



Attendance Policy for Pupils

Approved by SLT February 2024
Next Review February 2027

Introduction and statutory framework

Lonsdale School aims to maximise attendance rates and secure high levels of punctuality in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the full advantage of the learning experiences available to them. If allowed to remain unchecked, persistent absence and lateness can significantly impact on a pupil's progress and achievement. Improving school attendance is an important challenge; we need to work together. Our partnerships with parents play a vital role in ensuring that this is achieved.

In line with the 1996 Education Act¹, we expect all children on roll to attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We will endeavour to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. Attendance is more important than just attainment in school. Regular school attendance can facilitate positive peer relationships, which is a protective factor for mental health and well-being. To this end, we strive to create a happy and rewarding environment for all children. We recognise that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school, so at all times, parents are encouraged to take an active role in school life and to share and support their child's learning. As part of our annual written reports to parents, attendance records are shared.

Why attendance matters

Less than 5 days absence	= 98%+ attendance
14 days absence (approx.)	= 93% attendance
20 days absence (approx.)	= 90% attendance
30 days absence (approx.)	= 84% attendance

If a child achieves 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 40 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

Monitoring of the school's attendance data linked to progress data has clearly shown the significant impact of absence on pupils' attainment and progress.

Attendance: Monitoring and Reviewing

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil. The Attendance Registers are marked twice each day by class teachers, at the start of the morning session and again in the afternoon. Registers are open for thirty minutes at the start of each session.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents#:~:text=Changes%20to%20legislation%3A,force%20at%20a%20future%20date.>

The codes for absences are included in each register. If a child is absent from school for whatever reason, the parent must inform the school in person, in writing or by telephone as soon as possible, usually by telephone on the first morning of absence. Calls are logged and the class teacher informed. Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school received no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given. Registers are checked by office admin staff. All absences and persistent lateness are investigated. When the registers are closed the office admin staff, check for messages and update records where necessary. If a pupil is absent and school has not been contacted, then the office admin staff will contact parents to query why a pupil is not in school.

Attendance data is on the SIMS (School Information Management System). The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) monitor the attendance of pupils each day. Trends and patterns are monitored by SLT, and specific action will be taken by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral & Safeguarding) when appropriate. This may include inviting parents into school to discuss ways of improving attendance or attendance surgeries with the Local Authority (LA) Attendance Officer.

The school has signed up to the DfE live attendance data collection, and benchmark data exists to compare our school within local and national contexts. School sets attendance targets each year. These are ratified by Governors. The Headteacher provides a termly attendance report for Governors. Lonsdale School furthermore works with the LA Attendance Team and meet termly with the school's designated Attendance Officer to discuss the school's attendance data and attendance strategy.

Punctuality and lateness

Classes should start promptly at the start of the day at 9am. Pupils are arriving from 8.45am. Pupils arriving after 9am will be marked as 'late'. Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral & Safeguarding) monitor lateness and punctuality of pupils. Lateness causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is of importance therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time to begin their learning at 9am.

Registers close thirty minutes after morning and afternoon registration times. A pupil will be marked as 'late' unless school has previously acknowledged the reason for their late arrival into school. Where there are concerns about punctuality, class teachers will make contact with parents/carers. If the concerns persist, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral & Safeguarding) contact the parents to discuss punctuality and ways to improve this.

Authorised and unauthorised attendance

Only school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. Every absence will be determined as either authorised or unauthorised. Wherever reasonably possible, we expect parents to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time. If this is not possible, please use the Medical Absences form² and give as much notice as possible. It is important to include a copy of the appointment letter.

² Appendix A

Leave of Absence

DfE guidance indicates that Headteachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Exceptional circumstances are defined as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.

Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances, and the Head must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. Headteachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.

Applications for Leave of Absence

Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance, on the form³, and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.

Lonsdale School can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent or guardian.

Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and are refused will result in the absence being unauthorised, which may then result in legal action (Fixed Penalty Notice) against the parent, if the child is absent from school during that period.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Hertfordshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996. Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits. Lonsdale School understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time, but this does NOT count as an exceptional circumstance.

Leave which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Travelling during quieter time
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a wedding that is not immediate family
- Family birthdays

At Lonsdale School the staff and Governors endeavour to support parents in the responsibility of attendance by:

- Creating an environment in which pupils feel welcomed and valued.
- Making every effort to match learning tasks to pupils' needs
- parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, parents' evenings etc.) of the importance of good attendance

³ Appendix B

Data Analysis

In summary, school collects and stores attendance data using SIMs, school has signed up to the DfE live attendance data collection and provides attendance data to the DfE. The figures returned are then published by the DfE as part of the annual publication of school statistics.

School uses the attendance data to identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences or lateness may be a cause for concern and to track the attendance of individual pupils. Where attendance or punctuality is a concern, the school will use data to analyse attendance by year group, classes, groups of pupils for example ethnicity or gender. The school uses attendance data to identify the main causes of absences within school and to take action to address and improve those areas. The school will use data to monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support. The process is outlined in the document IMPROVING ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY – PROCESS AT LONSDALE SCHOOL⁴

⁴ Appendix C

Appendix A**Medical Absences**

If you are aware of forthcoming medical appointments for your child, please give details below and send into school with your child or email to admin@lonsdale.herts.sch.uk.

Please include a copy of the medical appointment letters or messages.

Date of appointment	Time of appointment	Place	Return to school?

For School Use Only
Register Updated
Date:

Appendix B**Application for leave of Absence****GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION**

Leave of Absence from school for any reason is not allowed without obtaining prior permission from the Headteacher. Permission for Leave of Absence is **not an entitlement**, and the Headteacher, on behalf of the Governors, is not bound to grant it. Should Leave be required the following form should be completed, signed by parent/guardian and Form Tutor and returned to the Headteacher not less than **3 weeks before** the proposed absence. A written response should be sent from the Headteacher granting permission, if appropriate, within a working week.

Name of Student: _____ Class _____

Dates of Proposed Absence:

Reasons for this request

Signature of parent/carer:

Date:

To be completed by School

Number of days requested: _____

Days leave already authorised this academic year: _____

Current percentage attendance: _____%

Decision of Headteacher

Authorised

Not Authorised

Reason:

Appendix C

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY – PROCESS AT LONSDALE SCHOOL

PUPILS WITH UNPLANNED ABSENCE

Daily monitoring is undertaken by SLT and form tutor, form tutor will contact parent/guardian if absence/lateness trend or pattern emerges, escalation to SLT if no improvement within a fortnight. Intervene as early as possible and agree actions with parents/guardians for pupils with higher levels of absence/lateness and those demonstrating growing disengagement with school.

PERSISTENTLY (90% and below) AND SEVERELY ABSENT (50% and below) PUPILS

Put additional and individual targeted support in place, where necessary working with partners, and agree a joint approach with local authorities for all severely absent pupils. Medical and routine appointments, absences due to illness as well as lateness/absence due to transport issues are taken into account on a one-to-one basis.

1st letter – send if attendance falls below 85% to inform parents/guardians of attendance rate.

Medical and routine appointments, absences due to illness as well as lateness/absence due to transport issues are taken into account on a one-to-one basis before letter is sent.

2nd letter – send to offer support to parents/guardians via an attendance support meeting at school with Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral & Safeguarding) if attendance drops below 80%.

Medical and routine appointments, absences due to illness as well as lateness/absence due to transport issues are taken into account on a one-to-one basis before letter is sent.

An attendance support meeting is offered to parents/guardians if attendance does not improve a month after receipt of the 2nd letter to join Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral & Safeguarding) to agree a support plan to improve attendance.

Parents will be invited to an attendance surgery with the LA Attendance Officer if the agreed support plan is not leading to an improved attendance.

A Fixed-Penalty-Notice (FPN) Warning Letter is sent if unauthorised holiday/absence (codes U, O & G) occurs. This will be triggered on the second occasion of a single-day unauthorised absence or on the first occasions a pupil is absent due to an unauthorised holiday or a multi-day unauthorised absence.

PUNCTUALITY

Students who arrive after the registers have closed am/pm are usually marked as unauthorised for that session – code U. Morning lessons start at 9am, afternoon lessons start at 2pm. We do note, however, that a large number of Lonsdale pupils are transported into school by SEN Transport. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral & Safeguarding) monitor punctuality and will address recurring late arrival to school also with the SEN Transport Teams.

Form tutors will contact parents who transport their own child to school if recurring late arrivals are noted through the registration process. If punctuality does not improve within a fortnight, this is then escalated to the SLT. The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral & Safeguarding) will address recurring late arrival to school with the individual parents and discuss any support needed to improve punctuality through an attendance support meeting with an individual support plan to improve punctual arrivals at school. If punctuality does not improve, further advice will be sought from the LA Attendance Team, which may result in a FPN warning letter being issued.

Once a FPN Warning Letter is issued, school can apply to the Local Authority for a FPN to be issued in compliance with the LA FPN Guidance. School will contact their link Local Authority Attendance Officer to discuss whether a penalty notice application is appropriate and to ensure that they have explored and implemented appropriate targeted support to remove barriers to attendance.