

# Attendance Policy

Reviewed by Mr D Mckeon

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Committee)

## CONTEXT

Lever Academy Trust considers excellent attendance and punctuality to be of paramount importance. The link between attendance and a student's ability to learn, make academic progress and achieve success is crucial. Excellent attendance and punctuality ensure that all students take full advantage of the educational opportunities available at Little Lever School. Irregular attendance and poor punctuality undermine the educational process and lead to educational disadvantage.

At Little Lever School we have a praise culture. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all of our students and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality. It is our aim to ensure maximum attendance for each student, as there is clear evidence of a link between poor attendance and low levels of achievement.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Government expects schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, ensure every student has access to full-time education and act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents are expected to perform their **legal duty** by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly and arrive to school on time.

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 child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, 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.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The school recognises that staff, students, parent/carers and everyone in the school community must work together in partnership in order to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality. As part of this, it is expected that:

### Students will:

- Attend school regularly and punctually.
- Attend all lessons punctually.

### Parents/carers should:

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually, fulfilling their legal responsibility.
- Notify the school by telephone before 8.30am if their child is prevented from attending school on the first day and every subsequent day of absence. Phone calls for the Attendance Team should be made to 01204 33 33 00, opting for option 1 on the menu.
- Provide medical evidence of illness to school, as requested.
- Notify the school by telephone as soon as possible if their child will arrive at school late.
- Arrange medical or dental appointments out of school hours wherever possible and provide evidence of **any** appointments in school time i.e. appointment letter/card. If no evidence is provided the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term time i.e family holiday. It should be made clear that this is not a parental right, such requests must be made in advance and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the head teacher. No leave will be authorised for students in year 11.
- Work in partnership with the school to solve any attendance and punctuality issues as and when they occur.
- Encourage their child to maintain a high level of attendance.

### School will:

- Expect students to attend regularly, punctually, properly equipped and ready to learn.
- Provide a welcoming and caring environment in which each member of the school community feels valued and safe.
- Promptly investigate all absenteeism and lateness.
- Work with students and their families to ensure good levels of attendance and punctuality are maintained.
- Use rewards and incentives effectively to acknowledge the efforts of students who maintain good levels of attendance and timekeeping or make significant improvements.
- Challenge the behaviour of students and families who give low priority to the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Provide information, support, advice and guidance to parents and students on issues relating to attendance and punctuality.
- Work effectively with relevant partners, services and agencies to provide additional support to students and families, where appropriate.
- Include students' attendance in reports to parents/carers at least annually.
- The senior leader with responsibility for attendance in school is Mr Davies and he can be contacted on 01204 33 33 00.

## **REGISTRATION PROCEDURES**

Students are required to register at the start of the morning registration session and again at the beginning of each session.

AM registration takes place during prep time. All students should be in school for 8.30am.

PM registration takes place at the start of session 3 for all students. The exact time of this will vary, depending on which year group the student is in, due to split lunches.

The school day officially finishes at 14:45 although this is often extended for students who may be taking part in enrichment activities or for year 11 boost sessions.

Little Lever School expects teaching staff to take a register on SIMS at the start of every session. If this is not possible due to computer failure, then paper registers are taken and sent to the Attendance and Welfare Leader, who manually inputs them on the system.

Only the Attendance and Welfare Leader will alter the attendance register; there are only three occasions when the attendance register can be altered:

- If it is discovered that an error has been made.
- Where an unexplained absence has since been satisfactorily explained.
- Where a student's name has been legally changed.

## **PROMOTING EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE**

To ensure that attendance remains a top priority, our Attendance Tracker is used in Prep Time with all students on a weekly basis to ensure that the message regarding the crucial link between attendance and achievement is relentlessly delivered to students. Students are required to record their current attendance figure in their planners so that all are constantly aware of this.

In addition to various awards and badges for excellent attendance, we also operate an attendance lottery, called 'In it to win it', as a further incentive for rewarding those students who meet our expectations from an attendance perspective. The criteria for this lottery being that all students who achieve 100% attendance in a week, having been on time, every day for the five days, will be allocated a 'Golden Ticket' on the Tracker for that week. In a typical half-term, therefore, it might be possible for a student to accrue 7 Golden Tickets; the premise being that the more tickets a student receives, the greater chance they have of winning in the Golden Ticket Draw which takes place each half-term in a live draw in assembly, with £50 vouchers for a shop of their choice being the prize for the winner in each year group.

## **PUNCTUALITY**

Students arriving after their start time must sign in at the attendance office (student reception) and will be recorded as late. All students who arrive late to school, for any reason, will be required to attend late correction after school on the same day.

1<sup>st</sup> late in a week – 10 minute correction

2<sup>nd</sup> late in a week – 15 minute correction

3<sup>rd</sup> late in a week – 20 minute correction

4<sup>th</sup> late in a week – 25 minute correction

5<sup>th</sup> late in a week – 30 minute correction

Should they fail to attend this detention students will be issued with a 30 minute correction the following day.

Registration closes at 9.15am. Students who arrive after this time, will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for the morning session. All students who arrive late to school after 9.15am, without valid reason, will be issued with a 30 minute correction to be served at a later date (usually the following school day). You will be advised of the day this detention will take place on via text.

Persistent poor punctuality may lead to the Local Authority issuing a penalty notice.

## **CATEGORISING ABSENCE**

***By law, only the school can authorise absence, not parents or carers.***

All absence will be treated as unauthorised unless an explanation for a student's absence has been received and authorised by the school. The school may require parents/carers to provide additional information or evidence before an absence is accepted as authorised. This will usually be in the form of prescription / letter / appointment card etc.

If a child is absent from school without authorisation for 10 school sessions (5 days) over two concurrent half-term periods, parents/carers are committing an offence and could be liable to receive a Penalty Notice.

The school will send a letter home, informing parents/carers when their child has reached 6 unauthorised sessions of absence (3 days) from the principal, formally warning of the possibility of legal action should there be no improvement. A Penalty Notice will be issued by the local authority when 10 unauthorised sessions have been reached over the period of two half-terms.

## **FIRST RESPONSE TO ABSENCE**

***It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school of student absence.***

When a student is absent from school, and no notification of absence has been received, the Attendance Team will endeavour to contact parents/carers by telephone and text message. If a student's attendance is causing concern, a home visit may also be carried out to support parents / carers.

If a student who is subject to a Child Protection Order is absent without satisfactory explanation, the Early Intervention Team will be contacted before 10.00am and asked to undertake a home visit.

Where there is a safeguarding concern relating to a student's absence, and the student is not subject to a Child Protection Order, the Attendance Team will undertake a home visit. The purpose of the visit is to establish the safety and well-being of the student. If safeguarding concerns arise this will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Where a student is absent for three consecutive days or more a home visit will be carried out. Again, the purpose of this visit is to establish the safety and well-being of the student and to offer support, if required, with the student returning to school.

Descriptor	Attendance	Equals absent number of days	Learning hours lost
<b>Excellent</b>	100%	0	0
	99%	2	10
<b>Good</b>	98%	4	20
	97%	6	30
<b>Satisfactory</b>	96%	7.5	37.5
	95%	9.5	47.5
<b>Cause for Concern</b>	90%	19	95
	89%	21	105
	88%	23	115
	87%	25	125
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	86%	27	135

## ILLNESS

When reporting absence via the school's voicemail system, parents/carers should provide the following information:

- Student's full name and year group
- A brief description of illness/reason for absence

Absence due to minor ailments i.e. headaches, period pains will not be authorised. Absences with insufficient information provided i.e. "unwell" will not be authorised. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to illness. This evidence can be in the form of a letter, copy of prescription, or appointment card etc.

If a student is absent for more than 3 consecutive days, evidence will be required to authorise the absence.

## MEDICAL/DENTAL APPOINTMENTS

Wherever possible, medical and dental appointments should be made outside of the school day or in holiday periods. All absence of this nature will be recorded as unauthorised until evidence of the appointment has been provided. This evidence can be in the form of a letter, copy of prescription, appointment card etc. Students will be expected to attend school before or after their appointment and a full day's absence will only be authorised, with evidence, in exceptional cases.

## AUTHORISED CIRCUMSTANCES

The school understands that there may be some occasions where there is cause for absence for exceptional circumstances, i.e. bereavements, funerals. Parents/carers should discuss these absences with the Attendance Team in the first instance.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE/HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

Students will only be granted leave of absence in term time in the most exceptional of circumstances. No leave will be authorised for students in year 11.

Parents/carers who take their children out of school in term time without relevant authorisation are liable to receive a Penalty Notice.

## **RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

Little Lever School acknowledges the multi-faith culture of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods and this necessitates a consideration for authorised absence.

In the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day is to be designated for any religious observance. Any further absence may be unauthorised.

## **PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

If data from the school's Attendance Tracker highlights that a student's attendance has become a cause for concern, a more intense level of monitoring will be introduced. This data is used to ensure that attendance improvement efforts are targeted towards students, or particular cohorts of students, who need it most.

Students may be placed on a Form Tutor or Year Leader Attendance Challenge for those whose attendance falls within a certain bracket. Furthermore, parents/carers could be asked to attend a meeting to discuss issues surrounding their child's absence. If a student's attendance falls below **90%** it will be regarded as 'persistent absence' and be subject to more detailed scrutiny by the Attendance and Welfare Leader. Unless absence can be explained by a one-off reason that is unlikely to be repeated (e.g. a period in hospital, bereavement) it may be decided to set up a Student Attendance Plan. The plan identifies patterns of absence from school and barriers to securing good attendance. It sets out strategies to support students in school, and at home, to improve levels of attendance. A target will be set for each student and a review date will be set to evaluate the success of the plan.

Further additional support and intervention strategies to be used at this stage may include:

- Recording absences as 'Unauthorised until Evidenced' i.e. GP appointment card or copy of prescription.
- Regular home visits.
- An early help assessment may be completed with the family in order to identify what support might be required to improve a student's attendance.
- Seeking family support from the Early Intervention Team or other relevant agencies.
- The Local Authority may issue a penalty notice or instigate legal proceedings for an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
- Requesting a medical examination to be carried out where insufficient medical evidence exists to justify such high levels of absence.
- Arranging meetings with senior staff/trustees in school to explain the need for good levels of attendance and to set out relevant strategies and targets.

## **TRUANCY**

Truancy checks will be carried out as part of the First Day Absence Procedures. Additional checks will also be made when there is information that a student may be truanting from school or if a voicemail reporting absence comes from a phone number that is not saved on a student's record.

When a student has truanted from school, or from any lessons during the school day, the parent will be informed at the earliest opportunity once relevant checks have been made in school. Where a student has truanted, whether the parent is aware of/in agreement with the absence or not, consequences will be put in place for the student, it will not be authorised and could lead to the parent being issued with a penalty notice by the Local Authority.