

Leigh Academy Hartley

Attendance Policy 2024-25

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Date	Version No.	Brief detail of change
15/1/24	2	Additional section: Removing a Pupil from Roll
19/07/24	3	Significant updates to policy - penalty notices, authorising absence
02/10/24	4	Added deletion from the admissions register section

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1. Statement of Intent

Leigh Academy Hartley is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all of our pupils and recognises the impact that physical illness and mental health can have on children's attendance. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to thrive from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to support our families to secure outstanding attendance. This is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience in which pupils progress emotionally, physically and academically. We actively promote 100% attendance for all of our pupils but understand there are some circumstances in which parents/carers and pupils will need extra support in order to achieve this. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role, and a legal responsibility to ensure good attendance and we aim to work in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and other agencies to resolve attendance problems and support where needed.

Good attendance is vital because:

- it improves children's mental health and wellbeing
- children learn more and enjoy their learning
- it helps children to make and keep friends
- children are not as at risk of underachievement
- children do not miss out on enrichment opportunities that are vital to their development
- children thrive on routines

The Governing Body and Principal, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at school.

As a school we aim to:

- maintain an attendance rate of a *minimum* of 97% to ensure children access all our school has to offer. (Pupils not of statutory school age will be subject to the same procedures as the whole school.)
- ensure that attendance is regularly monitored in order to offer support where needed
- follow up and closely monitor the absence of persistent non-attenders who are not engaging with the support offered
- reduce the rates of holiday absence and ensure that unauthorised absence is below 1%,
- maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

2. Parental Responsibility

In accordance with the home-school agreement that parents have signed, the responsibility for ensuring children attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents and carers. To this end, it is desirable that parents/carers should be the first line of contact whenever the child is absent from school.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to contact the school whenever the child is absent and on the first day of absence.

Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 8.45am. All pupils who arrive late must report to the school office, where the reason for lateness is recorded.

Parents can help us by:

- telephoning the school on 01474 702742 or texting our Attendance Officer on 07860054519 or emailing our Attendance Officer at attendance@hartley.latrust.org.uk explaining the reason for absence **on the first morning of all absences** before 8.45am with the reason
- arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school holidays;
- keeping us updated by telephone, letter or email if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness;
- discuss with the Family Liaison/Attendance Officer any planned absences well in advance and only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- keep us informed of changes in their child's behaviour or any worries they may be experiencing at school in order that we can offer support to avoid absence.
- Provide evidence of leave if your child is absent for 5 or more days

We will:

- promote good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities;
- follow our procedure for checking and marking registers;
- follow up unexplained absences **(where no reason has been given by text, phone or email or when a non specific illness eg poorly/unwell is given)** by phone calls to parents on the first day of absence;
- log any reasons for absence received by phone or personal visit;
- consider any absence in line with this policy and [the Working Together to Improve Attendance document](#) before authorising or not;
- offer a meeting with the Family Liaison/Attendance Officer in order to support the family.
- refer to Kent PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS) if absence continues despite support and communications, regarding absence, from the school
- PIAS may then request a meeting with parents to investigate reasons for low attendance if it gets below 85% and signpost support.

3. The Role of the School Staff

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:

- attendance and lateness records are up to date
- the appropriate attendance code is entered into the register
- chart below are followed for each child

Day	Process if a child's absence is not reported
1	Phone primary carer to confirm a reason for their absence and record if contact made
1	If no contact is made, leave a voicemail and email parent



2	If no contact following day 1, phone family contacts on child's file, absence recorded if contact made
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3	If no contact following day 2, phone all contacts on child's file and absence recorded is contact made
3	Home visit to take place if contact is not made



3	If no contact is made following a home visit, a referral for a potential child missing in education (CME) will be completed
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- **Additionally, if we have only received an email or text to inform us of your child's absence up to and including day 3, we will give you a courtesy call to check everything is ok. If we have not spoken, verbally, to the parent who is caring for the child, we will conduct a home visit on day 5, in line with our safeguarding policy.**
This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known.
- **If your child has been absent for 5 days or more, we require you to provide evidence of this.**

Teachers or Teaching Assistants will complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. They will identify unauthorised absences and bring them to the attention of the Attendance Officer as soon as possible in order that support can be offered at the earliest possible opportunity.

Frequent absence is also a cause for concern.

It is the school who authorises absence, not the parent/carer. Reasons for unauthorised absence can be found in section 5.

4. Timeline for School Action for Low Attendance

The school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what support to offer:

In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.

- 90-95% attendance - monitored through regular meetings with LAT Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and letters sent to parents/carers to warn of falling attendance if attendance drops closer to 90% (Letter 1)
- If the child's attendance is below 90%, and no improvement has been made following letter 1, a further letter is sent to parents/carers to request evidence for all absences (Letter 2)
- if absences persist after letter 2 and attendance remains below 90% - Family Liaison/Attendance Officer and/or the EWO will write to parents requesting a meeting in the first instance to discuss reasons for absence. Referral may also be made to KCC PIAS or a penalty notice issued where the absences have not been authorised and there is no improvement.
- for the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Referral to support the family.

Notice to Improve

If a child is late, beyond the close of the register at 9:10am, or has unauthorised absences of 10 sessions over a 10 school week period, a notice to improve can be issued.

A notice to improve will set out 20 school days in which the child should have no lateness or unauthorised absences.

If there is no improvement in attendance, a penalty notice can be issued.

Attendance Thresholds

<p>Gold Level 1 Above 97%</p>	<p>This means that your child is absent for less than 6 days a year. <i>Your child has every chance of meeting and possibly exceeding target levels.</i></p>
<p>Green Level 2 95% - 96%</p>	<p>Absent for less than 10 days in the school year, therefore missing up to 50 hours of learning. <i>Your child will probably achieve their target levels if they catch up on lost learning.</i></p>
<p>Yellow Level 3 90.1% - 94.9%</p>	<p>Absent for up to 20 days in the school year which is a month's lost learning of potentially 100 hours. <i>The amount of absence may make progress in learning difficult.</i></p>
<p>Amber Level 4 85% - 90%</p>	<p>Absent for up to 30 days in the school year - 6 weeks which is potentially 120 hours of lost learning. <i>Missing this much time will make it extremely difficult for your child to keep up in lessons, make progress and reach their target levels. The Leigh Education Welfare Officer and the Local Authority will become</i></p>

	<i>involved if no improvement is made.</i>
Red Level 5 Below 85%	This amount of absence will seriously affect your child's learning potential and life chances. Parents/Carers may face court action. <i>Your child is missing 180 hours+ of learning and unlikely to reach target levels and fulfil potential.</i>

5. Authorising Absence

Any requests for leave must be given with as much notice as possible, ideally at least 4 weeks, as a school cannot retrospectively grant leave of absence.

Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified 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 messages, emails or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Principal. Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation' has been given. Unauthorised absences are an offence and can be liable to legal action or a fixed penalty fine. The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that will **not** be authorised:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily,
- absences that have not been properly explained,
- travel during term-time, including family holidays, that have not been agreed,
- repeated or persistent non-specific illness, for example, 'poorly/unwell',
- absence of other siblings if one child is ill,
- absence because a parent is ill (alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school),
- oversleeping,
- inadequate clothing/uniform,
- confusion over school term and holiday dates,
- medical and/or dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason,
- child's and/or family birthdays,
- any routine family event or trip, for example, shopping.

Only the Principal can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Principal is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution.

- PIAS and/or Local Authority Action may include:-

- attendance Improvement Meeting
- home visits
- liaison with other agencies
- fast track to Prosecution

6. Punctuality

As we are aware of the impact being late can have on a child's wellbeing, focus and progress, we have implemented the following procedures:

- the register will officially close at 9:10am - if a child arrives after this time they will be marked as arriving after the register has closed and this may be recorded as an unauthorised absence, if an insufficient reason is given.
- to safeguard our children, classroom doors will be closed at 8:50am. Any child arriving after this time will need to go through the office as they are late, which will result in an 'L code' on the register. Parents/carers need to record the name of their child and reason for being late with the school office
- any child arriving after 9:10am will be marked as late after registration with a 'U code' and this will count and an unauthorised absence
- monitoring of punctuality will take place regularly and letters will be sent by the school where appropriate.
- parents/carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be sent a 'lateness letter' to inform them of the number of L or/and U codes; the impact this will have on their child's learning and penalty notices that may be issued if it continues. Support can be offered, such as short-term use of breakfast club and parents are welcome to come in and discuss their situations so we can support them

7. Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with [The Local Authority Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct](#).

- Ten unauthorised sessions of absence (including Holiday (G) / Unauthorised Absence (O) / Unauthorised Late (U)) may result in a request to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution through the Magistrates Court.

8. Leavers and Children Missing in Education

The school has a responsibility to safeguard pupils from harm. This includes knowing and taking reasonable steps to check the destinations of leavers. If your child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6 to go to Secondary School, parents are asked to:

- give the school full information about their plans including date of move, new address, new school and start date when known, and reasons for moving

When pupils leave and parents have not given us the above information, and we cannot contact the parent, then the child is considered to be a **Child Missing Education**. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations to try to track and locate the child. By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

Your child may be referred as potentially missing in education if:

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.

- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

9. Removing a Pupil from Roll

As per [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\)\(England\) Regulations 2024](#) - Section 9, when all possible actions have been taken we will remove the student from the academy roll due to continued serious absence.

- The pupil has not attended the school within the ten school days immediately after the end of the period of leave and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause; and the proprietor and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances. If unable to establish the pupil's whereabouts we will remove from roll.
- The pupil has been continuously absent from the school for at least twenty school days and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause; and the proprietor and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances. If unable to establish the pupil's whereabouts we will remove from roll.

10. Deletions from the Admission Register

- We will only enter pupils on the admission register where we have received written confirmation that the person with control of the pupil's attendance has accepted the school place.
- Where the local authority has offered a place at the school but no written confirmation of acceptance has been received from the person with control of the pupil's attendance, we will write to the local authority requesting evidence in writing and will not enter the pupil onto the admission register until this has been received. If written confirmation is not received within 10 school days, the offer of a place will be withdrawn and offered to another pupil in accordance with our Admissions Policy.
- We will enter pupils' names on the admission register on the first day that the school and a person with control of the pupil's attendance have agreed that the pupil will attend the school. If no date has been agreed or notified, the pupil's name will be entered on the first day they attend the school. Names must be added before, or at the beginning of the first session on that day.
- Where a pupil does not attend on the agreed date, we will send a letter to the person with control of the pupil's attendance asking them to confirm in writing within 10 school days that they wish to take up the place. If written confirmation is not received within 10 school days, the pupil's name will be removed from the admission register and the place offered to another pupil in accordance with the admission policy.

11. Penalty Notice Proceedings for Poor Attendance

- Penalty Notices are issued in accordance to [DfE Working together to Improve Attendance documentation](#). The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10

school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. unauthorised holiday, unauthorised late and/or unauthorised absence) The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- 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 funeral of a person close to the family.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. Any absence that has a primary purpose of recreation or pleasure will not fall under exceptional circumstances. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Principals can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence. Each request will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that ten unauthorised sessions of absence (including Holiday (G) / Unauthorised Absence (O) / Unauthorised Late (U)) may result in a request to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution through the Magistrates Court.

[Section 444 of the Education Act 1996](#) says that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Principal may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested at least four weeks in advance, in writing, and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Principal, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Principal'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 PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the

Local Authority.

SATs:

Under no circumstances will the school authorise an absence during the Y6 SATs week in May. Absence during this period will result in lack of attainment and progress data for your child. Year 6 tests are statutory and pupils must attend them.

12. Rewards for Attendance

The main benefit of regular attendance is that children feel safe and secure and have an understanding of responsibilities and boundaries. Their mental health will be better supported and they will have emotional stability that comes from routine. Children will benefit from everything that is available through our curriculum, including high quality teaching, outdoor learning, sports, trips and social interactions. Children with low attendance miss out on all of these opportunities.

To promote equality and to safeguard those pupils with medical or SEND, we do not advocate the use of reward for good attendance, as we understand that there are exceptional circumstances under which excellent attendance cannot always be achieved. Instead, our reward comes in the form of our aforementioned curriculum that all children benefit from as a member of Leigh Academy Hartley.

Our mascots, Hartley and Hazel deers, are awarded to classes with the best attendance. Hartley deer is awarded each week in our Achievement Assembly to the class who has had the highest attendance over the preceding week. Hazel deer is awarded at the end of term to the class with the most improved attendance.

13. Further Support Resources for Parents and Families

Further governmental support and advice can be found in the 'Working together to improve school attendance - Parental Responsibilities', which can be found on the Children's Commissioner's webpage. This guidance contains further information on frequently asked questions, such as *My child has a short term illness. Do they have to go to school, and will I be penalised if they don't?*