

Attendance Policy

Lyncrest Primary School



Reviewed July 2024

Next Review Date July 2025

1. Introduction and Aims

It is the aim of Lyncrest Primary School that all pupils should be safe, happy and develop the skills and knowledge needed in order to achieve their full potential. Our attendance policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of pupils.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by promoting good attendance; ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled; and acting early to address patterns of absence.

This policy sets out our school's position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents must follow to report their child absent from school.

The expected level of attendance is at least 90% over a ten week period, although as a school we aim for 96% attendance. If the attendance is below 90% over a ten week period (this is an absence of 5 days or 10 sessions), the school would deem it to be irregular attendance.

We want our pupils to attend school every day, unless they are really not well enough to do so. It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our pupils to enjoy school, grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality is essential in the workplace and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend, will be better prepared for the attendance expectations in the workplace.

We will do all we can to encourage our pupils to attend. We will also make the best provision we can for any pupil who needs additional support in school or who is prevented from attending school, due to a medical condition. We believe that one of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

2. Safeguarding

Our Senior Attendance Champion (Mrs Gillespie) will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues.

In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities.

As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, if a child is absent from school we are responsible for determining why. If the parent has not contacted the school to notify us of a reason for the absence, we will call the parents on the first day of absence to try and establish

why the child is not at school. If we do not receive a response, we will try to contact the family throughout the day. If we still cannot make contact with the family on day 2 of absence, we will carry out a home visit. If we deem there to be a safeguarding risk, we may decide to do a home visit on day 1 of absence. If we still cannot determine the reason for absence, we may visit again and communicate through a letter as well.

In exceptional circumstances, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when we cannot establish their whereabouts and are concerned for the pupil's welfare.

3. Present at School and Lateness

Pupils are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration, they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption. The Headteacher will meet with parents of those children who are frequently late arriving at school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.

Our pupils must arrive by 8:50am on each school day.

Our morning register is taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:00am

Our afternoon register is taken at 1:15pm and will be kept open until 1:25pm.

A pupil who arrives late after the register has closed will be marked as late (L) – which counts as present but the minutes of lateness are recorded for monitoring purposes.

If late after 9:30am, this is classed as an absence.

Effects of Late Arrival at School

When children arrive late to school, they miss important events like assembly, teacher instructions and explicit modelling. Children often feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children in comparison to their peers.

Minutes late per Day	Equates to Days of Teaching Lost in one Year	Which means this number of lessons missed
5 mins	3 Days	15 Lessons
10 mins	6 Days	30 Lessons
15 mins	9 Days	45 Lessons

4. Authorised Absence

‘Authorised absence’ means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away from the school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

The following information outlines the main circumstances where absence may be authorised by the school:

4.1 Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school’s absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school follows the 2019 DfE School Attendance Guidance, which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some instances the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil’s GP directly.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised. Parents should contact the school by 9:15am on the first day of absence, either via phone or Class Dojo. If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child’s condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

If a pupil needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the pupil must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult, and signed out in the ‘signing out’ book. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

4.2 Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.

Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day’s schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult, and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

4.3 Religious Observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends.

In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence.

If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

4.4 Traveller Absence

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible.

Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register. To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In which case the child will be dual registered at that school and this school, which is their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

4.5 Exclusions

If the school decides to send a pupil home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as a suspension or exclusion. The school will follow the current DfE's statutory guidance on suspensions and exclusions. Any suspension or exclusion must be agreed by the headteacher. The school will notify the parent of the exclusion. If the pupil is a Looked After Child, the school will notify the pupil's carer, social worker and Virtual School. In other instances, where a pupil is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

The pupil must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult, and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

5. Leave of Absence Requests – Exceptional Circumstances

The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence.

The school will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request, including the child's regular attendance at school.

The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times.

Depending on the circumstances, it could be the case that only part of the time requested is granted and the rest is classed as unauthorised.

If requests show that parents are intending for their child to be absent for more than 10 consecutive school days, a conversation will need to be had with the parents as school cannot keep a place open for a child during a prolonged period of absence.

Parents should put their request in writing to the Headteacher. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least four weeks before the absence. Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing. Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage, we will follow the necessary protocols.

6. Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil is absent from school without the permission of the school.

Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise the absence or not.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained

- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Waiting at home for a washing machine to be mended, or a parcel to be delivered
- Day trips
- Having a day off for rain
- Long weekends and holidays in term time (unless very exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing, in advance by the school)
- In the case of term time leave - if a pupil is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

Unauthorised absences may result in Legal Sanctions, usually Penalty Notices or Prosecutions.

7. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent, but may have day to day care of the child.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter.

If you take your child out of school for an accumulative total of 5 days or more (10 sessions) over a period of ten weeks, the school will deem this as irregular attendance and will consider a referral to the Local authority for consideration of legal action. This could include:

A Penalty Notice payable up to £180 fine.

Prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000.

Prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment."

8. Reporting Attendance to Parents

The school will report to parents annually about their child's attendance.

If a child's attendance falls below 90%, a period of monitoring attendance will take place. The school may contact the parents about this and offer guidance and support on a case by case basis to improve attendance. At this point it may also be necessary for an attendance contract to be put in place or a referral to the NCC Education Inclusion Partnership Team may be made.

9. Attendance Monitoring and Procedures at Lyncrest

Attendance is monitored on a daily basis and any immediate concerns are dealt with on the day.

Attendance is more formally analysed and monitored each half term. We recognise that a bout of genuine illness in a half term could result in attendance falling below 90% over a period of 6 weeks. All children become ill and therefore this alone, will not trigger a concern. It would be expected that over the next half term, attendance would improve. However, when there are concerns, we follow the below procedures.

When the attendance of a child falls below 90% in a half term, their name will be added to a watch list. This list will be monitored by office staff over the coming half term and if absence continues, the Head Teacher will be alerted. This may result in an immediate letter or conversation if the Head Teacher has concerns.

If attendance falls below 90% for a second consecutive half term, a letter will be sent home to make parents aware. A meeting will be held between the parents and Head Teacher to discuss the reasons for absence and find out if there is anything further school can do to support. A target for improved attendance will be set and a review timeframe set.

If, after this meeting, attendance continues to be below 90%, a parenting contract will be put in place. This will involve a meeting to determine barriers to attendance, agree what support school can put in place and offer the family an Early Help Assessment. At this meeting, clear actions will be agreed and all parties will sign these with an agreed review timescale of 6 weeks.

10. Support for Poor School Attendance

Sometimes pupils can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and pupils to be open and honest with us about the reason for the pupil's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse.

As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way. When we have concerns about the attendance of a pupil, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this.

However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. Parents may be asked to meet with the headteacher to discuss the matter. In some cases, this may result in a formal contract being produced as detailed above.

If our school refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. This will at least be evidenced via the sending of a warning letter.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school

will take a holistic approach to the issue, and involve other agencies as necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies, or fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil who is absent we will share with other agencies as we deem necessary.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

11.1 The Governing Body

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

11.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The head teacher also:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level;
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Liaises with the local authority with regards to issuing fixed-penalty notices

11.3 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.

11.4 Office Staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. They are also expected to make calls to those parents who do not report any reasons for absence and record these reasons for absence too.

11.5 Parents/Carers

Parents have a legal responsibility to make sure their child attends school. They are also responsible for informing school of any absence and reason for this. Parents are expected to

work with and alongside the school when there are any concerns as this is in the best interests of the child.

12. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher.