

LANGDON
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Reviewed Autumn 2018

Agreed by the Governing Body 31.10.18

Due for review Autumn 2020

Rationale:

Good attendance is essential in order to ensure that all adults and children in the school meet their social and academic potential.

It promotes good social skills and relationships, a commitment to learning and enables children to reach their academic potential and achieve high standards, increasing their confidence and self esteem.

Good attendance is a legal requirement, monitored by the Local Authority and Ofsted, and the school has agreed attendance targets that it must meet.

The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) is available to work with the school to lower absence rates at Langdon Primary School.

This policy has been written with the strict intention of keeping the children at Langdon safe and well, as well as ensuring effective and legal levels of attendance are being adhered to.

Aims:

- Whole school attendance rates will be above 96%.
- Good attendance rates will be reflected in the standards of attainment and achievement for the school
- Children will feel proud of good attendance and want to attain high levels of attendance for themselves

Protocol for child absence:

Parents:

- Absence during term time will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances in line with DfE guidance for schools and only if an individual child's attendance is above 96%. If a child is to be absent for a planned reason eg. hospital appointment, the school should be notified by the parents in advance of the day of absence. An appointment letter may be requested in order to inform absence records.
- If a child is absent and this is unplanned eg. overnight illness, bereavement, parents must contact the school in the morning. This is essential in order to secure the child's safety and well being.
- Where a child is likely to be absent for more than ten days a doctor's note should be presented to the school to explain absence and show that appropriate action has been taken to aid the child's recovery.
- In line with DfE guidance leave of absence for family holidays will not be agreed.

Office Staff:

- Office staff will operate a system of 'First Day Calling' where a child is unexpectedly absent, in order to ascertain the whereabouts of the child and reasons for absence.
- Office staff will be responsible for the day to day maintenance of attendance and absence records using SIMs.
- Office staff will be responsible for maintenance of records of late arrival.

Class Teachers:

- Class teachers will ensure that the Head Teacher is aware of any concerns regarding attendance for individual children in their class.
- Class teachers will deal with absence and late arrival to school professionally and sensitively.
- Class teachers will encourage good attendance for the whole class and help promote class participation in attendance reward schemes.

Head Teacher:

The Head Teacher will:

- discuss requests for leave of absence with parents and carers.
- Authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances providing the child's attendance is above 96% and that the leave of absence can be justified to the Governing Body.
- Ensure the maintenance of attendance, absence and lateness records.
- Liaise with the Local Authority in order to agree and monitor attendance targets.
- Liaise with the EWO to address persistent absenteeism through pre-referral meetings and/or formal referrals where appropriate.
- Action the Protocol for Unexplained Absence when appropriate.
- Follow LA guidance on the issuing of fixed penalty notices for absence where appropriate.

Governing Body:

- The Governing Body will monitor attendance and absence rates against agreed targets.
- Liaise with the Head Teacher regarding requests for leave of absence, persistent absenteeism and referrals to the EWO.

Authorizing Absence

Only the Head Teacher can authorize absence. Where there is doubt, the Head Teacher, on behalf of the governing body, should take a consistent approach. The absence must be unavoidable. The Head Teacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation, letter or telephone message and this in itself does not authorize an absence. If absences are not authorized, parents will be notified.

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

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

- Persistent non specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- 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

Leave of Absence/Holiday

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorize leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.

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 Head Teacher may authorize absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Head Teacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Head Teacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorize leave is taken, it cannot be authorized retrospectively.

Exceptional Circumstances

Family holidays, for whatever reason, cannot be approved, even if the parent is unable to take time off work at any other time. An "exceptional circumstance" would have to be defined as an unavoidable cause eg, a one-off emergency situation which prevents the child from attending school.

Requests for holidays in term time will not be authorized.

If the absence is not authorized and the holiday is taken anyway, the case will be referred to the Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school according to their criteria for Penalty Notice issue.

Protocol for Unexplained Absence of a child:

This protocol is specifically for the protection of the safety and well being of children in our care. If a child does not arrive in school at the close of registration (9.00am) then this protocol will be actioned:

- Office staff will undertake ‘First Day Calling’
- In the event that parents or carers cannot be contacted office staff will contact other listed contacts in order to ascertain the reason for absence.
- If no contact can be made, or reason is given to believe a child should have arrived in school, the Head Teacher, designated teacher or office staff should make immediate contact with the EWO or Attendance and Behaviour Service to seek advice on further action.
- Contact the police if there is reasonable justification to do so.