



Attendance and Unauthorised Leave Policy

November 2019

Review date: November 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential.

Our expectation is that every child who is on roll should attend school every day, when the school is in session as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is developing positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

At Lowerplace School, we use the SIMS Attendance Module to register children, monitor individual children's patterns and analyse attendance data.

WORKING TOGETHER TO PROMOTE REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Non-attendance at school is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, we recognise that each case is different and that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategy to apply. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility, but we encourage parents to approach school if they experience any difficulties with attendance and punctuality, so that we can offer our support.

Our aim is to work closely with parents, staff and children to promote good attendance and this policy explains the ways in which we do this. Parents agree to this working relationship once their child enrolls at Lowerplace by signing the Home-School Contract in the Admission Pack.

We use a number of incentives to encourage regular attendance at school, though we highlight that the prime benefit derived from regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured.

- *Weekly Incentives* – Assemblies that celebrate the class with the best attendance.
- *Termly Incentives* – Certificates are awarded at the end of each term for 100% attendance and children who have made a marked improvement in their overall attendance.
- *Annual Incentives* – Children who achieve 100% attendance over the course of a whole year are awarded a certificate and a gold badge and are invited to take part in a reward activity.
- *Individual Incentives* – Staff will work collaboratively with parents and children to tailor a package of support, which meets the needs of individual children whose attendance has become a concern. This might include short-term reward charts, small prizes or supporting parents with the school journey on a very short-term basis.

In cases where improvement in attendance or punctuality is required, we may:

- Report to you when your child's attendance/punctuality is causing a concern either in writing or verbally.
- Invite you to an Attendance Panel to discuss these concerns with the Inclusion Team or the Education Welfare Officer.
- Make a referral to the Education Welfare Service for further intervention and support.
- Submit a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine to the Education Welfare Service.
- Submit a Fast Track to Court referral to the Education Welfare Service.

UNDERSTANDING ABSENCE

Punctuality & Registration

We welcome children into school at 8.40am daily, to encourage a calm start to the day.

Each school day is made of two sessions - AM and PM.

Registration is taken at each of these sessions from:

9am-9.15am

1pm-1.15pm

Children are expected to be present in the classroom and ready to learn by these times.

- Children arriving after 9am must be signed in at the school office and are categorised as 'Late' (using code 'L' on SIMS).
- Children arriving after 9.15am must be signed in at the school office and are categorised as 'Late after Register has closed', which counts as one unauthorised absence session (using code 'U' on SIMS).
 - *When the 'U' code is used, children are likely to be missing a significant amount of learning, and putting their educational progress at risk. For this reason, the use of this code will be considered as serious as any other unauthorised absence, and will attract the interest of external agencies, including referral to the EWS and consideration of the use of a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine.*

Authorised/Unauthorised – The Definition

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone.

Authorised absences are when a child is absent from school for a morning/afternoon/full day and school deems the reason for this absence as acceptable. Only the Headteacher can make the final decision as to whether an absence is authorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which are unexplained by parents, which the school does not consider 'reasonable' or the Headteacher has not given permission for.

This includes:

- ✚ Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily (e.g. shopping, looking after other children, absences when parents are ill, birthdays)
- ✚ Truancy before or during the school day.
- ✚ Absences that have never been properly explained.

- + Holidays during term time.

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is absent, it is a parent's responsibility to contact the school before 9.30am on the first day of absence, informing of the reason for absence.

As part of our safeguarding procedures, if no reason for absence has been received, we will attempt to contact the parent or carer and all other emergency contacts listed on the child's record. This may be done by text message, telephone call or a home visit. Our staff will visit the home of any child who is absent for 2 or more days without any contact being made to school.

- + Parents have a duty to provide more than one emergency contact for their child's record.
- + Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. In most cases routine medical appointments will not be authorised (such as doctor or dentist visits), as these can be made outside of school hours. Hospital/consultant appointments may be authorised if school is provided with relevant evidence.
- + An appointment card or verification by the doctors/ dentist/hospital will be required. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for an appointment, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.
- + Vomiting and diarrhoea – school follows NHS advice around infection control and suggests that parents keep their child off school for 24-48hrs until the symptoms have stopped.
- + Other regular appointments, such as Speech and Language, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, will be authorised if relevant evidence is provided to the school.

Fixed Penalty Notice Fines

Penalty Notice Fines may be issued by the Education Welfare Service to adults with Parental Responsibility when a child has been absent from school for 20 or more sessions in any 12-week period during the academic year.

The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- + Truancy, including truancy sweeps
- + Parentally-condoned absences
- + Excessive holidays in term time
- + Excessive delayed return from extended holidays
- + Persistent lateness after the register has closed
- + Persistent absenteeism.

All Penalty Notice Fine referrals are checked by the Education Welfare Service to ensure that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct.

FAST TRACK to Court

The school works closely with the Education Welfare Service and will seek advice in cases where a FAST TRACK referral may be more appropriate than a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine. The criteria for a FAST TRACK referral are the same as for a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine.

UNAUTHORISED LEAVE (TERM TIME HOLIDAYS)

We recognise that pupil absence during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning. In line with DfE and Local Authority guidance, Lowerplace Primary School operates a 'zero-tolerance' policy with regards to Unauthorised Leave. **Parents are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time.**

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday.

Parents must notify the school in advance of taking a holiday using a 'Notification of Term Time Unauthorised Absence' form available from the office. In some circumstances, we understand that this may not be possible, however it is a parents responsibility to ensure that school are notified as soon as practically possible.

Parents are reminded that under the 2013 Education Regulations, Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless **'exceptional circumstances'* exist.

Unauthorised Leave of 10 or more sessions (5 or more school days) will qualify for a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine for each adult with Parental Responsibility, regardless of whether they travelled with the child.

In addition to this measure, parents are notified that Unauthorised Leave in excess of 40 sessions (20 school days) will result in the loss of the child's school place. Each case for removing a child from roll is reviewed independently with the Education Welfare Service and the Children Missing Education Team.

**'Exceptional Circumstances' can be described as "rare, significant, unavoidable and short, and that the leave could not reasonably be scheduled at another time".*

Review of Policy

Headteacher: _____

Chair of Governors: _____

Policy to be reviewed: November 2020

For further support or advice on school attendance, you can contact:

Education Welfare Service
Number One Riverside
Smith Street
Rochdale
OL16 1XU

Tel: 01706 925115