

Pupil Attendance Policy (SEND)

Date: May 2022

Review date: September 2022

Lime Trust

Lime Trust is founded upon four principles: Leadership, Innovation, Motivation and Excellence. It creates a sustainable group of exceptional, high-performing schools that improve life chances, and are trusted and respected in their communities. Lime Trust provides a high quality education for pupils through school-to-school collaboration, Trust direction, high challenge and support.

Along with our principles, Lime Trust has core values that are demonstrated and upheld by our pupils, employees and stakeholders. Respect for all underlines our seven core values:

Respect
Equality
Self-worth
Partnership
Enjoyment
Communication (a voice for all)
Trust

Introduction

Lime Trust supports the general principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We put the best interests of the child at the centre of all we do and actively promote the key rights, respecting values of non-discrimination, participation, safety and personal development. We believe that every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously.

We seek to ensure that all our pupils receive a full time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to achieve their full potential. The school strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each pupil feels cared for, secure and respected. We expect all our pupils to attend school on time every day, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

Aims of the Policy

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard its pupils to the best of its ability
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.

- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of Havering's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

Policy objectives

- To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children
- To reduce persistent absence
- To reduce or eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence
- To promote commitment to education and high achievement
- To maximise the potential of every individual pupil

Promoting Attendance

The Governors, Headteacher and staff will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement and newsletters.

Rewarding Good Attendance

We are aware absence is unavoidable for some of our pupils. When considering the use of rewards, we therefore make sure we do not discriminate against people who are absent due to medical or other unavoidable reasons.

Different schools operate different systems to reward attendance appropriate to the needs and understanding of their cohort. At Forest Approach we are currently designing our 100% attendance certificates when we take under consideration possible attendance only.

Roles and Responsibilities for Good Attendance

Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. Our schools give high priority to working with pupils and parents to ensure we are doing our best to support the needs of our pupils. We recognise that good communication and strong home-school links are effective ways of solving any attendance issues and barriers that may impact on pupils' achievement. We have high expectations that where possible pupils should have a minimum of 96% attendance, although we are aware some of our pupils have complex medical needs that may result in prolonged or frequent periods of absence. We encourage parents to send their children to school when they are fit to attend, and we offer support at home if a pupil is absent for extended periods due to their medical needs.

Roles and Responsibilities of Parents/ Carers

Understanding types of absence coding

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents, Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy

Reluctant attenders/ school refusal

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse. School refusal/school phobia is a psychological condition that usually has been medically diagnosed. Other arrangements may be put in place for a child with genuine school phobia.

Family Support Workers

Lime Academy Forest Approach has two friendly Family Support Workers who are there to help you with issues such as:

- Personal independent payment/DLA forms
- Information about benefits
- Referrals to short breaks
- Referrals to Child and Family Consultation Services (CAMHS).
- Referrals to specialist children's health services
- School attendance
- Free school meals
- Transitions and next steps in education
- General family support
- Liaise with external services.
- Educational Health and Care Plans
- Specialist workshops for parents

Educational Welfare Officer

Forest Approach works closely with Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), who support parents/carers and pupils to achieve good attendance and help them to break down any barriers to their attendance. This is an essential part of working with children and young people to become successful learners and to give them the best possible start in life.

The EWO roles are:

- To contribute to raising achievement by improving school attendance
- To assist the school in meeting their obligations and targets in relation to school attendance, especially persistent absence
- To make unsupervised contact with parents/carers to assess the reasons impacting on attendance of individual students and facilitating their return to education
- To initiate appropriate legal action to ensure the school is carrying out its statutory responsibility. This will involve preparing statements, attending and presenting evidence

Family Support Workers and Attendance Lead work together with the Education Welfare Officer to monitor absence and punctuality and to support families overcome any barriers. We take unauthorised absence and persistent lateness seriously and while we will work to resolve the issue if the problem persists formal letters will be sent out and if appropriate fines may be issued.

Pupils and families will not be sanctioned for any lateness caused by Local Authority (LA) Transport. Parents hold the responsibility for pupils that arrive late to school who do not use the LA transport.

Registers

Class registers are legal documents.

DfE guidance states registers must be taken twice a day, first thing in the morning and straight after lunch. Registers must be taken by the Class Teacher or the member of staff leading the class and must be done in the presence of the pupils. Each school has a 25-minute registration period each morning. The times vary slightly in each school.

At Lime Academy Forest Approach registers are taken twice a day. Pupils arriving after the end of registration will be marked as late.

The morning registration is at 9.00 a.m.
The afternoon registration is at 1.00p.m.

On each occasion class teacher must record whether every pupil is:

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

*(Our Teachers record present or absent with office staff recording the reason)

The school will 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

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration.

Only the Headteacher or designated member(s) of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absent). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year, or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action. If a pupil is persistently late our Family Support or SLT member will arrange to meet with the family as soon as the pattern is identified.

First Day Absence Contact

Parents are expected to notify the school if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. When a message is left regarding absence a member of school staff will call home to confirm the absence.

We have a robust and effective First Day Calling procedure in place to ensure that any unplanned student absences are identified promptly, with welfare calls made immediately after the school's register has closed.

Our electronic registration system, Arbor, is used to generate a report identifying all uncoded/unplanned absences. Initial checks are made with the relevant class teacher to establish whether they are aware of the reason for the absence, or whether a message has been conveyed via email/ EFL which has not been passed to the school admin team.

If the reason for the child's absence is still unknown the reception team will call parents to ascertain why the child is unable to attend school and the register will be coded accordingly. In the event that it is not possible to make contact with parents, calls will subsequently be made to other contacts recorded on the school's system, in order of priority. This process all happens as soon as registers have closed.

If after calling all the numbers contact still cannot be made, a home visit will be carried out by the school Family Support Worker/member of the safeguarding team to ensure that the child and their family are safe and well. If this is unsuccessful support from children's services/MASH/Police will be sought to establish the whereabouts and safety of the child.

Any unplanned and unexpected absence for a child subject to a Child Protection Plan will be advised to the allocated social worker immediately.

Continuing Absence Procedures

A home visit will be made by the Family Support Workers for any child who is absent for 5 consecutive school days or who has a pattern of erratic attendance, or persistent lateness after registers close. Any child who is absent for more than 5 days will need to bring medical evidence to school or future absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Frequent/Persistent Absence Procedures

Regular trawls of the registers will be made to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), that is to say absence of 10% or more in a half term. The attendance lead will be responsible for identification of any emerging concerns, and putting in place actions for each pupil of concern.

Initially the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues the school will refer to the School Nurse if the problem appears to be a medical one.

In cases where there appear to be issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child, referral may be made through the Multi -Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for external agency support. All persistently absent pupils and their parents may be subject to an Early Help Record. Such a plan may include allocation of additional in-school or external support.

Examples of unjustifiable reasons for absence from school would be:

- Going shopping with parents, birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy

Sanctions for an Unauthorised Absence without permission

If individual pupil's unauthorised absence rises above 12 sessions in any term, a parent can receive a Penalty Notice or prosecution under the Education Act 1996 Section 444.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Under Section 23 of the Anti-Social behaviour Act 2003, Local Authorities are required to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to the parent/carer of a child who has irregular attendance, where the absence is unauthorised by the school. A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued for unauthorised leave of absence by the Local Authority following discussions with the Family Support Worker. Your local council can give each parent a fine of £60, which rises to £120 each if you do not pay within 21 days. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.

The criteria that the school will apply to determine 'exceptional' is a circumstance that has unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another, each individual request will be considered on its merits.

In line with Pupil Regulations the Headteacher's decision is final.

No authorisation for leave of absence can be given retrospectively, which means that permission must always be sought beforehand.

In the event that there is an absence after a school holiday, the school will need to see proof, in the terms of a medical certificate or flight delay. The school will decide if the absence will be authorised or unauthorised.

In the event that leave for exceptional absence is granted, any further days of absence will be regarded as unauthorised.

If the pupil is subject to child protection plan, social services will be immediately notified. Leave will not be authorised at times when children are scheduled to take public examinations. Parents/carers will be notified as soon as these dates are known.

Court Proceedings

If the penalty notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28 days, the Local Authority may prosecute for the offence. This prosecution is for the offence of failing to secure attendance at school. Prosecutions are brought under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The Local Authority can also use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the pupil. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment.

Non starters

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the local authority CME team for further checks.

Governance

The Board of Trustees have a responsibility for attendance at the school. This is delegated on a daily basis through the Headteacher to Class Teachers, Family Support Worker and Admin Team. Governors regularly monitor the effectiveness of the attendance management strategies and attendance policy. The Family Support Worker provides regular updates in regards to both attendance and punctuality to the Headteacher and Governors.

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Introduction

We aim to encourage all members of the school community to reach out for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you as the adult, to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. It will be better for them in the long run to go to school, rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and make them even more reluctant. Your job as the parent is to encourage them to attend.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is YOUR legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued.

Learning

Any absence affects the child's learning, and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up. Research has shown that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

Safeguarding

A pupil may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly.

There is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 96%. This may make it easier to understand:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks

90% equates to a day off every two weeks

85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks

80% equates to one whole day off every week

Absence Procedures for Parents and Carers

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence and keep us informed thereafter via the absence line or directly at the school office
- If your child is due to have a planned medical appointment or procedure/operation, you must notify the school in advance and provide documentary evidence in the form of an official letter or appointment card, where available make appointments outside of school hours.
- The school may still carry out a home visit even if parents call in to report the absence.

If Parents fail to contact the school or provide a reason for absence the reception team will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our EWO if the absences persist
- Ask you to provide medical evidence, for example a doctor's letter or prescription for medication, if attendance is persistently below the expected level

If following all of the above attendance remains a cause for concern formal attendance management procedures may be initiated.

Term Dates

Confirmation of our school term dates are available from our websites or the main school office.

Please see the term dates information for Lime Academy Forest Approach below:

<https://limeacademyforestapproach.org/academy-information/term-dates-calendar/>

Special Leave Requests in Term Time

We understand and encourage participation in external school activities and pursuits. This can sometimes lead to pupils requiring special leave from school to attend additional training, competitions and other events.

Any child requesting special leave must supply a letter in writing to the Head Teacher, accompanied by an official invite on headed paper from the organisers / providers. This request is discretionary and applications will be considered on a case by case basis. Any absence due to sickness prior to or after the requested date will be marked as an unauthorised absence, unless medical evidence is provided.

Child Performance License – if your child is modelling / performing for film / TV / publications etc. legislation sets out that in addition to the above guidance the parents must obtain a Local Authority License. The Local Authority Child Performance Policy details all the by laws relating to this area.

Informing the school of a change of address or contact details

Please make sure that the contact details you have given to the school are kept up to date, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you we have the correct details.

If you are moving to a new borough but plan to still send your child to their current school you must notify the local authority and inform them of the new borough you will be moving too.

Parents/carers must notify the school immediately if they are moving abroad and provide the new home address and new school address. The parents/carers must provide flight details. Failure to

provide this information to the school will result in a Child Missing Education referral being made to the local authority and the school may also communicate with 'Home Office' and other child safeguarding agencies if necessary.

Moving to a new school

Parents/carers must notify the school immediately if they are removing their child to start at another school and provide us with the name of the new school. Parents/ carers are also responsible for notifying the local authority that they will be moving out of borough. If a family are moving to a new address, which requires the child to attend a new school but the child is not yet registered then parents/carers must provide school and the local authority with their new address. If a child moves away and we have not been notified, we will make every reasonable effort to locate the child and their family. If we are unable to make communication with the family, the child is kept on roll until we receive confirmation from the new school and a Children Missing Education referral will be made to the local authority and the Special Educational Needs Team will be informed.

School Contact Details:

Head Teacher: Mr Geoff Hadlow

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