



Attendance and children absent from education Policy

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1. Aims

The Lion Works School are committed to high expectations of all our students in relation to attendance and proactive in supporting children who are absent from education, whilst recognising that many of our students have experienced extended periods of time out of school before joining us. The myriad of reasons for this are complex and varied, but the relationship between anxiety and emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) and a diagnosis of ASD are well documented.

To achieve this aim, we provide a safe and nurturing environment for students to feel supported and able to learn. The school works collaboratively with parents/carers utilising our attendance team and Outreach mentor and external agencies such as CAMHS to source additional and external support when necessary.

We will always seek to support our parents with their legal obligations to ensure their child attends school, but we do not seek to instigate punitive judgements and will do all we can to reduce absenteeism wherever possible and increase attendance using a range of supportive means.

Our aim is always to support our students and parents with attendance, be innovative and creative in our approach to reduce anxiety related attendance and establish effective relationships built on trust and mutual respect with our students, their families and our external partners.

This close partnership working will enable us to fulfil our statutory responsibilities, safeguard our students and support our parents to perform their legal duty of ensuring that every student of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

The school is mindful of guidance within [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#) and the importance of having a structured and proactive approach to this. All staff should be aware that children being absent from school, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage.

Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. It is important that staff are aware of their school's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). 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 \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence>
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Independent School standards Regulations 2014](#)
- [Children missing educations: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)
- [Keeping children Safe in Education 2023](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold. Any student with an attendance of 90% or below is defined as a persistent absentee.

Student attendance since the Pandemic has continued to cause concern nationally and the school is also mindful of the following Government produced documents listed below and regularly reviews the attendance data tracked and recorded:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools>

[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

[Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#)

The school is also very mindful of the new research on EBSA on national websites such as Beyond Autism (www.beyondautism.org.uk) and The National Autistic Society (www.autism.org.uk), and the Anna Freud Centre: [Addressing EBSA](#).

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for overseeing:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring of school-level absence data
- Support of the attendance team with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Liaising where necessary with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Implementing supportive attendance strategies based on individual need as far as practically and reasonably possible
- Liaising with and informing placing authorities of strategies in place to support attendance when relevant

- As a very last resort, and in consultation with the School Board and Placing Authorities and only when all other strategies have been put in place to support and promote attendance have been exhausted, issuing fixed penalty notices

3.2 The Deputy headteacher and Assistant Headteacher (Dave McLaughlin: SLT Attendance Lead)

The Deputy and Assistant Headteacher:

- Support the headteacher in facilitating all of the above responsibilities
- Ensures the swift, effective implementation, monitoring, oversight and quality assurance of all remote learning provision
- Ensure that attendance data is shared with parents and families through the reporting system
- Establish contact with the relevant agencies for high levels of concern around attendance for additional advice, guidance and support

3.3 The School Attendance Officer (Rachel Pashley)

The school attendance officer:

- Records and monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual student level on Arbor
- Reports on attendance to the Headteacher on a weekly basis
- Closely tracks and reports on all students who are persistent absentees alongside the Outreach Mentor
- Coordinates the sending of attendance letters where necessary every half-term

3.4 The Outreach Mentor (Kim Nichols)

The Outreach Mentor:

- Closely tracks and reports on all students who are persistent absentees
- Provides reports and intervention plans for targeted persistent absentees
- Is the single point of contact for parents and families
- Ensures our Safeguarding duties are executed through home visits when necessary

3.5 The Receptionist/Administrator (Sally Darby)

The Receptionist/Administrator is responsible for overseeing the accurate recording of attendance on a daily basis and submitting this information on Arbor. They make and take calls from parents

about absence and record it on the school system. They will also store any attendance letters sent on ARBOR.

3.6 The Form Tutor

The form tutor will:

- Ensure that good attendance and punctuality are promoted with their tutees at all times
- That pastoral support is offered to all tutees in their care, and extended to their families as well
- That they monitor the attendance of their tutees and escalate to the Attendance team when they have concerns

3.7 Parents/carers/families

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Promote and encourage school attendance and punctuality with their son/daughter
- Liaise directly with the school to inform them on the day of any absence or expected absence and the reason
- Work with the school in supporting short-term alternative strategies to raise attendance
- Ask for help with attendance if they feel they need additional support
- To provide absence related medical information if requested by the school through GP or CAMHS

3.8 Students

Students at The Lion Works School are expected to:

- Attend school unless there are valid reasons to not attend
- Attend school and lessons on time as punctuality is a pre-requisite of Preparation for Adulthood and Skills for Work
- To catch up on missed learning through Google Classrooms or work sent home
- To participate in online learning when deemed appropriate and during periods defined as anxiety related absence or other periods of absence
- To engage in strategies that are designed to reduce their barriers to accessing learning in school

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all students onto this register. This is done through Arbor. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present

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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made. Students are expected to arrive in school by 09:00 each school day. As our students mostly arrive by taxis, there will be times that they might be late through extenuating circumstances. If this happens regularly then the Administrator must contact the taxi company and the Transport Team to try to resolve this issue.

The register for the first session will be taken at 08:55 and will be kept open until 09:45. If a student is late due to circumstances beyond their control (eg transport issues) and they will not be marked as late. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:30 and will be kept open until 12:45.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer/family must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 09:00 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Parents/carers can either phone the school number or send an email explaining the reason for the absence.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. These concerns may be related to safeguarding, persistent absenteeism, or medically related anxiety which is unsubstantiated by a medical professional. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

After a period of absence extending beyond a continuous period of two weeks, the school will request a medical note from a GP or similar medical evidence. This will also continue for each month of persistent absence following the initial request.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers/families 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 student's parent/carer/family notifies the school in advance of the appointment. To notify us of an absence, parents/carers can call reception or send an email to: hello@thelionworksschool.org. The date and time of the appointment must be stated so that this can be added to the diary.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The student's parent/carer/family is also expected to apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Examples of acceptable reasons for term-time absences that the school can authorise can be found in Section 5.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

The Lion Works School believes that punctuality is an important life skill. A student who arrives late (unless this is related to circumstances beyond their control) will be recorded as such:

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

If a student is often marked as late, parents/carers will be contacted and a plan will be put in place to support the student to arrive on time based on individual need.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer/family to ascertain the reason, by phoning the parent/carer on the first day of the absence.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary in line with statutory guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not in discussion with the Headteacher/Attendance Team
- Identify the correct attendance code to use in discussion with the Headteacher/Attendance Team

4.6 Reporting to parents

As soon as an attendance concern is identified, we will work with parents/carers and families to put in appropriate levels of support. Students with attendance below 90% are tracked and monitored. Attendance percentages for all students for every half-term will be sent to parents/carers at the end of each half term through our reporting system.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to students during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances or learning opportunities exceeding the school offer at the given time'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as rare, significant, unavoidable and short; 'unavoidable' should be taken to mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. 'Learning opportunities exceeding the school offer at the given time' reflects the needs of our students and the importance of achieving opportunities that may not be available on account of our small school size and limited social opportunities compared with a larger maintained setting. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. On some occasions, this may be extended to family holidays, but only if there is an evidenced and valid educational input.

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 student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Fairground 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 student is attending educational provision

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

The school will work proactively and collaboratively to reduce persistent absenteeism utilising the support of the Outreach Mentor. A plan will be formulated to ensure that we are offering appropriate support and meeting our statutory duties and the Independent School Standards (Part Three). This may also involve home visits to ensure we are also meeting our [statutory requirements](#) in relation to Safeguarding and children who are absent from education.

A period of absence of two weeks or more will trigger a home visit from our Outreach Mentor unless there are extenuating circumstances and medical or other advice in place.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We have a number of students who experience anxiety around attending school and emotionally based school avoidance. We strive to provide a safe and welcoming environment for students where they can express their worries and concerns. We have an experienced team who provide a trusted adult role in school to facilitate an emotionally contained environment for a 'safe arrival' at school and throughout the school day.

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance team meet regularly and monitor student absence on a weekly basis. The Attendance Team at school are: the Assistant headteacher, the attendance officer and the Outreach Mentor. Records are kept of all these meetings.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DFE is updated and as a minimum every 12 months by the headteacher. The policy will be approved by the CEO with guidance and support from the school board.

9. Links with other policies:

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Children with Health Needs Policy

If you have any specific concerns around attendance that you would like to discuss please contact any member of the attendance team and we will endeavour to respond swiftly to you.

Contact details for the Attendance Team key personnel:

Role	Name	Contact
Headteacher	Justine Collinson	justine@thelionworksschool.org
Deputy Headteacher	Kate Baldwin	kate@thelionworksschool.org
Assistant Headteacher (SLT Attendance Lead)	Dave McLaughlin	dave@thelionworksschool.org
Attendance Officer	Rachel Pashley	rachel@thelionworksschool.org
Attendance Administrator	Sally Darby	sally@thelionworksschool.org
Outreach Mentor	Kim Nichols	kim@thelionworksschool.org
BCP School Attendance	https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/Schools-and-learning/At-school/School-attendance.aspx	schoolinclusion@bcpcouncil.gov.uk Tel: 01202 093123

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement
Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student 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 student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed
Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student 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 student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Example of an Attendance concerns initial letter

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: (Student name)

(DOB)

Following a recent check of our attendance data , it has been brought to our attention that (Student) has an attendance figure which is below our expected level. (Student) has an attendance figure of % . Any student who has below 90% attendance is classed as a persistent absence for Government statistics. A copy of your child's registration certificate has been enclosed for your information.

We understand that sometimes children may be absent from school due to health or medical needs. If there is an ongoing persistent health need, which as a school we are unaware of, please do provide us with information about this. It is important that all our students attend school as much as possible to ensure that they are able to fully succeed with their learning and the opportunities presented to them.

It is hoped that by highlighting this matter to you, steps are taken to improve (Student) attendance at school. Should you wish to discuss the contents of this letter with me further or if you would like to arrange a meeting with school, please contact me on 01202 113707 or email hello@thelionworksschool.org. We are here to support you as much as possible.

Appendix 4: Example of a request for leave of absence acceptance letter

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: (Student) DOB

Recently a request was received for (Student) to have a planned absence from school from (Date) to (Date).

Following thorough consideration of the reason for this request for leave of absence, it has been decided that this **would** be classed as an exceptional circumstance. Therefore, should (Student) be absent from the school during the period notified, the absence will be classed as an authorised absence.

It is requested that (Student) is only absent within the dates provided. Any delay in returning to school may lead to an unauthorised absence being recorded. It is asked that (Student) ensures they catch up on any missed schoolwork, due to this period of authorised absence.

Should you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact school on 01202 113707 or email hello@thelionworksschool.org.

Appendix 5: Example of a request for leave of absence denied letter

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: (Student)

DOB

Recently a request was received for (Student) to have a planned absence from school from (date) to (date).

Following thorough consideration of the reasons for this request for leave of absence, it has been decided that this would **not** be classed as an exceptional circumstance. Therefore, should (Student) be absent from school during the period notified, this absence will be classed as unauthorised.

An unauthorised leave of absence from school may lead to further statutory measures being issued. This is usually through a Fixed Penalty Notice: Should the Fixed Penalty Notice be issued; the fine is per parent/carer and per child. Should you have any further information regarding the reasoning for this leave of absence, which may not have already been provided, you are urged to provide this for reconsideration.

Any statutory measures are clearly undesirable; therefore, it is requested that consideration is given to amending any planned arrangements so that these can take place in the 13 weeks in the year students are not required to attend school.

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this letter further, please do not hesitate to contact school on 01202 113707 or email hello@thelionworksschool.org.

Appendix 6: An example of a persistent lateness letter

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: (Student)

DOB

Following a recent review of our registers, it has become clear that (Student) is accumulating an unacceptable number of late marks. These are recorded when a student arrives at school after the start of school day. Since the start of the academic year (Student) has accrued (Amount) of late marks. A copy of your child's registration certificate has been enclosed for your information.

Should a student arrive at school before the registration period ends, this is coded as an L on the registration certificate. Should a student arrive at school after the registration period has ended, this is coded as a U. A U code is classed as an unauthorised absence and ongoing persistent lateness, after the registration period has closed, can lead to further action being taken. Registration closes at 9.45am for morning registration and 12.45pm for afternoon registration.

Persistent late arrival at school not only affects the students learning who arrives late, but also the learning of the rest of the students in the class. Should there be any ongoing reason this lateness is occurring which, as a school we are not aware of, please do contact us to provide further information about this.

It is expected that by highlighting the importance of punctuality to you, steps are taken to improve (student's) timely arrival at school. Should you wish to discuss the contents of this letter further, or if you would like to arrange a meeting, please contact the school on 01202 113707 or email hello@thelionworksschool.org.