



Attendance Policy for Laurus Trust Primary Schools

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Next review by: June 2020

The Laurus Trust recognises the importance of good attendance and the significance of attendance on achievement and attainment.

We aim to achieve good attendance by operating an Attendance Policy within which pupils, staff, parent/carers, the local community and the Education Welfare Service can work in partnership. Each school will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified. All staff will encourage good attendance.

The Attendance Policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

Aims

- “To achieve our DfE attendance targets” of 95% attendance or above and for persistent absence not to exceed 8%
- To improve the quality of school life
- To create a culture in which good attendance is a ‘normality’
- To demonstrate to pupils, parent/carers and staff that each school in the Laurus Trust values good attendance and to recognise that good regular attendance is an achievement in itself
- To be consistent in implementation
- To value the individual and be socially and educationally inclusive
- To promote good attendance through the prospectus and weekly newsletter

Objectives

- To involve pupils in recognising the importance of their attendance
- To improve communication with parent/carers about regular school attendance
- To ensure parent/carers appreciate good attendance is an integral part of the home/school agreements
- For all school staff to continue to take responsibility with pupils and parent/carers for pupils’ attendance
- To recognise the important role of teachers and administration staff in promoting and monitoring good attendance
- To work in partnership with the Education Welfare Service and to report half-termly figures to the service
- To ensure all partners are aware of their roles and responsibilities in monitoring good attendance

Targets

- To have an effective means of collecting and monitoring attendance information
- To discuss the settings of targets for the school with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and the School Improvement Partner as appropriate
- To ensure that such data is available and used effectively by school managers and staff in conjunction with the EWO
- To agree specific targets for individuals, groups, years and the whole school

- To keep parent/carers, pupils and governors informed of policy, practice and targets at least annually
- To ensure that the school is aware of government targets which may have been set for vulnerable groups

The School Day

The school day is from 8.50am until 3.15pm.

Responsibilities of Parent/carers and Pupils

- Parent/carers should ensure that children arrive at school on time to ensure a good start to the day. Registers will reflect if a child is late.
- If a child is not well enough to come to school, parent/carers should notify the school office as soon as possible giving the reason for absence, on each day of absence. An out of hours' telephone message service is available.
- If a child is absent for any other reason, parent/carers must contact the school giving reasons for their child's absence and/or lateness on each day of absence.
- Whenever possible please arrange for medical appointment to take place out of school time. If this is not possible, please email the Head of School prior to the appointment, requesting leave of absence for the child and provide a copy of the appointment card or letter.
- If parent/carers wish to withdraw their child for a planned event, they must seek permission in advance from the school by sending a letter or email to the Head of School. If the child has a sibling attending another school, the Head of School may contact the other school to enquire whether they have also received a request for term time absence. A decision will then be made and a written response will be given to parent/carers to confirm whether or not permission is given (Appendix 1). The Head of School will also decide how many days the child can be away from school if the absence is granted.
- Holidays during term time are strongly discouraged because of the negative impact it can have on a child's emotional wellbeing and academic progress. Since September 2013, Head Teachers have not been allowed to authorise holidays during term time. Absences can only be authorised by the Head of School in exceptional circumstances. To assist parent/carers, details of school holidays are circulated at least annually and are available at all times on each school's website.
- The 2013 regulations set out the procedures for issuing fixed penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Parent/carers must pay £60 per parent per child to be paid within 21

days; or £120 per parent per child if paid after 21 days and before 28 days. Failure to pay will lead to prosecution.

- If a child leaves the school, parent/carers/carers need to provide a forwarding address, name of the new school the child will be attending and a contact email address.

Procedure for Managing Pupil Attendance

- Registers must be taken at the beginning of each session in accordance with DfE and LA legislation. (Appendix 3)
- Registers are checked by a member of staff on a daily basis.
- The absence line is regularly monitored for notification of children's absence.
- In accordance with DfE guidance, we request that parent/carers/carers notify their child's school on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. DfE guidance states, that "Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt or if the period of absence exceeds 12 days, schools can request parent/carers to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parent/carers of their intention. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes".
- If children arrive in class between 9am and 9.30am, they will be given an 'L' code representing a late arrival. If children arrive after the registers close at 9.30am, they will be given a 'U' code.
- If a child is absent and the parent/carers have not notified the school of the reason for absence, school will make every effort to contact them to ascertain why. If parent/carers are unavailable, in the best interests of the child, school will make every effort to find the whereabouts of the child by contacting other family and friends.
- Attendance is monitored and any concerns about a child's safety and well-being are shared with the Head of School. This includes persistent illness, late or non-arrivals.
- If a child is absent for ten school days, they will be considered missing from education. An urgent referral on the eleventh day will be made to the EWO and a CME (Children Missing in Education) form will be completed. After reasonable enquiries and if the child does not return to school after a further five days, the child will be removed from the school roll.
- Regular 'newsletter' reminders will be issued outlining the importance of punctuality and daily attendance and the school's expectations will also be outlined at Parent/Carer Information Evenings.

- Dates of statutory test times will be given well in advance to relevant year groups. Permission for any absence, not caused by ill health, will not be authorised during this period.
- Information on attendance will be included on the school website.
- Children's attendance records will be included with the annual Pupil Reports.
- Pupils with irregular absence patterns will be highlighted as part of the class handover arrangements on transfer to their new class/school.
- The following procedure will be taken by the school in the event of concern over a child's attendance:

Stage one: Parent/carers/carers will be contacted by telephone/letter to discuss attendance concern and to explore how school can support the family in improving attendance. A follow-up email will be sent summarising the conversation and providing notification of next steps if no improvement.

Stage two: If there is no improvement, a standard letter will be sent inviting parent/carers/carers to come in to meet with a member of staff to discuss how home and school can work together to improve attendance and/or punctuality (appendix 4).

Stage three: If attendance does not improve, a second letter will be sent asking parent/carers/carers to meet with the Head of School and indicating that the Education Welfare Officer of the appropriate local authority will be contacted if there is no response (appendix 5).

Stage four: Head of School meets with parent/carers/carers and decides whether or not to contact the EWO at this stage.

If attendance issues persist then the school has a duty to alert the EWO and parent/carers/carers will be informed.

A record of all correspondence regarding attendance will be kept on file by the school: letters will be saved on the admin drive of the school network in the attendance folder.

Appendix 1

Letters in response to requests for absence during term time

Name / address / date

When the absence can be authorised – may need to amend the letter to make the 'reason' more personal e.g. absence due to funeral, compassionate etc – delete

Dear *Parent/carer name*

Re: Request for absence during term time

In this instance the reason you have given for the absence is deemed to be 'exceptional' and therefore will be authorised on this occasion.

Please note that the Local Authority will monitor attendance/ absence figures and will challenge any decisions regarding authorised/ unauthorised absence that are regarded as not complying with legislation and may, ultimately, fine parent/carers/carers for unauthorised absence.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please arrange to speak with me through the School Office.

Yours sincerely

Head of School

Name / address / date

For requests of 10 or more sessions and regular absence concerns - delete

Dear **Parent/carer name**

Re: Request for absence during term time

On this occasion the absence request for *child's name*, is not deemed to be 'exceptional' and therefore cannot be authorised.

In this instance if you choose to proceed with the absence it is a statutory requirement that we inform the Local Authority who may issue an unauthorised leave of absence Penalty Notice.

Please note that the Local Authority will monitor attendance and absence figures and will challenge any decisions regarding authorised or unauthorised absence that are regarded as not complying with the current legislation and may, ultimately fine parent/carers and carers (see below) for unauthorised absence taken during term time.

Penalties for unauthorised absence		
Taking your child out of school without the school's authorisation may result in the school requesting the local authority to issue a fixed penalty notice to each parent/carer for each child		
Timeline	One child	Two children
Paid within 21 days	£60 per parent	£60 per child = £120 per parent
After 21 days and before 28 days	£120 per parent	£120 per child = £240 per parent
After 28 days	The parent/carers will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds the parent/carers have failed to secure their child's regular attendance	The parent/carers will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrate's Court on the grounds the parent/carers have failed to secure their children's regular attendance

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please arrange to speak me through the School Office.

Yours sincerely

Head of School

Name / address / date

For requests of less than 10 sessions - delete

Dear **Parent/carer name**

Re: Request for absence during term time

The absence request for **child's name** is not deemed to be 'exceptional' and therefore cannot be authorised. However, no further action will be taken on this occasion.

Please note that the Local Authority will monitor attendance and absence figures and will challenge any decisions regarding authorised or unauthorised absence that are regarded as not complying with the new legislation and may, ultimately, fine parent/carers and carers for unauthorised absence.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please arrange to speak with me through the School Office.

Yours sincerely

Head of School

Appendix 2

School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities **Department for Education: November 2016**

Contents of Attendance Register

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

Absence and Attendance Codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence.

For more information and for coding guidance, please see:

School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities
Department for Education: November 2016

Appendix 3

Name / address / date

Stage two letter:

Invitation inviting parent/carers / carers to discuss attendance / punctuality

Dear *Parent/carer name*

Re: Punctuality / attendance (delete as required)

Since our previous conversation on {insert date} and our letter dated {insert date}, we have been monitoring {insert child's / children's names}'s punctuality / attendance as discussed.

Unfortunately, we have seen only minimal improvement and would like to invite you to a meeting to discuss how home and school can work together to improve matters further.

Please note that if {insert child's / children's names}'s punctuality / attendance continues to decline, then the Head of School will request a meeting with you.

Please get in touch with the school office to make an appointment with us as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Pastoral Manager

Appendix 4

Name / address / date

Stage three letter:

Invitation inviting parent/carers / carers to discuss attendance / punctuality with Head of School and EWO

Dear *Parent/carer name*

Re: Punctuality / attendance (delete as required)

Since your meeting on {insert date} with {insert names} we have been monitoring {insert child's / children's names}'s punctuality / attendance which has shown no improvement.

{If attendance: Insert name}'s attendance is currently xx% which is well below the national expected rate.

We are very concerned about the negative impact that this poor attendance / punctuality will have on {insert names}'s education and wellbeing and would like to invite you to meet with me to discuss this further.

Please note that failure to attend this meeting will result in the Educational Welfare Assistant being contacted.

Please could you get in touch with the school office to make an appointment as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Head of School