

Attendance Policy

2024-2025

Statement of Intent

Leigh Academy Horsmonden is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Principal and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Leigh Academy Horsmonden.

Parental Responsibility

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.

Pupils are expected to arrive at 8:40am. All pupils that arrive late, after 8:50am, must report with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

The Role of the School Staff

At Leigh Academy Horsmonden there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Principal, Hayley Sharp, has overall responsibility for attendance. The Office Admin Team, Lucy Janes and Laura Collins are responsible for monitoring daily attendance.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies Lucy Janes/Laura Collins of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of Lucy Janes and Laura Collins (Office Admin Team) to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call. Subsequent phone calls will be made each day a child is absent.
- Where there has been no communication, emails/letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed of their child's attendance figure.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- 95% attendance – child is considered 'at risk' and parents will be notified by letter
- Attendance between 95% and 90% - parents will be contacted and intervention put in place where necessary to improve attendance.
- 90% attendance - child is considered to have persistent absence and further intervention is needed to improve attendance immediately.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, a referral to Early Help will be completed.
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Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Principal and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- 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.
- Where a parent decides to home educate a child, they will be referred to the KCC Home Education Team

Lateness

At Leigh Academy Horsmonden the morning register is taken between 8:40am and 8:50am. Pupils arriving after 8:50am must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will officially close at 9.10am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets 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(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

Authorising Absence

Only the Principal can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Principal is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. An email, 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.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Traffic/problems with a vehicle
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

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. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings need to be attached to the completed referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution
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Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with [‘Working Together to Improve School Attendance’](#) (August 2024)

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.

If a second penalty notice is issued within a rolling 3-year period, then the charge will be at a flat rate of £160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days.

Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution through the Magistrates Court.

In the event of three or more periods of unauthorised absence within a 3 rolling year period, a penalty notice will not be issued. A statutory attendance referral may be made to the local authority and may result in prosecution through the Magistrates Court.

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 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 the Principal 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.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that 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 in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Principal. 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 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.