



Attendance Policy 2021-2022

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Introduction

This Policy has been agreed by the Governors, Staff and Pupils of Lister Community School.

It represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable, and achieved by many children. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is the parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development.
- Good attendance practice safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents or carers.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be considered vulnerable.
- These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

Aims of the policy

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, all lesson sessions and school days, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard the welfare of its pupils.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of Newham's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

Policy objectives

- To safeguard the welfare, social, educational and emotional development of children;
- To reduce persistent absence;
- To reduce or eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence;
- To promote commitment to education and high achievement;
- To maximise the potential of every individual pupil

Promoting excellent attendance

The Governors, Headteacher and staff will use all means available to them to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance.

The school will also, when necessary, employ sanctions to improve attendance. In cases of Persistent Absence (less than 90%) the school may recommend a case to the Local Authority prosecution through the Magistrates Court.

In very serious cases of poor attendance for no acceptable reason, the school may involve other agencies such as the School Nurse or Social Care, to safeguard the welfare, development and educational potential of the child.

Our attendance targets

The school's current targets for attendance are as follows:

- Overall Attendance to increase to above 96%.
- Persistent Absence to reduce to below 9.75%
- Unauthorised Absence to reduce to below 2.9%
- Authorised Absence to reduce to below 1.7%

Responsibilities of Parent/Carers

Introduction

This is a successful school, and you and your child play a part in making it so. We aim to encourage all members of the school community to reach out for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you as the adult, to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. It will be better for them in the long run to go to school, rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and make them even more reluctant. Your job as a parent is to encourage them to attend.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is YOUR legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued (see below).

Learning

Any absence affects the child's learning, and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up. Research has shown that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

Safeguarding

There is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

Working in partnership

The Governors and staff of this school want to work in partnership with parents to ensure that children are as successful as they can possibly be. This means being in school as near to 100 per cent of the time as possible. It is parents' responsibility in law to ensure their child attends regularly and on time.

Reporting your child's absence

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence, either by telephone or in person, by no later than 09:30am, and;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence.
- If sickness absence is for three days or more the school will require medical evidence in the form of a doctor's note, copy of the prescription or label from prescribed medicine. However if the student is a persistent absentee the school may require medical evidence from the first day of absence.

Applications for leave of absence in term time

The policy is **not** to authorise leave of absence from school during term time. No child will be permitted to take a holiday during term time. Heads only have discretion to authorise leave of absence in term-time in the **MOST EXCEPTIONAL** circumstances, for special considerations. In such cases the Headteacher must specify the date when the child must return to school.

Any applications for leave in term time must be made in writing to the Headteacher. There is no automatic right to term time leave of absence, and your request is likely to be declined except in the most exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered on its own merit, and the attendance record(s) of the children concerned will be taken into account when making a decision.

Unauthorised leave of absence in term time is likely to result in the issue of a Penalty Notice. A Penalty Notice requires each parent to pay £60 per child, if they pay within 21 days. If they do not pay within 21 days, but pay within 28 days, the fine rises to £120 per parent per child. If they do not pay at all they risk prosecution under S.444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Understanding types of absence coding

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are: illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, and emergencies. The school will ask for medical evidence after three days of illness.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping
- Birthdays
- Looking after other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell

- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Routine doctor, dentist, optician appointments which could be booked outside of school hours
- Reported illness not authorised by the school
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy

Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 95%. This may make it easier to understand:

95%	half a day off every two weeks
90%	a day off every two weeks
85%	one and a half days off every two weeks
80%	one whole day off every week

*****A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school*****

Even the brightest and most enthusiastic learner will find it hard to keep up with their work with these levels of absence. That is why we encourage the highest attendance possible.

Supporting reluctant attenders

Parents/carers should do everything possible to encourage their child to attend. However if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

School phobia is a psychological condition that is medically diagnosed, and in these cases other arrangements may be made for the child's education. However, refusal to attend school may result in parents being prosecuted.

Any absence affects the child's learning, and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up. Research has shown that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

Persistent absence

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, **for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both.** Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. PA pupils and their parents can be subject to an Action Plan, which may include allocation of some kind of support.

Parenting contracts

You may be asked to participate in a Parenting Contract to support your child's attendance.

These are initiated where the school feels you may need help in influencing your child to attend properly. They have no force in law, and are entered into voluntarily. A meeting will be held to which you and your child will be invited. The problems will be discussed and agreement reached as to what the school will do, what the child will do and what you as parents/carers will do to try to improve the situation. You may be offered some form of support such as counselling or parenting classes to assist you in setting boundaries and enforcing expectations of your child.

Your contact details

Please make sure that the contact details you have given to the school are correct and kept up to date, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you we have the correct details.

We will always follow up with parents/carers when pupils are not at school. This means we need to have a least two up to date contact numbers for parents/carers.

Responsibilities of Staff

Introduction

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of Safeguarding. Missing school can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children. We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay.

We will ensure that pupils who are expected to attend the school, but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority. When a pupil leaves the school, we will record the name of the pupil's new school and their expected start date.

School Procedures

Lister is a safe school where staff are proactive in promoting the welfare of young people and protecting them from harm. The school will systematically follow up absence according to this policy and systematic procedures which are reviewed annually. Below is outlined the follow-up of absence responsibilities and procedures.

Absence codes

The attendance officer has the responsibility for the authorisation of absences. house support officers have the responsibility of following up absences on the first day of absence and so forth, and following up any medical evidence required to authorise absences when relevant. If there is any doubt about what to do with a pupil who has been absent, staff should refer the matter to the attendance team at attendance@lister.newham.sch.uk. If the house support team require clarification, they will consult the attendance officer. Should the attendance officer require any clarification, they will consult with the Assistant Headteacher of Attendance, who will consult with the Headteacher.

The appropriate code for absence must be entered. This may only be done when the house support team/ attendance officer has received evidence, or a direct telephone communication confirmation with parent/carers.

The absence codes are as listed below:

Unauthorised	
G	family holiday
N	no reason yet provided
O	no reason provided despite active efforts to obtain one or, an invalid reason stated which does not meet the criteria required for authorised absence
U	arrived after registers closed (after 08:50 am)
Authorised	
D	dual registration (at another establishment)
Y	unable to attend due to enforced school closure (e.g. snow)
C	exceptional circumstances approved by AHT / HT
E	exclusion with no alternative provision
H	formally agreed exceptional circumstances travel abroad
I	illness
M	exceptional medical/health appointment which could not be arranged outside of school hours
R	religious observance
S	study leave
T	traveller absence
B	AEA educated off-site (not alternative provision)
J	AEA attending an interview
P	AEA attending an approved sporting activity supervised by school staff
V	AEA away on an educational visit

Registration and punctuality procedures

Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day at 8.30a.m. and once during the afternoon session. The registers will remain open for 20 minutes.

Pupils arriving before the end of the registration period will be coded L (Late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register, and they will receive a same day 30 minute detention.

Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence. This student will also receive a 60 minute after school detention on the day.

The morning registration period will start at 8.25.a.m. and end at 8.50a.m.

The afternoon registration period will start at 1.20p.m. and end at 1.40p.m.

Only the Headteacher or designated member(s) 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 as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (unauthorised absence). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year, or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action. If a pupil is persistently late the house support officer will arrange to meet with the family as soon as the pattern is identified.

All staff are responsible for ensuring their registers are accurately taken, within the first 10 minutes of the lesson and that their registers remain an accurate record of who was present.

First day absence contact

Parents are expected to notify the school the first day their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. If the school does not receive notification it will text/telephone on the first day of absence, to try to ascertain the reason. First day contact will be carried out as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school, but not arrived, as quickly as possible. This is important for safeguarding reasons.

Second day absence contact

If the child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, a telephone call will be made to the home.

Continuing absence procedures

In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be made.

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school of the reason for any absence and provide evidence for the absence where possible. Failure to do so will result in unauthorised absences which will trigger attendance interventions. Should a parent/carer remain frequently non contactable during periods of unexplained absence, this may trigger a parental/carer meeting.

Any child who is absent without explanation for 12 consecutive or cumulative sessions (6 school days) (90% attendance), or who has a pattern of erratic attendance or persistent lateness after registers close may be referred to the Attendance Management Service of LBN, in order that further investigations can be made. Such cases may result in a visit to the home by an Attendance Management Officer. Targets will be set for improvement, sources of support will be signposted if needed. If there is no improvement, court action or a Penalty Notice may ensue.

Frequent/Persistent absence procedures

Regular trawls of the registers will be made by the school to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), that is to say absence of 10% or more in a half term. The school Attendance Officer and House Support Officers will be responsible for identification of any emerging concerns, and ensuring that action plans are in place for each pupil of concern.

Initially the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues the school will refer to the School Health Adviser if the problem appears to be a medical one. In cases where there appear to be issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child, referral may be made through the Triage system for external agency support. All PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan or Parenting Contract. Such a plan or contract may include allocation of additional in-school or external support.

Consequences of poor attendance /punctuality

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

- 1) The school may ask the Council to issue a Penalty Notice on its behalf. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 20 days it rises to £120 per parent, per child, if paid within 28 days. If not paid at all, court action is likely to be initiated.
- 2) The school may ask the Council to initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even up to 3 months imprisonment.
- 3) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and educational development of the child.

Penalty notices

Penalty Notices can now be issued for a range of attendance-related offences, including unauthorised term-time holidays, poor attendance and poor punctuality, or being out in a public place without justification during the first five days of an exclusion. Further details are available on <https://www.newham.gov.uk/schools-education/attendance-exclusion-1/4> .

In particular, a penalty notice will be considered if a minimum of 6 sessions or 3 school days of unauthorised absence are taken during the current term for:

- Parentally-condoned absences
- Holidays taken in term-time that have not been authorised by the Head Teacher
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed at 8.50am)

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A 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 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 the parent or withdraw the notice.

Children who cease to attend without prior notification (CME) procedures

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in the Safeguarding Policy and CME Procedures. However, if, after ten days continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, we will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to school. If after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, they can be legally removed from the school roll. However this decision will be taken in concert with the local authority, depending on the vulnerability of the child/family.

Non starters

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as Children Missing Education (CME). If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the local authority CME Officer for further checks.

Vulnerable children

Children who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP), Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Officer. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home, or a home visit and children's social workers will be alerted. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will also be treated as a priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

House panels

House teams play an integral role in supporting our students. Every half term, a house panel meeting is held during which key staff meet to discuss attendance concerns and identify strategies to support the child.

The purpose of this meetings will be to:

- monitor the impact of interventions;
- to ensure that all vulnerable and at risk pupils needs are met;
- to escalate support and provision where necessary including safeguarding referrals where appropriate.

Business support officers and the business support team leader ensure we have accurate attendance data and track interventions that have been put in place. In preparation for these meetings, business supports officers ensure the Whole School Attendance Interventions tracker is fully up to date.

Useful school contacts

Attendance Officer	Carol Hanson carol.hanson@lister.newham.sch.uk
General Attendance Queries	attendance@lister.newham.sch.uk

Legal References

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *the 'parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school, or otherwise.'*

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

The Children Act 1989 provides for a number of actions that can be taken to protect children's safety and welfare, on the premise that the welfare of the child is paramount.

Appendices

Related Policies

At Lister Community School we recognise that safeguarding the welfare of young people permeates everything that we do as a school. We therefore recognise that a range of other school policies are central to many aspects of the school's Safeguarding, and Child Protection, and this document should therefore be read in conjunction with our policies for:

- Behaviour - this includes:
 - Anti-Bullying;
 - Use of physical force and restraint;
 - Searching, screening and confiscation
- Newham CME Policy (Children Missing Education)
- Vulnerable Children Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Guidelines (Sometimes known as Staff Conduct or Behaviour Policy)

All School policies can be found in the policy section of our website.