



# **School Attendance Policy**

**Date of Completion: September 2021**

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**V2.0**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Longthorpe School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

The whole school community – pupils / students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Staff have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

## **2. ATTENDANCE LEADER**

The School Office Manager will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. They will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared weekly with the Senior Leadership Team and that a report is prepared for the governing body half termly. S/he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

## **3. LEARNING**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may also affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

#### 4. SAFEGUARDING:

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

#### 5. THE LAW RELATING TO ATTENDANCE

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*

*(a) to age, ability and aptitude and*

*(b) to any special educational needs he/she may have*

*Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'*

*The Law relating to safeguarding:*

*Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.*

#### 6. UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents/carers) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

- a) **Authorised** absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. **Illness will be authorised up to a maximum of 8 days per**

**academic year**, after which point medical evidence must be provided for any illness related absences.

b) **Unauthorised** absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been authorised. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- 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, hair cuts;
- day trips and holidays in term time not authorised as an exceptional and unavoidable circumstance.

This type of absence can lead to Peterborough City Council Attendance Service using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Whilst any child may be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, please raise this as a concern with the school.

c) **Religious leave: one day** will be authorised for each religious festival with a maximum of two days in any one academic year. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. If you intend to take your child out of school for religious observance, please follow the leave of absence procedure detailed on page 6 of this policy. Any additional days for extended celebrations will be treated in line with the usual leave of absence process and at the discretion of the Headteacher.

## 7. PERSISTENT ABSENCE (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss **10%** or more schooling within an agreed period of time for whatever reason. Absence at this level may cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

## **8. PENALTY CHARGE NOTICES**

A Penalty Notice may be issued if one of the following criteria is met:

- Level of unauthorised absence leads to an unauthorised absence rate of 10% or more within a period of any 8 school weeks (A maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued in any academic year)
- A single unauthorised absence event of at least 2 consecutive school days (4 consecutive sessions)
- Persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed contribute to a level of unauthorised absence at 10% or above
- Lack of adherence to the leave of request dates agreed for any authorised leave of absence without reasonable justification
- Pupils identified in a public place whilst excluded from school (during the first five days of the exclusion period) without reasonable justification.

## **9. REPORTING ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

**If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Keep the school updated should further absence days be necessary

**If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- We may also request evidence regarding the absence eg. Appointment letters or doctors note for extended periods of absence;
- Write to you should their attendance fall below National Expectations (96%) and invite you in to discuss the situation with us if there is no improvement;
- Take legal action if there are persistent absences, which may be in the form of Penalty Notices issued to each parent/carer for each child.

## 10. THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OFFICER:

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the School Attendance Officer from Peterborough City Council Attendance Service.

S/he will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can recommend that the Local authority use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court

## 11. LATENESS:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and can be embarrassing for the child.

The school day starts at **8.40 am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by **8.50am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.10am** the registers will be fully closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after this time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but will be marked with a 'U' Code which is recorded as an **unauthorised absence**. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistently late record you will be asked to meet with us to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

## 12. LEAVE OF ABSENCE:

Taking leave of absence without exceptional circumstances in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave of absence **must** be made in advance with at least four weeks' notice. Applications must be received in writing – please request a form from the school office. Any applications received less than four weeks prior to the absence date will not be authorised unless there are exceptional and unavoidable circumstances for the late notification. In making a decision about whether to authorise this leave, the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of absence. We reserve the right to request evidence to support your request.

It is important that you understand that we will **only** authorise such absences in **exceptional and unavoidable circumstances**. You will be informed of the decision prior to the absence if the request is received with enough time to reach a decision.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school (with at least four weeks' notice) and/or different from that agreed by the school, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice per parent/carer per child.

### **Deletions from Register**

Under Section 8.-(1) (h), (i), (ii), (iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 should your child fail to return to school by the time that registration ends on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of absence the school is permitted to delete your child's name from their register.

This is possible if your child(ren) have not returned by the date specified because the following applies under Section 8 (h) - that he/she/they will have been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days and

- (i) at no time was the absence during that period authorised by school in accordance with regulation 6 (2);
- (ii) school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil(s) is/are unable to attend the school by reason of sickness, or any exceptional cause;