LANGDON

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance and Absence Policy

Reviewed Autumn 2024

Agreed by the Governing Body 10.12.24

Due for review Autumn 2026

Rationale:

Langdon School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement for all of our pupils. Regular attendance at school is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them now and in the future.

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 Inclusion and Attendance Advisers and School Liaison Officers for the Pru, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS) are 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:

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time.

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.

- 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.

At Langdon School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility. The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

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, absence and lateness records using SIMs.
- Where there has been no communication regarding absence, the office staff send out email communication or letters to parents requesting reasons for absence.

Class Teachers:

- Marking the registers is a legal requirement and in accordance with this class teachers complete a register of attendance at the beginning of each day and update this with the office manager in the event of any changes in the afternoon. Class teachers will ensure that the Head Teacher is aware of any concerns regarding attendance for individual children in their class.
- Class teachers mark pupils as present, absent or late.
- 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:

- Inform governors and parents of attendance figures for individuals, groups or the whole school.
- 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 PIAS 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 PIAS.

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 (9.30am) 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 PIAS to seek advice on further action.
- Contact the police if there is reasonable justification to do so.

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 requests for leave of absences are not authorized, parents will be notified in writing.

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 days out
- Family holidays

Exceptional Circumstances

An "exceptional circumstance" would have to be defined as rare, significant, unavoidable or short ie. a one-off emergency situation which prevents the child from attending school.

Family holidays do not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances since they are not unavoidable occurrences and there are adequate school holiday periods in which to take them throughout the year. Family holidays, for whatever reason, cannot be approved, even if the parent is unable to take time off work at any other time and therefore, they will <u>not</u> be authorized.

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

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. If requests are received after the period of absence, the absence will not be authorized retrospectively. 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.

If the absence is not authorised and the leave/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.

Penalty Notices 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 June 2020.

- 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, PIAS 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).

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

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Lateness

The school register is taken before 9.00am during the morning session and before 1.15pm during the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after these times 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 close at 9.30am and 1.30pm. 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 Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in June 202, 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

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and PIAS 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.