

# Attendance Policy



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## 1. Rationale and Aims

At Longstone Primary School, we want every child to *shine*. Good attendance and punctuality are essential for pupils to achieve their full academic, social, and personal potential. Evidence clearly shows that pupils who attend school regularly (96%+) make significantly better progress both academically and socially than those who do not. Regular attendance keeps children safe, supports their learning, builds routines and strengthens their wellbeing.

This policy aims to:

- Support children's welfare and safeguarding
- Ensure every pupil can access their full-time education entitlement
- Help all pupils achieve their best, preparing them for secondary school and life beyond
- Promote our school vision: Nurture, Ignite, Shine.

To make the most of their learning, pupils need to attend school every day unless absence is unavoidable. Missing school disrupts routines, affects progress and can impact confidence. Being late also affects learning and disrupts others.

Parents and carers have a **legal duty** to ensure regular attendance. Absence without a valid reason is an offence and may lead to legal action.

## 2. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy is shaped by the following statutory documents:

- **Working Together to Improve School Attendance from the DfE** (statutory from 19 August 2024)
- **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024**

The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

These set out legal duties for schools, local authorities and parents, and define national attendance codes and procedures.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All pupils on the roll
- All parents/carers responsible for those pupils
- All staff members involved in promoting and recording attendance

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.1 Parents and Carers

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents/carers (as defined in the Education Act 1996) must:

- Ensure their child attends school every day and on time
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Contact school before **8:50am** if their child is absent
- Provide reasons/evidence for absence when asked
- Avoid term-time leave and request any exceptional absence in advance
- Work with school to resolve any barriers to attendance
- Attend meetings if concerns arise

#### **4.2 Attendance Governor – Chair of Governors**

- Review and challenge attendance data.
- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.
- Hold leaders to account.

#### **4.3 Senior Attendance Champion – Headteacher**

This statutory role (DFE, 2024) leads:

- The 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
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels
- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis

- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance

#### **4.4 Class Teachers**

- Take accurate AM and PM registers using the correct national codes (see appendix 2)
- Spot early attendance concerns and report them
- Encourage good routines and punctuality

#### **4.5 School Business Officer**

- Monitors daily absence
- Makes day-to-day calls where no reason for absence is provided
- Records accurate absence information on Arbor
- Alerts the Headteacher to concerning patterns
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Provide attendance data and reports to headteacher/ governors.

#### **4.6 External Partners (Derbyshire County Council)**

- Work with school through **Targeted Support Meetings**
- Provide support via the School Attendance Support Team and Education Welfare Officer
- Carry out statutory interventions if needed.

#### **4.7 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

### **5. Understanding Types of Absence**

Every half day (am/ pm session) is recorded as **authorised** or **unauthorised**.

Only the **school** can decide which category an absence falls into (please see Appendix 1 for full list of registration codes).

#### **5.1 Authorised Absence**

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations.

Authorised absence examples include (but are not limited to):

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable 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.

We define 'exceptional circumstances'. Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background 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, paper copies available in the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (medical evidence may be requested if patterns raise concern)
- Unavoidable medical or dental appointments
- Religious observance- where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Family bereavement
- Other exceptional circumstances agreed by the Headteacher

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

## **5.2 Unauthorised Absences**

Examples of unauthorised absences include (but are not limited to):

- Keeping children off without valid reason
- Absences not explained (initially Code N)
- Shopping trips or childcare for siblings
- Birthdays or routine outings.
- Term-time holidays have not been authorised (Code G)
- Arriving after registers close (Code U)

Unauthorised absences may lead to Local Authority involvement or legal action. (See section 10-Sanctions.)

## 6. Promoting Regular Attendance

Regular attendance is a shared responsibility between the school, families and the wider community.

To promote strong attendance, we will:

- Set a whole school attendance target in line with national expectations- 96%
- Share attendance information regularly through newsletters to parents.
- Share attendance data regularly with Governors
- Include each child's attendance in their annual school report
- Inform parents each term when attendance falls below 96%
- Share information and guidance on our website and via regular communication.

Our aim is to work in partnership with families to help children develop healthy, consistent routines that support learning and wellbeing.

## 7. School Day and Registration

- **Gates open:** 8:50am
- **Registers taken:** 9:00am
- **Registers close:** 9:10am
- Registers are taken again at the start of the afternoon session at 1.00pm.

### Lateness codes:

- Late before registers close → **Code L**
- Late after registers close → **Code U (unauthorised absence)**

Lateness is monitored alongside attendance data.

## 8. Reporting Un-planned Absences (First-Day Response & Safeguarding)

Parents **must:**

- Contact the school via phone or email before **8:50am** on the day of absence.
- Provide a valid reason for child's absence.

### 8.1 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/carers on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence 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 on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- If no contact by **day 3**, a home visit may take place.
- If still no contact, school may inform Police/Social Care or begin CME (Children Missing Education) procedures.
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance.
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals.

A written or verbal explanation must be provided on return to school.

## 8.2 Planned Absences

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised, as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. This can be done by visiting the school office or email ([enquiries@longstone.derbyshire.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@longstone.derbyshire.sch.uk)) and must include a copy of the appointment letter/email.

However, we encourage parents 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 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.

## 9. Punctuality

Being on time supports learning and confidence. When pupils are late, staff will:

- Welcome them.
- Check their wellbeing.
- Offer breakfast if needed.
- Discuss concerns with parents if lateness becomes frequent.

Persistent lateness may lead to meetings with school and possible involvement from the Local Authority.

## 10. Persistent and Severe Absence

### Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil is classed as **persistently absent** when they miss **10% or more** of sessions in a school year - for any reason. An individual is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

### Severe Absence

A pupil is classed as **severely absent** if they miss **50% or more** of sessions.

### School Response

The school:

- Monitors attendance closely.
- Contacts families early to identify reasons and remove barriers.
- Offers pastoral support, early help or reasonable adjustments.
- Creates Attendance Plans where needed.
- Holds Attendance Panel meetings for ongoing concerns.
- Works with the Local Authority where absence is persistent or severe.

Persistent absence has a significant impact on progress, wellbeing and readiness for secondary school. The school aims to intervene early and supportively.

### **11. Monitoring, Early Help and Escalation**

School monitors attendance closely. If:

- Attendance drops below **96%**, or
- Patterns of absence/lateness appear

School will work with families to provide early help and support. This may include:

- Attendance meetings
- Support plans
- Attendance Panel meetings
- Referral to the LA School Attendance Support Team

### **12. Leave of Absence in Term Time (Holidays and Exceptional Requests)**

There is **no entitlement** to holidays or planned absence during term time.

The DFE does **not** consider work patterns, cost or convenience to be exceptional reasons for absence.

Exceptional circumstances (considered case by case) may include:

- Bereavement or funeral.
- Wedding of an immediate family member (with a defined role).
- Serious or terminal illness in the family.
- Severe housing crisis.

The Headteacher decides:

- Whether the request is exceptional.
- How many days, if any, may be authorised.

#### **Requesting leave:**

- Submit the Absence Request Form at least **two weeks** in advance to the first day of the leave.
- Do not make travel bookings before receiving written authorisation

- Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

### **13 Sanctions**

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions -including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

#### **Penalty notices**

In September 2013 the government introduced new regulations making it clear that Headteachers **must not** give approval for any leave of absence during term time, **including holidays**, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any requests for term time leave should be made on a Leave of Absence Request Form available from the school office and handed in **at least 2 school weeks** before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. Absence deemed for the reason of unauthorised leave in term time will be marked in the register with the Attendance code G.

You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid, this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996.

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a first penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

#### **Notices to improve**

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences

- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

### **13. Data Management and Privacy**

Attendance data is recorded securely and may be shared with the Local Authority and DfE where legally required.

### **14. Review**

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if national guidance changes.

## **Appendix 1: Attendance Code, taken from the DFE's**

**<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance> and Arbor (MIS system).**

### **Present Codes:**

**/ or \ (Present am or pm):** Student is present in school during registration.

**L (Late):** Student arrived late before the register closed.

### **Attending a place other than the school**

**B (Educated off Site):** Student is at an approved, supervised off-site educational activity.

**K (Education provision provided by LA):** Student is receiving education arranged by the local authority.

**P (Sporting Activity (Approved)):** Student is participating in a school-approved, supervised sporting activity.

**V (Educational trip):** Student is on a school-organised residential trip or supervised educational trip.

**W (Work Experience):** Student in the final two years of compulsory education is attending work experience.

**D (Dual Registration):** Student is registered at another school and attends it during this lesson (e.g., at a pupil referral unit).

### **Authorised Absent Codes:**

**C (Other Authorised Absence):** Leave for exceptional circumstances.

**C1 (Other Authorised Absence):** Absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad.

**C2 (Other Authorised Absence):** Pupils on part-time timetables.

**J1 (Interview):** Leave to attend an interview for employment or admission to another educational institution.

**E (Excluded):** Student is excluded but still on the admission register (up to the sixth consecutive day of a fixed period or permanent exclusion).

**M (Medical/Dental Appointments):** Absence due to medical or dental appointments that could not be scheduled outside school hours.

**R (Religious Observance):** Absence for religious observance on a designated day.

**S (Study Leave):** Study leave granted sparingly to Year 11 pupils for public exams, with students still able to attend school for revision.

**T (Traveller Absence):** Used when Travellers are travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school.

**I (Illness):** Used for any form of illness, including Covid-19 illness if not distinguished.

**X (non-statutory school age absence):** Sessions non-compulsory school-age children are not expected to attend (for early years students before their 5th birthday).

### **Unauthorised Absent Codes:**

**G (Family Holiday (Not Agreed)):** Holiday not authorised by the school or exceeding the period determined by the headteacher.

**N (No Reason):** Reason for absence not provided; if no reason is provided after a reasonable time, it should be changed to O.

**O (Unauthorised Absence):** School is not satisfied with the reason given for absence.

**U (Late (After Register Closes)):** Student arrived after the register closed.

### **Absent- unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes:**

**Q - Pupils unable to attend school due to lack of access arrangements**

**Y1 (Unable to attend):** Absence due to unavailable transport.

**Y2 (Unable to attend):** Absence due to widespread disruption to travel.

**Y3 (Unable to attend):** Absence due to part of the school being closed.

**Y4 (Unable to attend):** Absence due to unexpected whole school closure (different from # for planned closures).

**Y5 (Unable to attend):** Absence due to pupils in the criminal justice system.

**Y6 (Unable to attend):** Absence due to public health guidance or law.

**Y7 (Unable to attend):** Any other unavoidable cause.

**Z (Pupil Not On Roll):** Used when setting up registers in advance of pupils joining; schools must take attendance from the student's first scheduled day.

**# (School Closed To Pupils):** Used for whole or partial school closures known or planned in advance, such as if the school is used as a polling station.