



LANCASTER STEINER SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

VERSION DATE: APRIL 2023
DOCUMENT REVIEW PERIOD: JANUARY – MARCH 2025



This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education, and is prepared using the following DFE publications.

- [School Attendance Departmental: advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities \(May 2022\)](#)
- [Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs May 2013 - https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education](https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education)

INTRODUCTION

Regular and punctual school attendance is required by law for all pupils over school age (i.e. attending school in the year in which they turn 5). Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Lancaster Steiner School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school. This policy is made available to parents during the admissions process and is also on our school website so available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school. Paper copies are available on request.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the college of teachers work to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and trustees in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.



WE MAINTAIN AND PROMOTE GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY THROUGH:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

DEFINITIONS

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

The Dept of Education states that only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

PROCEDURES

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data and report this to the governing body termly.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality
- To refer to School Attendance Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the college of teachers.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teachers are responsible for:



- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the College of Teachers where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues

THE COLLEGE OF TEACHERS IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

ADMINISTRATION STAFF IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who go home or arrive late
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the class teacher and SENDCo
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

PARENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time, in writing. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.



REGISTRATION

The school garden is open from 8.45am. The bell rings at 8.55am. Class teachers take the register which is left open until 9.15am. Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session (Attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present).

Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

LATENESS

After 9.00am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way will be marked as late in the attendance record (L). Records are kept of those pupils who are late, the late book must be filled in and signed by the parent/guardian. Children arriving after 9.30am will be marked as U, an unauthorised absence. Class teachers alert office staff if a pupil has not arrived by 9.15am and office staff will contact parents for further information.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning and settling in time.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and offer an opportunity to discuss issues that are preventing attendance and punctuality, for example, a health issue, SEND or transport. School will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues. For certain children with SEND documentation can be found in pupils IPPs regarding attendance targets. Part of the meeting may involve drawing up a contract. If the parent is not able to adhere to the contract and lateness or absence persists we may have to involve the School Attendance Service.

ABSENCES

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All reports of absence due to illness must be made either in person, via telephone or by email to the office.

All absence must be reported every day, even in the case of long-term illness, unless agreed by written consent from the School Manager or class teacher.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on register. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The college of teachers has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised. Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

FIRST DAY CONTACT

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process.

We will contact the parents for clarification of reason for absence. If the staff cannot contact the parent or emergency contacts we would follow our safeguarding procedure and speak to our Designated Safeguarding Lead. We will do everything we can to find out a child's whereabouts which may include a visit to the family



home. If attempts to locate a child have failed, we may assume the child is missing. Staff will use their professional judgement and risk assess the urgency of the situation to help inform the timeframe required in establishing the pupils' whereabouts before notifying the Police. The DSL, together with the class teacher, will assess the child's vulnerability. If we suspect a child is at risk of harm we will contact the police.

ILLNESS

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for a minimum of 15 days we will work with the family and the Local Authority to ensure that pupils can keep up with their school work. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to arrange suitable full time education (or as much education as the child's health allows). The Local Authority should attempt arrange this as soon as it is clear that the child will be away from school for more than 15 school days (consecutively or cumulatively), although there is no statutory timeframe. For long term medical conditions, education can be provided at home or at hospital.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be an appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

PARENTAL REQUEST FOR ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL FOR HOLIDAY

As an independent school, we can allow, in special circumstances holiday absence, say if the holiday is of great value to the child or is for a wedding or funeral. This cannot be a habitual occurrence.

However, in order to obtain this the parent must apply to the class teacher in writing. We understand that there are unforeseen circumstances such as funerals when it is not possible to plan in advance however wherever possible please make a request in advance. The communication must have the reasons that you wish to take your child out of school and what benefit it will have on the child.

We will then assess this within the College of Teachers and inform you of our decision via the class teacher after the College of Teachers' meeting. If we feel being out of school will be detrimental to your child's education, we will not allow such absence and will inform you in writing.

We will be assessing the following:

- Your child's progression in the class
- The importance of being in school at that time in the school year

If you fail to follow procedure on this, the absence may be classed as unauthorised.

TAKING YOUR CHILD OUT OF SCHOOL IN AN EMERGENCY

If you need to take your child from school in an emergency, this must be done by providing the class teacher a letter explaining why you need to remove your child and how long you expect this time out to be. This must be presented to the School Manager, who will contact a member of the College of Teachers and the class teacher. Under no circumstances are parents allowed to disrupt the class to take their child there and then. Staff, if feeling that this is not appropriate, have the right to contact the Lancashire County Council School Safeguarding Team in order to assess this further.

ADDRESSING ATTENDANCE CONCERNS

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the college of teachers to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance



are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school may take advice from the School Attendance Service.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

If you choose to take your child away on absence without, in the school's opinion, good reason or thought for the child's education for more than ten occasions in a ten-week period, the school will, on the first instance, contact you in person and then in writing. It will be explained that any further absences will be classed as unauthorised absence. School may again take advice from the School Attendance Service.

GENERAL

- All classes are to maintain daily pupil registers for morning and afternoon sessions.
- Coding must be used to minimise error,
- All registers to be checked by the office staff daily and any unexplained absence investigated as per lateness and missing child policy,
- Children who leave without informing school that they are transferring to another school or intend to home educate are reported as being off-roll to the Local Authority,
- If parents/carers request absence for holiday during term time, then the child's progression in class will be a consideration,
- If parents/carers request absence for holiday during term time, the importance of being in school at that time in the school year will be a consideration,
- Concerns about attendance are in the first place discussed with the parents then, if deemed necessary advice is sought from the Schools Attendance Officer,
- Attendance issues relative to health are dealt with supportively and clearly with special measures being provided for these children.

See also the Parents Handbook on our school website



REQUEST FOR AUTHORISED ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME FOR CHILDREN OF STATUTORY SCHOOL AGE.

Once children reach statutory school age, at the age of 5, legal requirements govern attendance. Family holidays should be avoided during term time. The school can only approve absence for family holidays if it considers that there are **special reasons** that warrant the holiday. We are sympathetic to individual circumstances and understand that this is not always possible. Please note that we will take into account the child’s general attendance when considering requests for term time holiday leave.

Up to 10 days per academic year may be authorised, although there is **no** parental entitlement to holiday leave of absence. The school can only approve absence for family holidays if it considers that there are special reasons that warrant the holiday. Please note that holiday prices and the fact that parents have booked a holiday before checking with the school are not classed as special reasons.

Before the school is asked to authorise a holiday, we would like to encourage you to think about how your child’s absence would affect his/her progress, and how their absence will affect the class as a whole.

The school should be consulted **prior** to booking.

NAMES OF CHILDREN	CLASS

DATES REQUESTED

FROM	TO

NUMBER OF SCHOOL DAYS

[COVID COMPLIANT RISK ASSESSMENT]

PLEASE STATE WHICH COUNTRY YOU ARE TRAVELLING TO/THROUGH AND DATE OF RETURN TO THE UK.



PLEASE SAY WHY THIS ABSENCE IS IN TERM TIME

SIGNED		PRINT NAME	
		DATE	/ /

[COVID COMPLIANT RISK ASSESSMENT]:

DATE CHILD CAN RETURN TO SCHOOL (AFTER 14 DAY ISOLATION PERIOD) _____

WE DO/DO NOT AUTHORISE THE REQUEST

REASONS FOR DECISION:	SIGNATURE (COLLEGE OF TEACHERS):				
FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY					
PARENT NOTIFIED	TEACHER NOTIFIED				
<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">DATE</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">/ /</td> </tr> </table>	DATE	/ /	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">DATE</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">/ /</td> </tr> </table>	DATE	/ /
DATE	/ /				
DATE	/ /				
