



Lakeside  
School  
Learning for life

# Attendance Policy



## Attendance Policy

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Lakeside School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise the often complex health problems faced by many of our pupils and will make every effort to support pupils with medical conditions to achieve a high level of attendance. See Children with Medical Conditions Policy.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

The Home/School agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

We will ensure that our pupils are made aware of the importance of good attendance and how this will benefit them.

### **The Legal Requirement.**

Children must get an education from the school term after their 5th birthday.

The leaving age depends on when a child is born.

Children born before 1 September 1997 can leave school on the last Friday in June as long as they will be 16 by the end of that year's summer holidays.

Children born on or after 1 September 1997 must stay in some form of education or training until their 18th birthday.

The options are:

- full-time education - eg at a school or college
- an apprenticeship or traineeship
- part-time education or training - as well as being employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week

However pupils can remain at Lakeside school until the summer after their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday

### **Absence**

A child can only be absent from school if either:

- they're too ill to go in
- they have advance permission from the school

## Leave of Absence in term time

Leave of absence during term time will be discouraged. Parents will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement.

Parents must get permission from the head teacher and can only do this if:

- they make an application to the head teacher in advance
- there are *exceptional* circumstances

The school will consider any application for leave of absence and will only agree to authorize the absence in exceptional circumstances. The head teacher can decide how many days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

*Parents can be fined for taking a child on holiday during term time without the school's permission.*

## Persistent Absence

Local councils and schools can use various legal powers if a child is missing school without a good reason. These include:

- Parenting Order
- Education Supervision Order
- School Attendance Order
- penalty notice

A parent can be given one or more of these orders but the council doesn't have to do this before pursuing a prosecution.

### Parenting Order

This requires the parents to attend a parenting classes and to improve the child's school attendance.

### Education Supervision Order

If the council thinks a family need support getting a child to school but the family are not co-operating, they can apply to a court for an Education Supervision Order.

A supervisor will be appointed to help the family get the child into education. The local council can do this instead of prosecuting, or as well.

### School Attendance Order

A School Attendance Order is issued if the local council thinks a child isn't getting an education. Parents then have 15 days to provide evidence that they have registered their child with a school or that they are providing home education.

The order will name a specific school. Failure to comply can lead to prosecution.

### Penalty notice

Instead of being prosecuted, parents can be given a penalty notice. The penalty is £60, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the fine may lead to prosecution.

### Prosecution

This can be a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court also issues a Parenting Order.

### **School procedures in the event of Absence**

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Education.

All children are marked into school using a transport register as they enter the doors in the morning. In this way we are immediately aware of any absence and can query this with the school transport staff. Any absences are reported immediately to a member of SLT.

If a child is absent without explanation a member of the school admin staff will be asked to ring the parents to seek a reason. We have several phone numbers and emergency contact information for each child.

In the event a family cannot be contacted the school would first contact social services and if necessary contact the police.

### **Registers**

Registers are marked by the class teacher in her absence a senior member of support staff at the start of morning and afternoon sessions or in her absence a senior member of support staff and returned to the school office immediately.

To accommodate the arrival of pupils on home school transport morning registration will take place between 9.15 and 9.30. After this time pupils are considered to be late. However parents and pupils have no control over the home school transport system. Where buses are going to be late due to travel problems they inform the school that pupils are on their way, so pupils will not be marked as unauthorised absence in this instance. However notes of persistent problems are noted and referred to the travel company.

Any pupil arriving after registration will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation.

The afternoon registration will be at 1.30 PM.

### **Absence notes**

Notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

### **Persistent Absence [PA]**

All pupils whose attendance level falls below 85% will be subject to an action plan to support their return to full attendance. These action plans will be set up by the deputy headteacher.

The action plan will include engagement with all parties who can support the pupil's attendance, including the school nursing team, educational psychologist and the social worker.

## A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. Teachers will ensure parents have any missed home school information.

## Categorisation of Absence

**Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.**

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

### **1. Unauthorised absence**

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

### **2. Authorised absence**

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

### **3. Approved Educational Activity**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

**Note Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.**

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site

If a pupil is receiving education off site or is attending at a school where they are dual registered with, the school will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

Parents are requested to inform the school of the reasons for any absence. In the case of sickness this should be on the first day of absence and some indication of the return date should be given.

Parents should always inform the school in advance of any planned absences e.g. for medical appointments.

Teachers are required to inform the head teacher of any absences with reasons if known. If the school has not been notified of the reasons for an absence the teacher should ensure that the parent is telephoned that morning to ascertain the cause.

There is a legal requirement to inform the LA of pupils failing to attend regularly, or who have been absent for a continuous period of more than two weeks without reason given.

### **Children in Public Care.**

The Local Authority collects regular data on the attendance of pupils who are in public care. The school complies with all such requests.

### **Pupil Attendance and Non Attendance.**

The attendance policy of Lakeside school in common with all of the school's policies is to be seen in the context of the ethos of the school. There is a strong emphasis on the fostering of positive attitudes to school and the creation of a climate based on mutual trust and support in which students may flourish. The school expects its pupils to develop a sense of responsibility, discipline and pride in their school attendance.

Unauthorised absences are in fact few and do not present a problem at Lakeside. There are therefore no extra monitoring arrangements in place other than those required by the LA for their information. Should records show an increase in unauthorised absences more detailed and formal monitoring will be introduced.

Although pupils do not have the opportunity to truant owing to the clearly defined transport arrangements it is still important that pupil attendance is carefully monitored because a pupil's absence from school may indicate any of the following:

- θ Unhappiness at school
- θ The parent's lack of confidence in the school
- θ Problems at home.

By following up on non attendance immediately the cause is more likely to become known before matters become entrenched.

### **Unhappiness at School.**

A child who is unhappy at school may feign illness to be allowed to stay at home. Teachers should be observant of a pupils who has a series of 'off days' which do not culminate in a genuine illness. Should such a pattern be observed teachers should use sensitive discussion and discreet observations to ascertain if there are any problems at school which may be the cause - dislike of certain lessons for example or problems with other children.

The school will discuss any worries with parents.

### **Parental Lack of Confidence in the School**

If parents lack confidence in the school they will place little importance on school attendance. A child may feel divided loyalties and be uncomfortable at school because of this and so be reluctant to attend.

If such a situation becomes apparent the head teacher will attempt to have discussions about any perceived or real problems with the parents. The school may wish to involve the attendance officer in the process. In the long term the School Complaints procedure may need to be evoked.

### **Problems at Home.**

Absence may reflect problems at home. Marital discord, for example, may make a child feel insecure and loath to leave home. Teachers need to be aware that there could be sensitive issues behind non attendance and although follow up must be made of absences they should be careful in their approach.

Non attendance can also be the outward sign of abuse. If non attendance and other factors mean that abuse is suspected the matter must be reported to the designated teacher for Child Protection.

### **Illness.**

The school has a problem with parents who send their children to school even when they are unwell. This appears to be a problem in many special schools and is linked to the caring attitude the school displays towards its pupils and the fact that some pupils do have long term medical needs.

The school tries to make a distinction between children who have a medical problem and those who are ill. Children who are unwell should not be in school. We have many frail children who are susceptible to infection.

Following advice from the NHS we ask that children who have been sick or had diarrhoea should not return to school for 48 hours after the end of the illness. If pupils are sent to school and are unwell

the school nurse is asked to assess them. If she feels it necessary parents are asked to take the child home.

Children who have had operations under general anaesthetic should not return to school for at least 24 hours after the operation, in order to have time to recover fully.

We are anxious not to exclude children from school because they have a medical condition e.g. epilepsy. For these children it is important that the class teacher and the school nurse establish a known norm of functioning for this child - how they normally are in the light of their condition. For example if a child has seizures and requires a short sleep on a regular basis they have to be dealt with in school or miss a great deal of schooling. However if these children show signs of falling below their norm then parents will be contacted.

We have learnt that there are many grey areas in trying to establish the difference between medical problems and illness, but we are usually guided by the degree of discomfort suffered by the pupil. The views of the school nurse are always sought and her decision is the one the school adopts.

If a pupil requires a length of time away from school because of illness the school will contact the LA to try and arrange home tuition.