

Attendance Policy

LEYBOURNE SS PETER & PAUL CE
PRIMARY ACADEMY



Introduction

Leybourne Ss Peter and Paul CE Primary Academy is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is both a legal requirement and essential if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

Ensuring regular and punctual attendance will:

- Give children the best possible start in life
- Help children make the most of educational opportunities
- Instill in children good timekeeping habits
- Prepare children for the world of work

We recognise that parents and carers have a vital role, and a legal responsibility, to ensure good attendance and we identify, investigate and work in partnership with parents / carers, pupils and other agencies to resolve attendance difficulties. We support children who might be experiencing problems that might affect their attendance, in line with our identified School Christian Values of Love, Trust, Compassion and Respect.

Absence from School

It is the parents' / carers' responsibility to contact the school **whenever** their child is absent. Parents should inform the school of their child's absence on each day of a continued absence and not just on the first day. The school has a designated telephone line on which parents can leave a message reporting a child's absence. Alternatively parents can email the school office using the link on the website.

School office staff will review the attendance registers at the beginning of the school day. They will identify any children who are absent from school and for whom they have not received a message from the parent/carer.

Office staff will then attempt to make text or telephone contact with the parent/carer, using Schoolcomms. It is a parent's /carer's responsibility to ensure that contact telephone numbers held by the school are up to date. If the office staff cannot make contact with the parent/carer, they will, if possible, leave a telephone message to explain that the child is absent and asking for the parent/carer to return the call and confirm that the child is safe.

An absence will only be authorised if a legitimate and acceptable reason has been provided by the parent / carer. If no reason is provided, then the child's absence is marked as unauthorised.

However, the school is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation as a reason for granting an authorised absence; a letter from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. The school's Attendance Officer will review the given reason for a child's absence and if they feel the absence may warrant being unauthorised, they will refer it to the Headteacher for consideration.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

If the Headteacher decides that an absence is not authorised, the parents will be notified in writing.

Low Levels of Attendance

If a child's attendance falls below 95% in any one term, the Attendance Officer will review the reasons which have been given for the absence and, if deemed necessary, the Headteacher will then make telephone contact with the parents/carers to discuss the situation. The child's attendance will then be monitored at monthly attendance meetings held between the Attendance Officer and Headteacher.

If the child's attendance continues at 95% or less for an extended period, the Headteacher may request a meeting with the parents/carers to discuss the situation and to satisfy themselves that the absences are unavoidable.

If a child's absence continues at 95% or below for more than two terms, the issue may be referred to the Attendance and Inclusion Service.

High levels of Unauthorised Absence

If a child has unauthorised absence of 10 or more half day sessions (five school days) during any 100 possible school sessions, the parents may be asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss and resolve the situation. These absences do not need to be consecutive for the absence to be unauthorised and the meeting requested. If a child has continued unauthorised absence after such a meeting, the school will make a referral to the Attendance and Inclusion Service.

The Attendance and Inclusion Service issue a Penalty Notice warning letter, setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded. If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued. Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days,

reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Lateness

Pupils arriving after 8.50am must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will proceed to their classes where they will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

Pupils arriving after the register has closed (9:30am) will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

If a child is frequently late, the issue will be discussed with the parents and may be referred to the Headteacher. Ten incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed in a term will lead to a referral to the Attendance and Inclusion Service.

The Attendance and Inclusion Service issue a Penalty Notice Warning Letter at this point which sets out 15 school days during which no lateness is to be recorded. If lateness is recorded during the 15 day period, Penalty Notice(s) will be issued. Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Leave of Absence

As a school, we expect pupils to attend every day when the school is open and where there are more than 10 sessions or 5 days unauthorised absence in a 50 day period, the school may request a Penalty Notice.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance, and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively. If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway the case may be referred to the Attendance and Inclusion Service.

Possible examples of exceptional circumstances:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near, future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health, professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family
- Or where the school has evidence that there are other pressing personal issues for a family that would warrant a short break from school.

Any examples provided above are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. The use of the term 'unavoidable' implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Unauthorised Term-Time Leave (including leave for family holiday)

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term-time leave of 10 or more morning and afternoon sessions during any 100 possible school sessions or 50 school days, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances), may receive a Penalty Notice.

The unauthorised term-time leave does not have to be consecutive for a parent to receive a Penalty Notice. In deciding whether to refer a case for the sanction of a Penalty Notice, the Headteacher should take into account whether there is known evidence of previous unauthorised term time leave taken in the last 3 years and evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notices may be issued when parents have taken their children out of school for holidays in term-time without the school's authorisation.

Please be aware that where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued

A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of persistent unauthorised absence or where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.

Unauthorised absences

Penalty Notices can only be issued in cases where a pupil of compulsory school age has been absent or late for a period, or periods, of time and the absence or lateness has not been authorised by the school, or shown improvement as a result of actions taken by the school.

After a school have taken the steps set out above, the relevant case may be referred directly to Kent's Attendance and Inclusion Service to issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded U) for 10 or more sessions after the register has been closed
- unauthorised absence for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice in these circumstances would conflict with other intervention strategies in place, such as Early Help support, or other sanctions already being processed.

Exclusion

Where a child is found in a public place during school hours of day 1 to 5 of any fixed term or permanent exclusion.

Reporting Attendance

The school will report a child's annual attendance to parents in term 6. This indicates the number of authorised and unauthorised absences each child has had over the course of the academic year. If a parent wishes to discuss this, they can make an appointment to do so with the Headteacher. Parents may request information about their child's attendance at any time.

Equal Opportunities and Racial Equality

All school policies have an explicit aim of promoting equal race equality and will be reviewed in terms of their contribution and effectiveness in achieving this aim.

Looked After Children

As for all our pupils, Leybourne Ss Peter and Paul CE Primary Academy is committed to helping every Looked After Child to achieve the highest standards they can. Staff are aware that Looked After Children can be at risk of underachieving at school because they have experienced disruption to their family life and education. Some may have low expectations, poor emotional and psychological health and a lack of family support. Leybourne Ss Peter and Paul CE Primary Academy will support Looked after Children with their attendance.

Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Headteacher and the policy is reviewed by staff and the Local Governing Body.