

# Lainesmead Primary School



## Attendance and Absence Request Policy

Review date

November 2015

Read in conjunction with Safeguarding Policy and Admission Policy

Signatures

Subject Co-ordinator

Andrea Chapman

Headteacher

Eirian Painter

Chair of Governors

Sarah Newton

## **Philosophy**

School attendance is subject to educational legislation and this policy is written to reflect these and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DFE). The DFE remains firmly of the view that unnecessary absence is unacceptable and must be prevented and tackled by schools.

We aim to provide a caring, happy and positive environment that enables all pupils to reach his or her full potential. In order for children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital they attend school, on time, every day. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

As a school, we review attendance regularly and do all we can by liaising with families and other agencies as necessary in order to improve attendance and punctuality for all.

## **Aims and Objectives**

- To make attendance/punctuality a priority for all those associated with school, including pupils, parents, staff and governors.
- To ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- To promote good attendance and punctuality and reduce overall absence, particularly unauthorised absence and persistent absence (10% as of September 2015).
- To monitor attendance and punctuality and act early to address patterns of absence.
- To acknowledge and celebrate good attendance/punctuality.
- To work effectively with parents/carers and other agencies.
- To remind and encourage parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- To work with and offer support, advice and guidance to parents/carers if there are attendance concerns.

## **Responsibilities**

### The Headteacher and Governors:

To have overall responsibility for school attendance and review attendance figures regularly.

To ensure that the school report to parents on their child's annual attendance.

### Assistant Headteacher:

To be responsible for addressing attendance matters as delegated by the Headteacher.

### Parents:

To perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory age attend daily.

To drop and collect their child punctually.

To inform the school if their child is absent with an explanation for the absence.

To inform the school in advance (wherever possible) should they need to collect their child during the school day and provide a reason and/or evidence for this.

To ensure that the pupil is only absent for the minimum amount of time necessary for an appointment.

To ensure the school has 'up to date' contact information for the parent/carer in case the school needs to contact the parent due to pupil illness.

To work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance/punctuality for their child.

### Staff:

To promote good attendance and punctuality and take the register for am/pm sessions.

To celebrate good attendance and also to share any concerns about the impact of poor attendance/punctuality with parents/carers at parents evenings and in school reports. Where necessary, targets for improving attendance may be set.

The class teacher can then monitor this and refer to the Assistant Headteacher if there is no improvement.

### Attendance Officer:

To contact parents on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of absence, maintaining daily registers and recording explanations.

To raise awareness of any emerging attendance concerns to the Assistant Headteacher.

### Local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO):

To ensure parents are informed of their responsibilities in relation to attendance.

To work in partnership with families and agencies (including the school) to help remove barriers to poor attendance/punctuality.

To invite parents to Formal Meeting Case discussions.

To issue penalty notices/warning letters as necessary.

## **Organisation and Routine**

### Registers

Staff must take the attendance register twice a day (am/pm).

Pupils are recorded as being present or absent.

Pupils who do not arrive on time may be marked as late (L) or if very late after registers close (9.20) will be marked as (U).

Parents/carers who arrive late via the school office (after external gates are closed at 9am) are asked to provide a reason for lateness.

Reasons for absence are followed up by the attendance officer on the same day either by telephone or letter to identify whether the absence is authorised or not.

Registers are marked accordingly using the correct code.

If no known reason is provided for an absence after 2 weeks it will be marked as unauthorised.

If a child has a minor illness such as a cough or cold then parents may send them to school. If a child is unwell at any time and is unable to learn then the school will contact the parent/carer and request they collect their poorly child from school.

If a child requires medication, school are only able to administer prescribed medicine with signed consent of parents/carers (full details in school medical policy) .

Lainesmead may authorise absences due to genuine illness. However, if the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Lainesmead may also request medical evidence for an absence due to illness for up to 5 days. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc., rather than doctors' notes.

School can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness, but should advise parents of their intention.

Lainesmead encourages parents to make medical/dental appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. If no reason for absence is provided after two weeks, it will be marked as unauthorised.

**Unexplained absence/poor punctuality in term time may result in a fixed penalty notice or prosecution by the Local Authority EWO.**

#### Monitoring Attendance and Procedures

-Attendance/punctuality is monitored regularly (every 2 weeks)

-Particular attention is paid to persistent absence and poor punctuality

-Parents may be notified of attendance/punctuality concerns via telephone, face to face or letter

-If no improvement in attendance/punctuality is made within 2 weeks, parents/carers may be invited via letter to attend a 'School Attendance Meeting' at the school to discuss their child's attendance, outline the importance of good attendance and ascertain if the school can offer support or advice, or refer to other agencies in order to improve a child's attendance. This meeting may be held by the Parent Support Advisor, the Assistant Headteacher or the Headteacher.

-At such attendance meetings, actions may be set and then reviewed accordingly.

-If attendance does not improve and/or if there have been previous concerns about attendance/punctuality, the school may refer the child's case to Local Authority EWO. The Local Authority EWO will then invite the parent/carer and a school representative to a Formal Meeting 'Case Discussion' held at the school.

-Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from the school without good reason is an offence.

**Poor attendance/punctuality at any time may result in a fixed penalty notice or prosecution by the Local Authority EWO.**

### Children at Risk of Missing Education (CME)

Lainesmead follow the local authority's procedures for reporting pupils who are missing in education. After a **maximum of 5 days** of non-school attendance, and after school has been unable to contact parents/carers, the school should complete the specific referral form and forward it to the CME Office, Swindon Borough Council /EWO.

If a child who is looked after, or a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan goes missing, schools will refer them to Social Services within 48 hours.

Lainesmead inform the local authority at regular intervals of the details of pupils who are regularly absent from school or have missed 10 school days or more without permission.

Lainesmead must also notify the authority if a pupil is to be deleted from the admission register in certain circumstances:

- Pupil has been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system, e.g. home education (see below on home educated children).
- Pupil has ceased to attend school and no longer lives within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered.
- Pupil has a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school.
- Pupil is in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period.
- Pupil has been permanently excluded.

### Requests for Absence During Term Time

Due to the change in Government legislation that came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, schools are no longer able to authorise absences, including holidays in term time, unless they are in exceptional circumstances. Cost, employment, extended family illnesses are not deemed as exceptional circumstances.

Requests for pupil leave of absence during term time should be made in advance and before any arrangements confirmed or money committed. Parents/carers

should complete the appropriate form , which is available via the school website or from the school office. All requests need to include reasons for the proposed request, plus supporting evidence.

Before deciding whether to authorise the requested leave of absence, the Headteacher (or Assistant Headteacher that the task is delegated to) will consider the circumstances of each case individually at the time of the request and relevant background context. A reply is given within 5 working days. The decision does not set a precedent nor does it mean that a future/similar request will receive the same decision. Leave of absence taken before a request has been addressed may be marked as unauthorised. Schools are also unable to give retrospective approval for leave taken.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the school should determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school.

**If an absence is not authorised, parents/carers may receive a Penalty Notice, or face Prosecution through the Magistrates Courts. A Penalty Notice is a fixed fine issued by the Swindon Borough Council at the schools request.** Since the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, the fine is £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid within 28 days. A Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent for each child. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice could result in prosecution through the courts.

### Removing a Pupil From The School Roll

Regulation 8 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 sets out the grounds for removing a pupil at a maintained school from roll. A pupil shall be removed from the school roll where he/she:

-Has not returned for 10 consecutive school days immediately following an authorised period of absence of more than 10 school days

-Has not been granted leave of absence and has been absent for 20 consecutive school days

The school and LA may not remove a pupil from roll unless they have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil.

The school follows CME procedures for a child who has been absent for 20 consecutive school days.

### Procedures that Lainesmead will follow if a child is not collected promptly from school at 3.15/after a club

- If a child has not been collected at the end of the school day/after a club has finished a member of staff will bring the pupil to the school office
- Pupil/s will be supervised by school staff
- Admin staff will telephone all named contacts in their priority order (as indicated by parents on the admission form) until a response is achieved.
- On arrival, adults are asked to complete the late collection register giving reason for their lateness.

- If there are several occasions of lateness, parents will be contacted by a member of school staff to discuss the matter further.
- If lateness is at a concerning level, parents may be invited to a school attendance/punctuality meeting. This could lead to a further meeting with Swindon Education Welfare if lateness continues to be a concern.

*If school is unable to make contact with a pupil contact within 30 minutes then school have a duty to raise initial concerns with Children's Services: warn them of the situation, making it clear that at this stage it is just for information.*

**If school is unable to make contact with a pupil contact after 4.15 then school will telephone Children's Services again for further information and advice on how best to proceed.**

#### Acknowledgement and Celebration of Good Attendance/Punctuality

Classes (EY/KS1 & KS2) with the highest attendance/punctuality each week are recognised in the weekly Celebration Assembly and will receive a special 10 minute reward. Each term the pupils with 100% attendance/punctuality will receive a special mention in an assembly, a certificate and a special treat (from the reward list suggested by Lainesmead School Council). Their names will be put into a hat and the winner will receive a family prize e.g. cinema voucher £20 Pupils who achieve 100% attendance all year receive a special certificate.

#### **Review**

This policy should be reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and Governors and reviewed in line with changes in legislation.