



Longcause Community Special School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Signature of Head:	Anne Hutchinson
Date:	17.07.2024
Signature of Chair of Governors:	Fred Jenkins
Date:	17.07.2024
Agreed by the Governing body on:	17.07.2024
Minute Reference:	100

Reviewed by:	Victoria Eastman
Review date:	June 2024
Checked by:	Anne Hutchinson
Master file location:	Admin Shared Drive
Next review date:	July 2025

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Changes

July 2024 – Adopted new attendance policy to begin September 2024.

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). Working together to improve school attendance, statutory guidance was amended in February 2024 and to be implemented in schools from September 2024. This policy has been updated to meet the requirements. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Please note, the latest KCSIE guidance (2023) refers to children missing education which is defined as: 'Children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school'. (Children Missing Education, 2016)

'Children who are absent from education' refers to general absence including persistent absence.

This policy will be accessible via the school website and all on request from the school.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfill expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Anne Hutchinson and can be contacted via email: ahutchinson@longcause.plymouth.sch.uk

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance updates to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with the EWO/Early Help Team to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Theresa Baldry-Lee and can be contacted via email: tbaldry-lee@longcause.plymouth.sch.uk

3.5 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. Registers should be completed by 9.15am and 1.15pm.

3.6 The family team/admin team

The family team and admin team will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system (SIMS)
- Transfer calls from parents to members of SLT/family team order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time (unless there is a valid reason for absence e.g. illness)
- Call or email (longcause.school@plymouth.gov.uk) the school to report their child's absence before 9.45am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence (unless stated in the initial call) and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time (unless there is a valid reason for absence e.g. illness)

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years (updated from 3 years) after the date on which the entry was made. The law requires all schools to have an admission register and an attendance register. Registers are kept on an electronic management information system containing the required information that can be accessed by the DfE. All pupils must be placed on the admission register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register.

Pupils must arrive in school by or as near to 9.05am as possible on each school day unless otherwise agreed by SLT. However, lots of our pupils arrive on school transport. Therefore, we understand their pupils may sometimes be late due to transport delays.

The register for the first session will be taken at 09.05 and will be kept open until 09.15. The register for the second session will be taken at 13.05 and will be kept open until 13.15.

Any absence notes from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the year (or longer if there are absence concerns) and registers will be stored safely when not being used.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 09.45 or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

If the call is not answered, parents/carers should leave a message stating the name of the pupil and reason for absence. If a call has not been received by 09.45, a member of the family team will contact the parent/carer to establish the reason for absence.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school will gather further information from parents/carers.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents/carers can notify school by phone call or email.

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Ongoing punctuality issues will be monitored by the attendance officer and family team. Lots of our pupils come in on school transport so are unable to control their time of arrival. However, when pupils are regularly coming in late, a member of the family team/the attendance officer will discuss this with the pupil (if travel trained) or the parent/carer/transport staff to explain the importance of arriving on time.

For travel trained pupils, systems are in place for pupils to call if they are due to arrive late into school. If pupils have not called or have not arrived by 09.15, school have pupil numbers so will call them to ensure safety and to gather an expected time of arrival.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence (if no contact has been made by 09.45) to ascertain the reason.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not

- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues (unless the duration is stated in the call/email on day 1) to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will continue to call on each day and will consider involving an education welfare officer.

If the school cannot contact the parent/carer, they will:

- Call all of the pupil's emergency contacts.
- Leave a message on the answerphone for the parent/carer to contact the school ASAP.
- Transport will then be contacted to ascertain if they have spoken to the parent/carer.
- Repeated phone calls will be made until contact with the parent has been reached.
- At 2pm, if no contact has been made, a member of staff (often a member of the family team or SLT) will make a home visit.
- If there is no contact during the home visit, contact will be made with the MASH consultation line and/or police. The school will continue to request updates on any contact made. NB: police will only enter the house if there is a genuine risk of serious injury or death.

The family team will engage with families to provide early help and to put in strategies to avoid persistent absences and thus prevent a child missing education.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via termly digital reports.

5. Authorised and unauthorised 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 must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or from the school reception. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- Please see appendix 2 (school absence form) for further examples

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

A new National Framework for Penalty Notices for school absence has been published by the Department for Education. The new national framework for penalty notices will come into effect from 19th August 2024 and will apply to all forms of unauthorised absence from school, including unauthorised holiday's during term time.

Specifically, the changes are:

1. A new national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions for any reason (equivalent to 5 school days) within a rolling 10 school week period for when a penalty notice must be considered. A penalty fine can be issued for any combination of unauthorised absences over a 10-week rolling period. They can be consecutive or non-consecutive and can span over two terms.
2. An increase in the penalty fine from £60 to £80 if paid in 21 days. If the fine is not paid by the first 21 days, it will rise to £160 if paid within 28 days of being issued.
3. If a 2nd penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period, the fine will automatically rise to £160 with no option to pay the lower rate of £80.
4. If a parent then commits a third offence in a 3-year rolling period, the local authority will need to consider options available to them to improve attendance.
5. The current penalty notice warning letter used for unauthorised absence (not holiday) will be changed to a Notice to Improve.

The new national threshold will begin from 19th August 2024. Therefore, parents previously issued with penalty notices will have a clean slate in terms of the national limit of 2 penalty notices in a 3-year rolling period.

Parents who have booked holidays in prior to 19th August 2024 for which an absence request form has not been completed or where they have already been informed the absence is unauthorised, will be subject to the new increased fine amount if they choose to continue to take their child out of school.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded/suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice. **Please note:** no fines will be provided for holiday absences equivalent to 10 sessions or less in a rolling 12-month period based on changes to Plymouth City Council's school absence policy.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

- The school provides early help and preventative action to support families.
- Good attendance is promoted on the weekly newsletter and on the website for families.
- Families are provided with termly updates on their child's attendance and absence figures on digital reports.
- SLT/family Team meet with families where attendance concerns arise. Barriers to good attendance are explored and plans are made to promote good attendance.
- Environment and timetable changes are made for pupils with attendance concerns.
- 'Check-ins' are provided for pupils, where necessary, to encourage good attendance.
- Pupils are welcomed back after absence from school and support is given to help them to re-adjust to school routines to encourage good attendance.
- Additional interventions and support are put in place, based on family and pupil need, to avoid persistent or severe absence and thus prevent a child missing education (including when mental health impacts on attendance).

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data 3x per year at a whole school, group and individual pupil level.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern (including pupils in the following groups: FSM, CLA, Adopted, EAL, EM, Service, Vision)

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance updates to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Provide adaptations to environment, staffing and pupil timetables to reduce levels of persistent or severe absence.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum, yearly by Anne Hutchinson, senior leader for attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour and emotional support policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school

V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)

O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: absence request form

S2

Absence Request Form



Notes to parents/carers

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent with whom the child normally lives. Permission must be sought in advance and must be for **exceptional circumstances**. If you do not have Parental Responsibility and/or normally live with the child you must seek the consent of the parent who does and that person should complete this form. Schools will only consider requests from that parent and absence will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

When deciding whether to allow term time leave, for any reason, the school will only consider:

- The reason for the leave
- The time and duration of the leave
- Whether or not the leave could have been taken during the statutory school holiday periods
- Your child's record of attendance
- **Learning that will be missed**

WARNING: IF THE SCHOOL REFUSES YOUR REQUEST AND THE CHILD IS STILL TAKEN OUT OF SCHOOL, THIS WILL BE RECORDED AS AN UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE AND MAY MAKE YOU LIABLE TO A £60/120 FINE.

To the Headteacher of **Longcause Community Special School**

I wish to apply for

Name(s) of Child(ren)

(Include siblings attending other Schools)

.....DOBSchool.....

.....DOBSchool.....

to be authorised as being absent from school from to inclusive

Reason for request for absence during term time:

If this is a holiday request please explain the exceptional circumstances which mean that the holiday cannot be taken during a school holiday:

Signature of Parent/Carer Date

Signature of Parent/Carer Date

Authorised The School/College agrees to your child being absent from school on the specified dates.

Absence dates ___/___/___ to ___/___/___

Unauthorised The School/College does not authorise your request for leave in term time for the following reason(s):

Learning that will be missed		No Exceptional Circumstances	
The time and duration of the leave		Leave could have been taken during school holiday periods	

Signed..... Designation **Head Teacher** Date

Please read overleaf

Holidays in term time

Important: please read carefully the information below.

Warning: If you take your child on holiday in term time without the prior approval of the school, you may be issued a £60/120 Penalty Fine, per parent, per child.

As a Parent/Carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by, whenever possible, taking your holidays during school holidays.

The Facts	The Law
<p>We recognise that it is often expensive to take a holiday during school breaks and that is why some parents may ask for term time leave for their children. However, it is important that parents carefully consider the implications of taking their child out of school during term time.</p> <p>Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the course work they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.</p> <p>Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.</p> <p>What you should consider</p> <p>There are times during a school year when a child may experience particular problems because of term time leave such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Closeness to exams or tests (Standard Attainment Tests in Year 2, 6 and 9). ● During GCSE, and other examination courses. ● During the first year at a new school. ● At the beginning of a new school term. <p>If the school refuses a request for term time leave and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may lead to a £60/120 fine per parent, for each child.</p>	<p>The law does not say that parents have an automatic right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time.</p> <p>However, in exceptional circumstances school may authorise, in advance, requests for periods of leave. The request for leave must come from a parent with whom the child normally resides.</p> <p>If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.</p> <p>If the child is away from school for a total of 4 weeks or more, the school may have to take the child off roll unless there is a good reason for the continued absence, such as illness. In these circumstances it is up to the parent to inform the school as once removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.</p> <p>The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force on the 1 September 2013. The amendments make it clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.</p> <p>Holiday prices, and the fact that the parents have booked a holiday before checking with the school, are not exceptional circumstances.</p>

Other absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical / dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible)
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
- External examinations
- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents where the school is informed beforehand

Other absence from school will not be authorised:

- For any type of shopping
- Looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents
- Minding the house
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives
- Because holidays are cheaper in term time
- More than one day for a family wedding.

Please contact your child's Headteacher if you wish to discuss this issue.

The law requires schools to be open to pupils for 190 days each year, and every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time.

We hope that when you have read this leaflet you will consider that your child's education is too important to take holidays during term time.

MARCH 2015