a reference to anyone having care of a child as set out above.

## **Procedures**

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

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- To maintain and monitor appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To have positive reward systems in place to promote attendance including weekly raffles.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality by means of regular School Attendance Panel meetings and termly Attendance Cards for all pupils.
- Consideration will also be given by the Lead Behaviour and Pupil Support Officer or Head Teacher to make an unplanned visit to the pupil's home address to ascertain a reason for absence if a child is absent from school for a period of time and the parent is at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- To follow up absences, persistent lateness and holidays taken by means of issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice Formal Warning Letter.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Lead Behaviour and Pupil Support Officer or Senior Administrator.

## Staff Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Lead Behaviour and Pupil Support Officer or Senior Administrator where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary, stressing the impact of low attendance on academic progress in end of year school reports.

## Parent Responsibilities (The Law)

**School Attendance:** Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parent of every child of compulsory school age has a duty to ensure that the child receives efficient full time education suitable to the child's age, ability and any special educational needs he or she may have. This duty can be met by the child attending regularly at a school or alternative educational provision made by the Local Authority or the school or by the parent providing other suitable educational provision.

Where a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child at a school at which they are a registered pupil or other educational provision made for them then the parent may be guilty of an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Where a child has not attended regularly at school the Local Authority have the options of issuing a fixed penalty notice in respect of the parents of the child, bringing proceedings before the family courts for an Education Supervision Order or prosecuting the parents under Section 444 before the Magistrates, Court.

Non-school attendance includes any day when a child should be in attendance at school and they are absent without the authorisation of the school and includes unauthorised holidays during term time and persistent late arrival at school beyond the registration period. Fixed Penalty Notices can be issued for persistent lateness where the child arrives after the closure of registration and this is coded U in the register.

**Excluded Pupils:** Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 makes it a duty for parents in relation to pupils subject to a fixed period or permanent exclusion to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of any such exclusion. If a child is present in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion during school hours the parent may be guilty of an offence for which they can be prosecuted by the LOCAL AUTHORITY before a magistrates' court. Alternatively the matter can be dealt with by the school through issuing of a fixed penalty notice.

Where an excluded pupil is of compulsory school age the Head Teacher must also notify parents without delay, and by the end of the afternoon session. For the purpose of the warning letter above, the letter should include

"that for the first five school days of an exclusion (or until the start date of any alternative provision where this is earlier) parents are legally required to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, and that parents may be given a fixed penalty notice or prosecuted if they

fail to do so. This will therefore apply to you from (*Insert first date of exclusion*) to the end of the school day on (*insert fifth date of exclusion*)."

**Fixed Penalty Notices:** The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 as amended set out the framework for the operation of the penalty notice scheme.

## **Where a Penalty Notice may be Issued**

A Fixed Penalty Notice Warning Letter will be sent to the parents when their child's attendance is 94% or below and they have two days unauthorised absences in any 6 week period.

The Local Authority has the right to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice in order to tackle poor school attendance. A Fixed Penalty Notice will only be issued in circumstance where the Local Authority is satisfied that the criteria for prosecution would be met. A Fixed Penalty Notice can be sent when there is:

- 4.5 unauthorised days or more in a 6 week period for reasons other than family holiday.
- 4.5 unauthorised days or more in a 6 week period where some is unauthorised family holiday and some are other unauthorised absences including illness without medical evidence.
- 3 weeks unauthorised holiday or more in a 6 week period.
- In a 6 month period (does not have to be the same school year) there are two 4.5 day unauthorised period in two 6 week periods.

## **Registration**

The school gates open at 8:40am, a member of staff is on duty in the playground at 8:40am and all pupils **MUST** be in the classroom or playground by the registration time of 8:50am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 8.55am and 1.10pm. (Attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present). These registers are then returned to the school office.

All attendance records are documented using Integris software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## **Lateness**

Once the doors are closed at 8.55am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 8.55am will be marked as late in the attendance record. 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 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence before 9.30am. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

If a reason for absence is not received by 9.30am on the first day of absence it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless the Head Teacher deems the reason given as for "exceptional circumstances".

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head Teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

### **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, a Med 3 note, appointment card or copy of a prescription.

Parents are asked where possible to ensure that routine medical appointments, such as dental check-ups, are made out of school time as much as possible.

### **Child Missing Education**

Should a child be absent with no explanation given for a period of 5 days a referral will be made to the Children Missing From Education Team via a phone call to Lincolnshire County Council Customer Service Centre on 01522 782111.

Should a child be absent for a total of four weeks without explanation, and after due investigation, the school is entitled to remove this child from the register. Parents would then have to re-apply for a place in the school should they wish their child to return.

### **Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of Head Teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Head Teachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. Parents must inform the Head Teacher in writing giving a minimum of four weeks' notice of an intended absence giving as much detail as possible for the reasons that they believe to be exceptional circumstances.

What amounts to "exceptional circumstances" is a matter for the discretion of the Head Teacher and should be judged on a case by case basis but it is unlikely to amount to an exceptional circumstance if it is merely claimed that a holiday abroad can only be afforded in term time or that a parent is unable to take leave during school holidays (this is a matter between the parent and their employer). The Head Teacher may also consider asking for evidence of the circumstances that have arisen where appropriate.

Signed..... Date.....

## Appendix 1

### SAMPLE LETTER: For persistent absence/lateness

Dear

#### **FIXED PENALTY FORMAL WARNING**

**NAME OF CHILD/YOUNG PERSON:**

**DATE OF BIRTH:**

**PUPIL REGISTERED AT:**

This letter is a **Fixed Penalty Formal Warning** and is being sent to you because your child has an unacceptable level of unauthorised absence.

During the period (date) to (date) ,(child's name) was absent/lateness on (number of) sessions out of (number) possible half-day sessions of which (number) were unauthorised \* and ( in addition she/he was late on (number) occasions. ) \*delete as appropriate

(child's name) 's attendance will be reviewed from the date of this warning, with the expectation that his/her attendance increases to 100%. Failure to comply will result in a Fixed Penalty being issued.

In order for us to consider any absence due to medical conditions, you should consider obtaining a Med 3 note from your GP each time (child's name) absent and forward this to the school.

Requesting the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice is a strategy used by schools to address the unacceptable levels of attendance of children attending their school under the following legal framework:

- **Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise**
- **Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act**
- **In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of either £60.00 or £120.00.**

Should you wish to discuss this matter further or to access appropriate support, please contact the school on the above contact details.

Yours sincerely

## SAMPLE LETTER 2: For holidays during term time

Dear

### **FIXED PENALTY FORMAL WARNING**

**NAME OF CHILD/YOUNG PERSON:**

**DATE OF BIRTH:**

**PUPIL REGISTERED AT:**

This letter is a **Fixed Penalty Formal Warning** and is being sent to you because you have requested a period of absence from school for your child during term time.

The period you have requested from (date) to (date) , is not deemed to be exceptional circumstances and therefore will be coded as unauthorised absence. If you choose to ignore this warning, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued for the above period of absence.

A Fixed Penalty Notice is a strategy used by schools to address the unacceptable levels of attendance of children attending their school under the following legal framework:

- **Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise**
- **Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act**
- **In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of either £60.00 or £120.00.**

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact the school on the above contact details.

Yours sincerely