

# LOUDWATER COMBINED SCHOOL

## Attendance for Learning Policy

*“Loudwater Combined School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share in this commitment. Please refer to our Safeguarding Policy.”*

### Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. If children are not in school, they are not learning. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, if they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor 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.

The governors of Loudwater Combined School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. This is even more important in the context of the interruptions to schooling which have been caused by the corona virus pandemic.

Loudwater School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at an early stage. If parents are experiencing difficulties in getting their child to attend school regularly they should contact the school and we will do everything we can to help by identifying the root causes of this and taking appropriate action. However, we will work with the County Attendance Team to issue penalty notices for irregular attendance and where children are absent during term time and there are no exceptional circumstances for this absence; holidays taken during term time is an example of this.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on Safeguarding, Anti-Bullying, Behaviour for Learning and Positive Relationships and Inclusion. This policy also considers the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

Our school attendance target is 95%. This represents average attendance. In our drive towards continuous improvement, this is an area of school performance that will be targeted to bring about improvements. Please see Appendix 1 to demonstrate the impact of attendance, which falls below this figure.

We celebrate high levels or improvements in attendance to encourage children to have good attendance levels. This is done through weekly certificates for classes who achieve 100% punctuality or the highest level of attendance during a week. A mufti (non-uniform) day is awarded to the class with the highest percentage attendance in a month. Children with attendance between 98% and 100% each term receive a certificate. Full attendance for an academic year is rewarded by a badge, a certificate and a gift card. Children are also awarded a ‘virtual raffle ticket’ each week if they have attended school for the whole week and these are drawn during the last assembly of each term when three children are awarded a small prize. These achievements are recognised in achievement assemblies and on the weekly newsletter.

### Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to

any special educational needs the child may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

### **Categorising absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone or email on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note or email from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

#### Illness

In most cases a telephone call, an email or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill, is acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

#### Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day attending school before their appointment and returning afterwards.

#### Other Exceptional Authorised Circumstances:

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced that the individual will not be in receipt of any leave soon that coincides with school holidays.
- Where a health professional, as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation, recommends an absence from school for a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above, the head teacher will consult with a member of the Governing Board prior to any authorisation being given to the parent.

- If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the head teacher and governors must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:
  - The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils)
  - Year six induction day (for pupils in year six)
  - Year six SATs week (for pupils in year six)
  - Assessment periods in other year groups (these will be communicated to parents by the school)
  - Induction days for year groups already at the school.

#### Suspension (no alternative provision made)

Suspension from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will arrange for work to be sent home.

#### Late Arrival

Registration begins at 8.55am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9.15am. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. (Code M). The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry. (Code U)

#### Unauthorised absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

#### Leave of Absence and Extended Leave

Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before arrangements are made. This request should be made at least one month prior to the date of requested leave to ensure there is adequate time for the request to be considered by the Governors. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

The Curriculum and Admissions Committee of the Governing Body will consider all requests for leave of absence, where timescales do not permit; the head teacher will always consult with at least one governor from this Committee. Each request will be discussed individually and will consider the following factors:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record in the previous 12 months

- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil.
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

Please also see the checklist that will be used in appendix 2.

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request is granted, the letter will state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases, the school will refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice.

### Religious Observance

Loudwater School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R).

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body. Parents are requested to give notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

### Children in Entertainment

This is regulated under the Children Young Person Act 1933/63 and Children in Performance Regulations 1968.

By law, all children from birth to the time they cease to be of compulsory school age require a licence to perform. The production company is responsible for completing and submitting the licence application to Buckinghamshire Council.

Performances, which require a licence, include:

- Theatre, panto
- Films, TV
- Commercials, video, internet for commercial purposes
- Member of a band/choir/dance show
- Modelling – all types, broadcast and non-broadcast
- Amateur dramatics
- Broadcast dance/singing competitions

A licence is not required for children performing in a school production.

In Buckinghamshire, if time off school is required, the school is contacted directly. We are asked to provide information about current levels of attendance and whether we object to the licence being granted. Depending on the current attendance levels and time of the school year, the governors do not generally object and the absence is authorised. However, if the absence falls in key times of the year as outlined previously in this policy, then an objection may be made.

## **Punctuality**

Arriving at school on time is important for a range of reasons:

- Punctuality is a life skill which is important in the next phase of education as well as the workplace.
- Lessons and learning always start punctually, so children who are late for school are missing vital learning. Phonics sessions are always the first lesson of the day in Key Stage 1 and if these are missed pupil's progress in learning to read may be compromised.
- Children who arrive late at school are sometimes reluctant to enter the classroom where others are settled and working, making their day unsettled and meaning that they are not ready for learning.
- Everyday from 8.45am there are a range of learning tasks available to the children to consolidate prior learning and provide practise in key skills. If children are arriving late they are not able to take advantage of these opportunities.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

We believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

All staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Parents should:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and be ambitious
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home learning, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time.

## **Using Attendance Data**

All pupils' attendance is monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Every week the Attendance Administrator will provide the head teacher with attendance data for the previous five weeks for each pupil whose attendance is 95% or less. This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Loudwater Combined School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with GDPR regulations.

## **Pupils at risk of becoming Persistently Absent.**

For primary age pupils, persistent absence is defined as missing more than 10% of education, therefore their attendance is 90% or less.

Where this is the case, parents are expected to:

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support

Loudwater School will:

- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance.
- If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners.
- Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service.
- Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

## **Pupils who are Persistently Absent**

If this is the case, parents are expected to:

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

Loudwater School will:

Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:

- Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers.
- Where necessary this includes working with partners.
- Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

## **Support Systems**

Loudwater Combined School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required; and information given will be treated sensitively.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Advice or support from Gemma Northeast our Family Support Adviser
- Home visits
- Referrals to support agencies
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

## **Legal Sanctions**

Please see Appendix 3 for details of interventions.

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Loudwater Combined School will notify the County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance. The County Attendance Team or school will invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

### Parenting Contracts

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

### Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A pupil is persistently late for school.

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/.carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date, the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

The Curriculum & Admission committee monitors this policy on a half-termly basis. Anonymised data will be made available to this committee including notifications made to County and the responses received.

January 2024





**APPENDIX 1**

**WHAT DOES 90% ATTENDANCE MEAN FOR YOUR CHILD?**

MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY	

**90% ATTENDANCE MEANS MISSING ONE HALF DAY EVERY WEEK OF TERM TIME**

SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY

**90% ATTENDANCE MEANS MISSING THE EQUIVALENT OF FOUR WEEKS IN THE SCHOOL YEAR**

	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY
Y2											
Y3											
Y4											
Y5											
Y6											

**90% ATTENDANCE OVER FIVE YEARS MEANS MISSING ONE HALF OF A SCHOOL YEAR**

**IS YOUR CHILD’S ATTENDANCE AFFECTING THEIR ACHIEVEMENT?**

**WHAT WOULD YOUR EMPLOYER’S RESPONSE BE IF THIS WERE YOUR ATTENDANCE PROFILE?**

## Appendix 2

### Checklist for authorising requests for absence during term time

Date request made:	Length of absence requested:
Name:	Year Group:
Attendance over last academic year:	Have any attendance concerns been notified to parents previously? (details)
Have there been any term time absence for reasons other than illness in the past 2 years?	
Are there any SEN needs? What level of support is provided?	Are there any welfare concerns (including social care involvement)?
Known health needs:	
Current attainment: Reading Writing Maths	Progress during the last 12 months: Reading Writing Maths

	Yes	No
Is this absence in the first half term of the academic year?		
Will the first week of a new term be missed?		
Will the pupil miss tests or need them to be rescheduled?		
Will the pupil miss secondary school induction days?		
Will the pupil miss key times during the run up to assessments: Y1 Phonics check (2 <sup>nd</sup> week June) School assessments (1-15 July) Y2 end of KS 1 tests (summer term to end of June) Y3 & Y4 School assessments (1-15 July) Y5 School assessments (First half summer term) Y6 11+ test, (first full week in September or end of KS 2 tests (summer term to end of June)		
What are the reasons given for this period of leave		
Do the governors consider these to be exceptional circumstances? Reasons		

## APPENDIX 3

### Intervention Flow Chart

The head teacher will monitor attendance on a weekly basis to identify unacceptable, irregular attendance over a 5 week period.

School will notify parent of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve. 1a letter sent.

- A letter will be sent informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should
- Speak with your child to see if there are any reasons why they are reluctant to attend
  - Contact the school to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing.
    - Ensure your child attends school regularly

If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the school will write to invite the parent into school to devise a parenting contract and provide information about further actions which could result.

If an improvement has been made this will be communicated to parents and attendance will continued to be monitored in line with school procedures. Should the improvement not be sustained parents will be invited to attend a meeting to devise a parenting contract. 1b letter sent.

Failure to attend a meeting to devise a parenting contract or to follow the parenting contract will result in the school making a referral to the County Attendance Team who will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting or review and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.

A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the Local Authority aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.

Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular, the County Attendance Team may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

If you are issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent/carer, per child this must be paid in full within 21 days otherwise the Penalty will increase to £120 per parent/carer, per child. If you fail to pay the Penalty by the 28<sup>th</sup> day, the County Attendance Team may instigate legal proceedings against you.

If you are found guilty of this offence you can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.