



Lingfield Education Trust

Attendance Policy

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Policy prepared by (name and designation)	Nick Blackburn CEO
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1. Statement of purpose

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure each school in Lingfield Education Trust develops and implements appropriate procedures which help to maintain high levels of pupil attendance. The trusts expect each school to:

- Promote good attendance, and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence

2. School attendance

2.1 Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils/students can fulfil their potential is a commitment to attendance. Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Missing out on lessons or arriving late leaves pupils vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

2.2 Every pupil should be at their school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

2.3 The requirements related to school attendance are contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- School attendance: Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, Department for Education October 2014

3. Authorised and unauthorised absences

3.1 Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause. This can be for longer periods in exceptional circumstances.

3.2 Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at the school too late to get a mark
- parents taking children out of the school for term time holidays

4. Procedures

4.1 Each school will inform parents, normally by publishing information on the school website, of the procedures to follow when dealing with individual absences. This will include details of:

- who to contact should a parent need to report an absence (and the latest time the school should be contacted);
- the procedure to follow should a parent wish to request a leave of absence during term time (NB leave in term time will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances);
- how long registers will be kept open each morning and afternoon (a pupil arriving after the register has closed will be recorded as an unauthorised absence).

5. Supporting good attendance

5.1 Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child

5.2 Parents are expected to contact their child's school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the relevant trust staff or Local Authority Educational Welfare Officers.

6. Penalty notices

6.1 Local authorities and all schools have legal powers to use parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices to address poor attendance. Penalty notices are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

6.2 In common with all schools in its area, Darlington Council administers the penalty notice scheme on behalf of the schools in the trust.

6.3 The schools in the trust may decide to request that a penalty notice is issued where a parent appears unwilling to take responsibility for their child's attendance. There are two circumstances in which penalty notices may be issued:

- (i) Planned, but unauthorised absence, such as holidays during term time
- (ii) Persistent unauthorised lateness

6.4 The procedure for each is set out below.

(i) Planned, but unauthorised absence

(a) A parent wishing to request a leave of absence during term-time should submit a request to the school;

(b) The Head of School/Headteacher/Executive Headteacher will then make the decision as to whether or not the circumstances justify authorisation, following the

guidance of the Department for Education, which states this can be given in ***exceptional circumstances only***;

(c) That decision must be recorded and sent back to the parent promptly. If the absence is unauthorised and subsequently taken, Darlington Council may issue a penalty notice.

(ii) Persistent unauthorised lateness

(a) Each school will indicate how long registers will be kept open each session; a pupil arriving after the register has closed will be recorded as an unauthorised absence;

(b) If unauthorised lateness is a cause for concern then a 'Late Warning Letter' should be sent to the parents.

6.5 In relation to pupils which are referred to Education Welfare (see paragraph 5.2), these officers may try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these officers can use legal interventions on parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

7. Admission and attendance registers

7.1 The law requires all schools, including academies and independent schools, to have an admission register and, with the exception of schools where all pupils/students are boarders, an attendance register. All pupils/students (regardless of their age) must be placed on both registers. The proprietor of a school who fails to comply with these regulations is guilty of an offence and can be fined.

8. Contents of the admission register

8.1 The admission register must contain the personal details of every pupil/student in the school, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school last attended.

8.2 Expected first day of attendance

8.2.1 Each school in the trust must enter pupils on the attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year.

8.2.2 If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

8.3 Amendments to the attendance register

8.3.1 Every amendment made to the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

8.4 Preservation of the Attendance Register

8.4.1 Every entry in the attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

8.5 Children at risk of missing education

8.5.1 The school must inform the Council of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of the school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education;
- Have ceased to attend the school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- Have been permanently excluded.

8.5.2 The local authority should be notified in advance of the deletion, when the school becomes aware that the deletion will be made.

9. Children Missing Education

9.1 If a school in the trust suspects a pupil is 'missing' and there are existing child protection concerns or the child is on the child protection register, the school **must** make a referral to the relevant social care team immediately, as well as inform the Children Missing Education Officer

9.2 Where a school is sure that a pupil has left but has been unable to establish the educational provision that the pupil is attending, or where a pupil has been missing for 20 school days or more the school should complete the online CME form. If at any point during the above 20 days the pupil's whereabouts is established then the clock resets and the 20 day cycle must start again.

9.3 Before making a referral the school must try to locate the pupil. The CME officer will require the school to demonstrate what actions they have taken leading up to the referral.

9.4 Once the CME Officer has confirmed that they have taken on the case then the school can take them off-roll and follow the relevant local authority off-rolling procedures.

9.5 Off-rolling of pupils

9.5.1 The obvious trigger for off-rolling a pupil is that they have left the school at which they were registered. However, a school should only do this when they have confirmation of the date on which the pupil was placed on-roll at the new school and has been provided with details of attendance or absence. The guidance recognises four reasons why an school in the trust would take a student/pupil off-roll:

- **Pupil transferring to another school in or outside of Local Authority area**
The school must obtain the details of the destination school (from parent/carer or other agency) and contact that that school for confirmation of the start date

and the fact that the student/pupil is attending. Once confirmation is received that the pupil is on-roll at their new school, and attending, the school can take them off-roll and inform the local authority via published procedures.

- **Pupil emigrating to another country** The school should seek confirmation of this in writing (or email) from the parent / carer asking for a forwarding address and the date the pupil will be leaving the UK. Once confirmation is received then the school can take them off-roll and inform the local authority via published procedures.
- **Pupil leaving to be home educated** The parent / carer must confirm their intention to home educate in writing. Copies of the letter must be forwarded to the relevant local authority department. Then the school can take them off-roll and inform the relevant local authority via published procedures.
- **Pupil deceased** The school should take the pupil off-roll and inform the relevant local authority via published procedures at the earliest opportunity.

10. Contents of attendance register

10.1 Each school must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

10.2 The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

11. Absence and attendance codes

11.1 The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence.

Review date: Autumn 2018