



LAURUS
GRACE

Attendance Policy

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1 Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential to support children to achieve their full potential.

Laurus Grace 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 are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Poor attendance may also be detrimental to the social adjustment and development of students. We are therefore fully committed to promoting school attendance by providing an environment and ethos where all students feel safe and can built positive relationships with their peers and staff.

Laurus Grace values all students. We understand there may be circumstances where children struggle to attend school due to a variety of factors, including SEND and mental health. Some of these factors may be complex. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties in a trauma-informed, inclusive manner.

Laurus Grace recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Underpinning this policy is the belief that promoting good attendance is the responsibility of staff, parents, and carers and this must be evident in our interactions with children.

2 Safeguarding

Every student should be able to learn in a safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our students so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families, and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places the child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

To allow us to safeguard the children in our care, it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency. It is also important parents inform the school of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstance.

3 Absence Procedures

Laurus Grace believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a share responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, students and the wider school community.

Laurus Grace will ensure that:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted with students and their parents.
- Review the school's Attendance Policy every three years, and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting.
- Ensure that there is a named member of the Senior Leadership Team to lead on attendance.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site, are implemented.
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Form positive relationships with students and parents.
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all students to attend and to achieve.
- Complete accurate registers and address any unexplained absences and identifying any attendance patterns.
- Conduct home visits as and where appropriate.
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.
- Implement necessary interventions to support children and families where non-attendance is driven by emotionally based school avoidance.

We request that parents/carers will:

- Talk to their child about school. 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 have aspirations.
- Contact the school **if** their child is absent to let them know the reason why and provide evidence where requested.
- 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. Provide up to date contact numbers and any changes in address.
- Support the school: take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education and progress, form a positive relationship with school and engage with any supportive interventions the school is implementing to improve attendance and wellbeing.
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bedtimes, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before, etc.

- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances, send a written leave request to the Head of School.

4 Recording and Categorising Absence

The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, 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 student was:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Where students are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by a member of school staff and cannot be authorised by parents. Parents must advise the school of this explanation by telephone on each day of the absence.

i. Illness

Parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow school to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription, etc.

ii. Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, students must attend school for part of the day. Parents/carers must show the appointment card to school and inform school in advance of the appointment where possible.

iii. Other Leave of Absence/Religious Observance

This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances. Laurus Grace 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 this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence. Parents/carers should request absence due to religious observance in advance and await a response from school as to whether the absence will be authorised.

iv. Emotionally Based School Avoidance

At Laurus Grace we have specific procedures to support with children whose absence is driven by emotionally based school avoidance. Please see section (6) of this document for details on how we support our children and families.

v. Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents/carers have provided a satisfactory explanation and that is has been accepted as such by the Head of School. All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of the leave granted.

If a student fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the student off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parents takes their child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrate's court.

vi. Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, students will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order.
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority.
- The student has ceased to be of compulsory school age.
- Permanent exclusion has occurred, and procedures have been completed.
- Death of a student.
- Transfer between schools.
- Student withdrawn to be educated outside the school system.
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the student.
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age.
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team).
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the student.
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the student.

Laurus Grace will follow Stockport Council's 'Keeping Children Safe' Strategy to report a child missing in education when their whereabouts is unknown.

5 Persistent/Severe Absenteeism

The government defines two types of absenteeism, persistent and severe, which are characterised by the amount of time a student is spending out of school. Students are considered 'persistently' absent if their attendance drops below 90%, and 'severely' absent if their attendance drops below 50% (GOV.UK, 2022). Laurus Grace strive to work at a preventative level, when absenteeism shows early signs of becoming an issue, rather than solely targeting support when avoidance becomes entrenched.

We aim to achieve this by:

- Ensuring we have thorough assessment processes that provide a depth of investigation into the individual needs of our children.
- Ensuring that we have robust monitoring and tracking procedures in place to promote early identification of need.
- Ensuring a high level of multi-professional collaboration and expertise is sought for children and their families.

6 Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

There are a number of reasons why a child may avoid school. Factors within specific cases are highly complex, and a specialised assessment measure is necessary to understand the reasons for avoidance. Laurus Grace use an assessment measure called *School Refusal Assessment Scale – Revised (SRAS-R)*. This assessment is designed by psychologists to assess the causes for school avoidance. It is globally recognised and recommended by educational psychologists and experts who work closely with the Laurus Trust. The outcomes of the assessment scale help staff understand how the student experiences emotions around attending school, and the nature of their avoidance.

Laurus Grace will follow a process to develop attendance plans for those who struggle to attend school. The process is in four sections.

- i. Noticing Period
- ii. Monitoring and Tracking
- iii. Intervention, Support and Challenge
- iv. Extended Support

These sections may not be linear or escalatory in nature, it can be considered cyclical, and its entirety may not be used for the vast majority of students.

The process should allow support packages to be developed for use within school, as well as evidence for external stakeholders should there be a need for escalation of support.

7 EBSA Process

i. Noticing Period

When a student is absent from school, texts, emails and phone contact is made with home. The pastoral link within the school will aim to engage the student and family with initial contact home. This is to build relationships and gather initial data on possible challenges the student is facing with attending school. At this stage, it may be that the student is able to re-engage with school following supportive intervention from the pastoral team.

ii. Monitoring and Tracking

Attendance Meeting:

Attendance data will be assessed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). If a student does not successfully re-engage following contact made by the pastoral team, further data will be gathered on that student.

A lead professional will be delegated to follow up on individual cases. A parent meeting should be organised to informally discuss concerns or possible reasons for non-attendance. It may be that issues for non-attendance are solved within these parameters, and the student will be able to re-engage with school. The review process at this stage will cycle through the monthly attendance meetings, where students of concern the previous month will have their attendance progress reviewed.

iii. Intervention, Support and Challenge

If the 'monitoring and tracking' period shows there are students who continue to face challenges attending school, it may be necessary to formalise the support for them within school. At this stage, this will include involving support from the SEND team.

Triage Meeting:

Triage meetings are opportunities for wider staff teams to discuss students they may have a concern about. These meetings may involve classroom staff, pastoral and SEND teams. The pastoral team will bring their findings from the 'monitoring and tracking' stage. At the triage meeting, it will be established that everything has been put in place during the 'noticing' period and 'monitoring and tracking' period ahead of proceeding to planned provision. A key person will be nominated to take charge of the information gathering stage.

Assessment and Information Gathering:

During this stage, the nominated person will meet with child/family to complete initial assessments and gain an understanding of the full context.

Discussion should include understanding triggers and challenges, but also identifying protective factors.

The assessment scale (SRAS-R) will be completed by both the child and their parent/carer.

Professionals involved with the student discuss the responses to the SRAS-R, as well as considering the wider context gathered from the family meeting. The student's literacy and psychometric screening may also be investigated at this point.

To formalise the support, an attendance plan can be created for the student. The depth of these plans could be dependent on the complexity and severity of the circumstances for the student and family. Further detail on how to create attendance plans can be found in section 3 of the *EBSA Strategy*.

Some children with attendance plans may also have School Focused Plans (SFPs), or Behaviour for Learning Improvement Pathway (BLIP) profiles.

Formalising Support and Monitoring:

When formalising support, input may be sought from professionals that have previously been involved with the student, this could include:

- Early Help Assessment
- CAMHS Worker
- School Nurse
- School Counsellor
- Social Worker
- Class Tutor
- Parenting Course
- Intervention Specialist
- Educational Psychologist
- Speech and Language Therapist

After provision is decided within school, this should be communicated to the family through appropriate means (e.g., meeting in person, virtual, phone communication, home visit). The family should be given opportunity to look through the attendance plan and discuss this with school.

An initial period of six weeks should allow time for the attendance plan to be implemented.

Review:

After six weeks, a formal review meeting should take place with the family and the appropriate school professional to review the attendance plan. These review points may be flexible depending on the specific circumstances of the family. The review may take place during other professionals' meetings, including SEND reviews, TAC, CIOC reviews and PEP meetings. The discussion at the review should ensure to establish next steps regarding support for the student.

At each review point, the keyworker should record progress in the review documentation on the attendance plan. Reviewing progress should identify improvements, ongoing challenges and any changes to identified targets.

If the student is experiencing success within the current plan, the level of support should remain, whilst continuing to review progress. This repetition of this process will be agreed and formalised in the attendance plan. Where the student/family are struggling to engage with the provision, extended support should be explored.

Sporadic Absenteeism:

Throughout the monitoring period, it may be identified that some students have sporadic periods of absence. The school plans may be more fluid for students with sporadic attendance, it's important to document and archive previous attendance plans.

It may be appropriate to formulate a transition process for individuals fluctuating in and out of crisis periods; detailing this within attendance plans may be appropriate for students whose attendance patterns are more predictable. If during a period of sporadic absence, a student's absence becomes 'severe', it may be necessary to make an enforcement referral to the Education Welfare Service.

iv. Extended Support

External Support & Referral: Severe Absenteeism:

For students whose non-attendance is continual or considered 'severe', it may be necessary for the school to source external support and referral when they have exhausted their reasonable endeavours. The factors leading to avoidance are complex, therefore there will not be a direct process to follow, however the following steps could be taken as extended supportive measures:

- Ensure attendance plans are documented and reviewed as evidence of the schools' endeavours.
- Seek advice and support from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Support Hub (MASSH).
- Discuss complex cases with the Educational Psychologist.
- Ensure documentation is up to date, including TAC, EHA and CAMHS paperwork.
- Explore suitability of current school environment.
- Enforcement referral to the Education Welfare Service/social care.
- Continue to monitor attendance data and share at stakeholder meetings.

Above actions may be taken at the discretion of the school's safeguarding team.

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Laurus Grace will consider the use of legal sanctions.

8 Legal Framework

Legal proceedings are a statutory intervention used by the local authority against the parents of registered pupils who fail to attend regularly at school. Parents whose children are on a school register and fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child(ren), may be guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and the authority may take enforcement action through the courts to secure regular attendance.

Legal proceedings are not used as a punishment to parents for their pupil's absence from school; they are a supportive measure intended to make parents realise the importance of attendance and to avoid further absence from school.

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 to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A prosecution can take place against any person who has parental responsibility for the child's education or who has care of the child. Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children are properly educated. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly. If you allow your child to be absent from school without good reason, the school will not authorise the absence, you may be committing an offence, and you could be issued with a penalty notice or prosecuted.

9 Legal Interventions

Prosecution:

Where intervention fails to bring about any improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. Laurus Grace will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered student at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of up to three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Education Penalty Notices or and Education Supervision Order.

Education Pentalty Notices:

Education Pentalty Notices will be considered when:

- A student is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A student has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the Head of School.

A penalty notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

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

Penalty notices will be used in accordance with Stockport Council's Education Penalty Notice Protocol.

Equality Impact Assessments

<p>Names and titles of people involved with this assessment</p>	<p>Rachel Robinson Assistant Trust Director of Inclusion</p>
<p>Title of Policy – Attendance Policy</p>	
<p>Impact assessment carried out with regard to identified characteristics</p>	<p>Race <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Disability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Sex <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Age <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Religious & belief <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Sexual orientation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Gender Reassignment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Summary of any issues/proposed changes</p>	<p>i. Added – ‘Review the school’s Attendance Policy every three years.</p> <p>ii. Spelling mistake - changed to ‘if’</p> <p>iii. Added – ‘can’</p> <p>iv. Added – ‘Social Worker, Class Tutor’</p> <p>Added – ‘These review points may be flexible depending on the specific circumstances of the family. The review may take place during other professionals’ meetings, including SEND reviews, TAC, CIOC reviews and PEP meetings.’</p>
<p>Date</p>	<p>12th Sept 2025</p>
<p>Date of next review</p>	<p>June 2028</p>