



'Welcoming everyone, building foundations, leaving no-one behind.'

Attendance Policy

Policy Creation & Review	
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Attendance Policy

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Statement of Intent

Children are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have and we are committed to encouraging all pupils to attend regularly so that they can thrive from the opportunities available to them. One of our main principles is to develop positive attitudes towards attendance and ensure our school is a happy, calm, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Laddingford St Mary's C of E Primary School adheres to the principles and guidance as set out in the DfE publication, "Working together to improve school attendance," August 2024. The Senior Leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance is the Headteacher.

The school is committed to promoting good attendance as part of its dedication to ensure quality educational provision to give its pupils the best start in life. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils but understand that there are some circumstances in which parents and pupils may require extra support to achieve this.

Leaders at Laddingford St Mary's recognise that there are many factors that can affect non-attendance and will ensure a holistic approach is taken whereby families are supported via any appropriate external referrals and/or partnerships where necessary, for example through additional support from Early Help. A targeted and joint approach with external services is taken in the cases of persistent and severe absence. Building strong relationships with families is paramount and listening to and understanding the barriers to attendance.

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 maintain friendships
- Children are less likely to be at risk of underachievement
- Children do not miss out on enrichment opportunities that are vital to their development
- Children thrive on routines

The responsibility for giving strategic direction to attendance is led by the governing body. This will include monitoring, reporting, reviewing and planning for attendance, developing a policy, promoting an ethos of good attendance and setting any targets. There is a governor appointed to lead on attendance, who will have regular contact with the Headteacher as part of the monitoring and review process.

School staff are responsible to ensure they promote the school's ethos, set an example of attendance and punctuality, enable the school to keep accurate records of attendance for individual students.

Encouraging and Promoting Good Attendance

The most vital part of encouraging good attendance is to ensure that the school is a place to which the children want to come: that the school is a place where the children are treated with respect and feel valued; a place where their needs are recognised and are being addressed; a place where all children can experience success within a rich, relevant and diversified curriculum.

It is clear that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. From the outset, parents are encouraged to take an active interest in the work of the school and to build and support their children's enthusiasm for attending.

All staff make children aware of the importance of good attendance and children are praised.

Each child's attendance is shared with the parents three times a year; however, this may increase where increasing a child's attendance is a focus.

There will be regular communication with parents that demonstrate the benefits of good attendance. Where used sensitively and without discrimination, this may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year group, class or individual level.

Parental Responsibility

The responsibility for ensuring children attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents. To this end, it is desirable that parents should be the first line of contact whenever the child is absent from school.

The purpose of this policy is to inform parents/carers of the following;

- How the school encourages and enables good attendance
- How the school monitors and reviews attendance
- How the school monitors punctuality and lateness
- Authorised and unauthorised absences
- Leave of absence in term time
- Why attendance and punctuality matter

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school whenever the child is absent and on the first day of absence. They are encouraged to do this by using Studybugs but can also ring or email the school office.

Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 8.50am. 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 01622 871270 or emailing the office at office@laddingford.kent.sch.uk every morning your child is absent before 9am with the reason.
- arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.
- discuss with the Headteacher 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. If a parent has any concerns about attendance they should contact the senior leader responsible for attendance, details above.

Why attendance and punctuality matters

Across one school year:

- Less than 5 days absence = 97.3% attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 92.6% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 89.4% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 84.2% attendance

If a child achieves 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 39 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil. There is the same attendance ambition for all pupils.

Laddingford is committed to ensuring good support for all pupils. This may include making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed.

The SENCo will ensure that there are strategies in place to remove any in-school barriers including support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.

A joined up pastoral approach will be put in place where needed, for example the SENDCo will consider whether a time limited phased return would be appropriate.

Monitoring and reviewing attendance

The school will regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils that require support and put effective strategies in place. Analysis of attendance data includes

analysing patterns and trends and benchmarking attendance data.

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil. The school will ensure that its staff receive appropriate training and support to use attendance codes (Appendix 1) in line with DfE guidance and best practice.

To enable the appropriate coding of attendance or the authorisation of absence, the school may request additional information or evidence, e.g. in relation to medical appointments or illness. (Medical evidence may include: an appointment letter, a GP appointment card signed / stamped by a receptionist, a prescription, prescribed medication.)

Regular checks on attendance are carried out by all class teachers. The attendance registers are marked twice each day, at the start of the morning session and again in the afternoon. Registers are checked by administrative staff.

All absences and persistent lateness are investigated. When the register closes the administrative staff check the messages and operate 'first day calling' for those pupils absent with no reason given.

Attendance data is held electronically on SIMS, accessible by the Headteacher, and administrative staff who are able to conduct spot checks on individual children and provide comprehensive attendance records.

The Headteacher monitors the attendance of pupils weekly. In particular any patterns of persistent and severe absence will be a focus of monitoring to enable identification of any pupils that may require targeted support as quickly as possible.

Returns of school data are made daily to the Department for Education (DfE) and benchmark data exists to compare our school within local and national contexts.

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and Governors at the first Full Board meeting of the school year. Targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years.

Monitoring and improving low attendance

The school acknowledges that there is no one standard response that is appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what support to offer. The minimum attendance expectation is **95%** and the school has an attendance target of **96%**. To ensure a rigorous, consistent and fair approach the steps followed in monitoring and improving low attendance are detailed in Appendix 2

At all stages of improving attendance work will be undertaken to remove barriers, build strong relationships with parents and carers, work collaboratively to provide the right support at the right time. Laddingford school follows the DfE approach of 'Prevention, Early Intervention and Targeted support.' To facilitate this. See Appendix 3.

Positive praise letters will be used to congratulate children and their families on significantly improved attendance following a period of intervention and review.

- In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parent's keep the school informed of any

matters that may affect their child's attendance. In the first instance pupils and parents will be supported to address any in school barriers to attendance.

- **90-95% attendance** - monitored by the Headteacher. Pupils may be at risk of poor attendance and so will be monitored weekly. The Headteacher will use attendance and absence data rigorously to support pupils with increasing levels of absence, arriving at school late or taking leave in term time without permission before it becomes a regular pattern.
- **Below 90%** - Where absence escalates to pupils missing 10% or more, the school will ensure targeted support that may include letters to parents/carers about attendance and/or meetings to discuss barriers to attendance and how the school can help the family to improve attendance.
- If attendance does not improve the school will support the family by completing an attendance audit to identify any barriers to attendance. An Individual Attendance Plan will be drawn up with the family to support attendance.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may suggest an Early Help referral to support the family or seek other support from external services including a referral to KCC inclusion and attendance service (PIAS)
- **For pupils with severe absence (those missing 50% or more of school)**, there will be a joint targeted approach where all relevant services will support the pupil and help address any barriers to attendance. An attendance contract may be drawn up with the local authority where voluntary support has not been effective. In some cases, an Education Supervision Order may be appropriate if an Early Help plan or parenting contract has not been successful in the case of severely absent pupils.

Punctuality and lateness

The Headteacher monitors lateness of pupils as being punctual for school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. The gates open at 8.40 a.m. for all year groups and close at 8.50 a.m.

The school day starts after the gates close at 8:50 a.m. for all year groups. Pupils who arrive after these times will be recorded as late to school (L code). The Registers close at 9.30 a.m. and after this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence (U code). The afternoon begins at 1.15 p.m. Pupils who arrive after this will be recorded as late to school (L code). Registers close at 10 mins after the end of lunch respectively. After this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence (U code).

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will make verbal contact with parents/carers. If the concerns persist, the Headteacher will write to the parents/carers using about punctuality, including the total minutes late over a determined period.

If there is no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer. In the event of persistent lateness, the school may make a formal referral to PIAS.

Authorised and unauthorised absences

The DfE recognises the importance of regular attendance, and it is a requirement for the Headteacher to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised. The

final decision is made by the Headteacher.

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 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 Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation has been given. Unauthorised absences 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
- 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

The DfE recognises the importance of regular attendance, and it is a requirement for the Headteacher to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised. The final decision is made by the Headteacher.

Levels of absence in term time

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Headteachers **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.

Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time.

Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

The Headteacher will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.

The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.

Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to PIAS at Kent County Council.

From Autumn 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued per parent per child within a 3 year rolling period, any second notices that is issued would be at a higher rate.

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Kent County Council’s Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996 or prosecution under Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

It is important to note, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £160 each, totalling £320 for both children, this is reduced to £80 per child if paid within 21 days).

Leave during 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.

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

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to Kent County Council via <https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-attendance/children-missing-education>

Reasonable steps to be taken by school staff include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts (parents are asked to provide a minimum of two emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and also for other emergency purposes).
- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- Possible home visits
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts
- Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the pupil/family

All contacts and outcomes to be recorded on the pupil's file

Penalty Notice proceedings for poor attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a 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 (one per parent per child)

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 wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. 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 Headteachers 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.

From Autumn 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued per parent per child within a 3 year rolling period, any second notices that is issued would be at a higher rate.

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days

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 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, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). 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 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.

Appendix 1

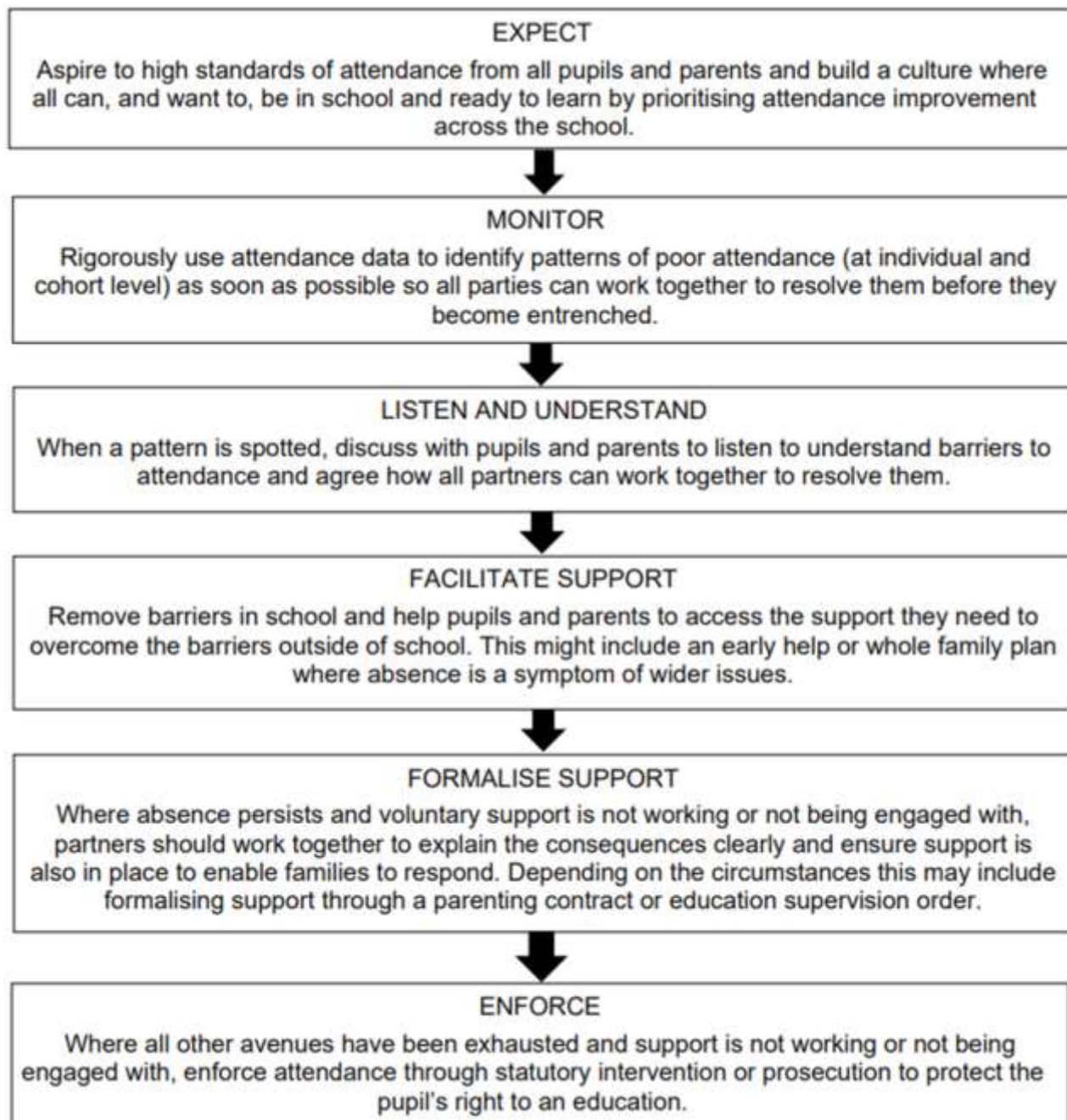
Codes	Description	Meaning
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Education off site (no Dual reg)	Approval Education Activity
C1	Regulated performance/employment	Authorised Absence
C2	Part-time timetable	Authorised Absence
C	Exceptional circumstances	Authorised Absence
D	Dual registration	Approved Education Activity
E	Suspended or Excluded	Authorised Absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
G	Family holiday (not granted)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Family holiday (granted)	Authorised Absence
I	Illness	Authorised Absence
J1	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
K	Attending education provision organised by the Local Authority	Authorised Absence
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
O	Unknown circumstances	Unauthorised Absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Authorised Absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised Absence
S	Study leave	Authorised Absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised Absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity

Appendix 1

Codes	Description	Meaning
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
#	School closed to pupils & staff	Attendance not required
Y1	Normal provided transport unavailable	Authorised Absence
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Authorised Absence
Y3	Part of premises closed	Authorised Absence
Y4	Whole site unexpectedly closed	Authorised Absence
Y5	Pupil in criminal justice detention	Authorised Absence
Y6	Public Health Guidance	Authorised Absence
Y7	Other unavoidable cause	Authorised Absence
Y	Enforced closure	Attendance not required
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Attendance not required
Z	Pupil not on roll	Attendance not required

Appendix 2

Our approach to working together to improve attendance



Appendix 3

Effective school attendance, improvement and management

'Prevention, Early Intervention, Targeted'.

