## Part of the Slough and East Berkshire CofE Multi Academy Trust

## Lynch Hill School Primary Academy

# Attendance Policy

*We Aim High, Work Hard, Care Deeply*

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| Members of Staff Responsible | Mrs L. Bunce and Mrs L Tomlinson |
| Position | Attendance Officer and Headteacher |
| Overviewed by the LGB | Mrs D. Fletcher |
| Dated | September 2025 |
| Date of next review | September 2026 |

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## Aims and Ethos

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent absence and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

## The importance of good attendance

Every day of education, and indeed every lesson, matters. In the National Curriculum where there is built-in progression, children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning and consequently do not understand current lessons when they return. The introduction to a lesson and to the school day is crucial to the child's understanding of their own learning. Children who miss school frequently will undoubtedly have gaps in their learning which will impede their progress and future ability to engage in lessons. This in turn may have an effect on their ability to concentrate and to behave. Children who do not understand the lesson may behave inappropriately to cover their inability to engage with the work. Frequent absence has a profound and cumulative effect on achievement.

At Lynch Hill School, we want our pupils to Aim High, Work Hard and Care Deeply and will support our parents/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## Roles and responsibilities

### The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers
- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Our Chair of Governors, Denise Fletcher, is also our safeguarding governor and monitors attendance as part of this role.

## The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

## The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Lindsey Tomlinson

## The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer will:

- Monitor attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Provide regular updates and reports to staff and report concerns about attendance to the head teacher/designated senior leader
- Work with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advise the head teacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Lisa Bunce

## Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

## School Office Staff

School office staff are expected to:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parents to the attendance officer in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Record any safeguarding concerns on CPOMS in line with the school's child protection and safeguarding policy

Where this policy refers to a parent/carer, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child
- All those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

## Parents and Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9:00am on the day of the absence giving the reason why they are absent, reporting just as unwell is not sufficient (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

## Pupils

Pupils are expected to attend school every day on time.

## Recording attendance

### Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

**Pupils must arrive in school by:**

- Nursery AM - 8:30am
- Nursery PM - 12.30pm
- Reception through to Year 6 - 8:45am and doors will close promptly just before this at 8.43am.

On each school day, the registers will be taken promptly, once the class door has been closed and will be submitted, via Sims, immediately after the 8:45 class registration.

If your child is late, you will need to bring them through the main office, where they will be marked in.

### Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15am.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

## Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment, will be counted as an authorised absence as long as the pupil's parent/carer can provide proof of the appointment.

However, we do encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## Medical absence

As a school, we have to satisfy ourselves that absences are genuine. We would not, however, expect any parent to send their child to school if they are genuinely ill.

Long-term or recurring medical absence needs to be supported by medical evidence/treatment plans.

In specific cases, school will not authorise medical absence unless supported by medical evidence.

**Guidance for absence due to sickness:**

- Sickness and diarrhoea – we recommend that whilst a child is experiencing sickness or diarrhoea they are kept off school. Generally, a virus needs up to 48 hours after the last episode to ensure that the child is no longer infectious.
- Coughs and colds do not normally require the child to be absent from school, but this depends on the severity of the illness.
- Conjunctivitis – Once the child is receiving treatment, they should be in school - no exclusion period is necessary.
- Chicken pox – usually this takes about five days from the onset of the rash. Once the spots are dried and scabbed over, then the child can return to school.
- If a child is unwell at school, we may contact the parent to take the child home if we feel that this is necessary.
- If staff consider that the child needs immediate medical attention, then we will contact the emergency services and the parent.

## Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. A leave of absence form must be completed ahead of the appointment and it will be for the headteacher to decide if the absence is recorded as authorised.

## Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- The issue of poor punctuality must be taken very seriously and strongly discouraged. DfE guidance clearly states that schools should actively discourage late arrival and provide a policy on the matter.
- When a pupil arrives late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson/school day. This reduces their chances of academic success. Poor punctuality can also cause social disruption as children and young people may feel uncomfortable and embarrassed arriving to the classroom when everyone else is already settled. In fact, when one pupil arrives late it disrupts the teacher and the rest of the class, compromising everyone's learning.
- Good attendance and punctuality are essential for all pupils if they are to achieve their full potential, both academically and socially.
- Pupils arriving late, before register closes will be marked as late (L).
- Pupils arriving late after the registers closes will be marked as unauthorised absence (U), when there is no valid reason given.

## Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by text, phone call and if there is no response, the school will make a visit to the home address

This is to:

- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use
- If a pupil's absence exceeds what is deemed necessary or appropriate in relation to the illness/injury, the school will contact the parent of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this
- If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent, we will consider involving the local authority
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to agencies supporting or working with the family including youth offending teams or social workers
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals

- Where support is not appropriate, not successful or not engaged with, issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below) as appropriate.
- If a pupil on the Child Protection Register is absent without explanation the Social Worker will be notified
- If a pupil is in public care (CLA) the carer, social worker and Virtual School will be involved appropriately.

### Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance levels. Each child's attendance will be a topic of discussion at each parent/carer consultation evening and will be recorded on their termly report, unless there is cause for concern.

If there is cause for concern, the Attendance Officer will contact parent/carers in the first instance to discuss why the child is absent and to explore any barriers that there may be.

## Authorised and unauthorised absence

### Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion.

Examples of events that are **not** considered exceptional are family holidays, weddings, extended religious holidays and generally any event that does not justify a child being out of school.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Taking part in a regulated performance
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school.

**For all absences, the school will consider whether any safeguarding action is required or they may seek advice.**

Monitoring attendance also allows the school to track vulnerable families, to ensure all children are regularly attending school and ensure we are fulfilling our safeguarding role.

Children should never be absent from school without a good reason. A note, a telephone call or an e-mail from the parent should cover all absences. In most cases absences will then be authorised.

Research shows that there is a direct link between good attendance and achievement in school. Poor attendance can have a direct effect on a pupil's attainment and their future life chances.

For example, 90% attendance might sound quite acceptable, but what that means in reality is:

- On average half a day's school missed every week. (Would an employer think this is an acceptable rate of attendance?)
- This would also mean in one year 4 whole weeks of schooling missed.
- In 5 years, it would mean half of a school year missed.
- It could result in a drop in attainment in each subject.

## Truancy

All staff at Lynch Hill are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness. Although it is a very rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a concern that a child might be truanting, then action is taken straight away.

If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher is notified, who will then contact the parent, and the Attendance Officer. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. In the event of a child leaving the school premises after arriving at school, and the school being unable to contact a parent/guardian, then the Police will be notified.

Truancy is a serious issue, which the school aims to address in a supportive manner.

The school also aims to address the issue of "condoned truancy" in which parents support a young child's non-attendance at school by offering excuses covered by a written note. Positive reinforcements are used as an incentive for children to attend school and we actively encourage their parents to feel positive about the school.

Any reason for absence, which is unacceptable and cannot be authorised, is discussed with the parents.

## Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a first penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days. This amount is not reduced through early payment.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. The third time an offence is committed for unauthorised term time leave or irregular attendance, the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Fines can be around £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found to be guilty in Magistrates' Court can show as a criminal record and also on the parent's future DBS certificates due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

At all stages, penalty notices are issued per parent, per child. For example, 3 siblings absent would result in each parent receiving 3 fines. This could amount to £960.

Once a penalty notice has been issued, the local authority will be unable to cancel the process. If you have any evidence to support the leave of absence, you must provide this to the school before the absence occurs.

## Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with Slough Borough Council processes.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far, opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

## Monitoring attendance

The Attendance Officer will:

- Monitor attendance on a weekly basis across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

### Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Will advise initially of any concerns by letter and if there is no improvement, will hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

## Children Missing in Education (CME)

### ‘CME’ by Definition

Children Missing in Education CME are children of compulsory school age (5-16) The DfE defines CME as: 'Children of compulsory school age who

- Are not registered pupils at a school
- Are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school
- Who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually four weeks or more)

If a child has not attended school for ten days, without any reason for the absence and reasonable enquiries have been done by the school a CME referral will be sent to the local authority.
When a child leaves LHSPA to go to another school or have moved out of the area, a Pupil Tracking referral will be sent to the local authority, to notify them of this.

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

## What Lynch Hill is doing to support attendance

We understand how important attendance is and encourage a positive ethos regarding attendance for all pupils. There is a strong pastoral system for supporting and monitoring attendance; this includes the Headteacher, Inclusion Officer, team leaders, subject teachers, and the school's Inclusion Team, which includes therapists, nurture practitioners and behaviour support.

Following a pupil's absence, we will support every individual in catching up on any missed work. Should a student have a long-term or recurring illness, work will be provided electronically or hard copies (if required).

## Graduated response to attendance

At Lynch Hill we have a graduated response to dealing with attendance. In the first instance, a text message will be sent asking for a reason for the absence. If your child's attendance falls below 95%, they will become a Cause for Concern. This means:

1. **Your child's attendance will be monitored weekly by the Attendance officer. You will be notified of our concerns.**
2. **You will be invited into school to discuss the attendance issues.**
3. **After a period of time you will be invited to a review meeting**
4. **There will be legal action if there is no improvement.**

It is important that we work together to achieve good attendance. Any issues which impact on

attending school should be discussed at the earliest opportunity with The Attendance & Inclusion Officer, your child's class teacher, a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

## Categories of Attendance

Attendance is reviewed regularly and pupils fall into one of the categories below:

**AT LYNCH HILL SCHOOL PRIMARY ACADEMY – WE AIM HIGH, WORK HARD AND CARE DEEPLY**

**ATTENDANCE MATTERS!**

**96-100% Attendance levels are good to excellent**

This gives your child the best chance of success. These pupils will certainly achieve the best levels they can.

**93-95.9% Attendance levels beginning to cause concern**

The school would put targeted support in place to remove any barriers. We are here to help and want to work in partnership with parents.

These pupils may find it harder to achieve good levels of attainment.

**90-92.9% Attendance levels causing more significant concerns**

The school would put targeted support in place to remove any barriers. We are here to help and want to work in partnership with parents.

These pupils will definitely find it difficult to achieve good levels. These pupils would have missed up to a month of school and parents may be faced with Fixed Penalty Notices.

**Below 90% Attendance Persistent absentee and has decreased to an unacceptable level and is serious cause for concern.**

The school would put further targeted support in place to remove any barriers. We are here to help and want to work in partnership with parents.

These pupils will find it almost impossible to keep up with the work. The Government class these pupils as Persistent Absentees. These parents will possibly face legal action by the local authority.

Intensify support through statutory children's services (social care) where there are safeguarding concerns.

**Below 50% and more is SEVERE absence**

The school would work with the local authority on legal intervention, if the targeted support is not working or being engaged with.

Intensify support through statutory children's services (social care) where there are safeguarding concerns.

## Policy monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by following guidance from the local authority or the DFE. This will be done by the Attendance Officer and the Headteacher. The policy will then be approved by the full governing board.

## Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- SEND policy

## Reporting a child absent

To report a child absent, please see contact details and information needed below.

**School contact number:** 01753 524170 and information you will need to have at hand.

Email: Office@lhspa.org.uk

**Pupil's Name**

**Pupil registration group**

**Reason for absence**

**Have you made a doctor's appointment?**

**Evidence for the absence**

**Date expected to return to school**

**Lynch Hill School Primary Academy**

**APPLICATION FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM LEARNING**

This is an application for you to request permission for your child to be absent from learning at school during term time. Before completing the application form, please read these notes carefully.

- **The law states that you DO NOT have the right to take your child out of school during term time. The local authority works with schools to reduce the numbers of children missing school. Schools can refuse your request for leave.**

- **If you wish to take your child out of school during term time, you must apply for permission in writing using the form below in advance. The school will only consider such requests in exceptional circumstances.**

- **Proof will be required of any family emergencies.**

  **Pre booked holidays will always be <u>REFUSED</u>.**

- **A request for leave of absence during term time will always trigger some form of investigation from the school because it may indicate a safeguarding concern.**

- **If the school refuses your application and you still take your child out of school, the absences will be unauthorised. Unauthorised absences <u>will</u> lead to a Penalty Notice or a Summons for irregular school attendance because poor attendance puts your child's progress at risk. No holiday can ever make up for time lost at school.**

Having read these notes, if you still wish to apply for Withdrawal from learning, then please complete the application and return **IN ADVANCE** of the requested dates.

**Pupil name: _____ Class: _____**

**Pupil name: _____ Class: _____**

**I request permission for my child to be absent from school between the following dates:**

**First date of absence _____ Date of return to school: _____**

**Total number of school days missed: _____**

**Reasons for absence from school**

_____

_____

_____

_____

*I make an application for my child (named above) to have their absence from school authorised, for the reason stated. I understand that if this is not agreed then any absence will be treated as unauthorised and* ***will*** *lead to the issue of a Penalty Notice or Summons for irregular school attendance.*

Name of Parent/Carer making application:_____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

**Office use only: OFFICE COPY [ ] REPLY FOR PARENTS/CARER [ ] FPN [ ]**
**CODE [ X ]**

(**Reply for school use only**)

Date:_____

Dear _____

Thank you for your application to take _____ in class ____ out of school during term time.

Requested dates of leave: _____

I can confirm that _____ days have been authorised and _____ days are unauthorised. This will be monitored in school by the Attendance Officer.

Previous number of days requested during this school year: _____

Attendance to date:

**Pupil name: _____ _____%**

Number of *authorised* absences during this school year: _____ ½ days

Number of *unauthorised* absences during this school year: _____½ days

**Pupil name: _____ _____%**

Number of *authorised* absences during this school year: _____ ½ days

Number of *unauthorised* absences during this school year: _____½ days

Punctuality: _____

**Comments from Attendance Officer / Head of School:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Mrs L Tomlinson**
**Headteacher**