



LONG DITTON

INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL

THE HEART OF LONG DITTON SINCE 1911

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Last reviewed : Summer 2016
To be reviewed : Summer 2017

The Staff and Governors of Long Ditton Infant and Nursery School are committed, in partnership with the parents, pupils, Governors and the Local Authority to providing a school which values every child in the community and of which the wider village community can be proud.

By law parents whose children are of compulsory school age and registered at school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school daily. If they fail to do this they are guilty of an offence and may be given a penalty notice or prosecuted under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

The aim of this policy is to clarify for parents, staff and governors the school's procedures and practices regarding attendance, absence and lateness. By implementing the policy we would also expect to reduce rates of authorised and unauthorised absence and improve the punctuality of pupils.

The Governors have taken the decision that under no circumstances will holidays during term time be approved.

EXPECTATIONS

The school expects that all pupils will:

- Attend school daily
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day.

The school expects that all parents /carers/persons who have day to day responsibility for the children will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities (see appendix 1)
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day
- Ensure that they contact the school whenever the child/children is unable to attend school
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school

School staff will

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils at least twice daily
- Monitor every pupil's attendance
- Contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain a written note authorising the absence
- Encourage excellent attendance
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Provide sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns

- Make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the LA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Service

LEVELS OF ATTENDANCE

Although there is no precise definition of what constitutes 'good' attendance, the national average for attendance in primary schools is 96%. We therefore aim for overall attendance at Long Ditton Infant and Nursery School to be at least at this level if not higher. For individual pupils, therefore, we would broadly regard attendance of 96% (or above) as a reasonable target. Attendance may be affected by a number of factors, and most children will go through periods when their attendance is lower than usual due to illness or other reasons. When considering a child's attendance record, therefore, we will always look at patterns of attendance over a period of at least a year.

Attendance of 90%, which may sound high, in fact represents the equivalent of a day per fortnight away from school, or a total of 19 days in a school year. If sustained over 5 years, this would equate to nearly half a year of schooling missed in that period. Such levels of absence would clearly have a negative impact on attainment and progress, and that is why we aim for children to attend school as regularly and punctually as possible.

Attendance is monitored each week by the head teacher and half termly by the Governors. Any patterns are investigated and action taken to ensure that attendance of all children is regular. Attendance of 90% will be monitored closely and letters sent out to parents warning of low attendance. If attendance does not improve a meeting will be arranged with the head teacher and specific targets set. If attendance still does not improve a referral to Educational Welfare Services will be made.

REGISTRATION

Registers are an important legal document and all staff involved in registration (teaching and administrative staff) complete registers clearly, to an agreed school format and with a common understanding of the definitions of authorised and unauthorised absence.

PUNCTUALITY AND LATENESS

If children are late for school on a regular basis it can be very disruptive, not only for the children who are late but also for the rest of the class. If patterns of regular lateness are observed this will be referred to the Head teacher, who will then refer the case to the Education Welfare Officer.

Registers are completed by class teachers within the first five minutes of the morning or afternoon sessions. The registers are taken at 8.55. Any child who arrives between 8.55 and 9.10 will be marked as late (L). Please note that your child's arrival needs to be recorded in the late book in case of an emergency. It is the parent/guardians responsibility to sign the in the late book in the office.

The registers close at 9.10 and any child arriving after this time will be marked as 'late after close of registers' (U). This is a statistical absence for the whole session. If no adequate explanation for the lateness is given by the parents, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

When a pupil is absent at the time of registration, the law requires all schools to indicate in their registers whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

An absence may be authorised if it has been approved in advance by the school or if it falls into one of the categories listed below. It is essentially a morning, afternoon or day away from school for a good reason. No absence from school is ever automatically authorised.

Absences cannot be authorised by parents - only the school can do this. Notification of an absence by parents does not in itself guarantee that the absence will be authorised. All schools complete an annual return which details the overall levels of authorised and unauthorised absence in the school.

Absences for the reasons listed below are more likely to be authorised, provided that parents provide an adequate explanation:

ILLNESS AND MEDICAL/ DENTAL APPOINTMENTS

Absence through illness is the most common reason for pupils to be away from school, and such absence is authorised when parents **provide confirmation** of the illness (this may be in the form of an appointment card, chemist receipt etc.) Absence through illness cannot be authorised if the only confirmation received is from the pupil. The same principles apply to medical or dental appointments.

If a child is ill or will be absent for another reason, parents are asked to telephone the school as early as possible on the morning of the first day of absence, giving the child's name, class, the reason for the absence and the expected date of return. This will be recorded in a book in the school office and this information will be used to complete the register. **Parents must follow this up with a letter for less serious illnesses and/or medical evidence such as an appointment card or copy of a prescription.**

Parent/Guardian Illness Procedure Quick Guide:

- 1. Call the office as soon as possible, but by 9.00am at the latest, detailing name, class, illness and expected return to school.***
- 2. When the child returns to school a written letter detailing the illness should be given in to the office.***
- 3. If medical treatment has been sought, or if attendance is being monitored, copies of appointment cards, prescriptions, chemist receipts should be given to the office as proof of illness.***

In cases where absence through illness is excessively high or where there is a continuing pattern of such absence, this will be discussed with the parents.

If a child is away and, by 9.00am, the school has not been notified, a member of the office staff will ring to find out the reason for the absence. Should the child return to school and no reason for an absence is given a letter will be sent to the parents/carers asking for details about the absence within 10 days.

If the school has not heard from the parents/carers after 10 days the absence will be changed from N (no reason yet given) to O (unauthorised) and a statutory referral made to the Educational Welfare Service.

ABSENCE FOR A PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

Absence for amateur productions and one-off performances may be authorised at the school's discretion. Children's involvement in professional work is regulated by the LA under the **Children (Performances) Regulations 1968**, and parents must apply for a licence from the LA before an absence may be authorised.

FAMILY BEREAVEMENT

The school will respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals. If the funeral takes place some distance away this will be accounted for in terms of the number of days to be authorised. This would be authorised under the category of 'exceptional circumstances'.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

In exceptional circumstances an authorised absence may be granted. Head teachers, on behalf of the Governors, can grant leave at their discretion for up to one week (5 days - 10 sessions) in any school year. No parents/carers can demand leave of absence for their child/children as a right. Two examples quoted by DFE of exceptional circumstances are for family trauma and Armed Forces or other Services' annual leave. Government guidelines state that as a general rule absence for family holidays will not be authorised and parents who take their children out of school for a holiday in term time are at risk of receiving a penalty notice.

UNAUTHORISED AND PERSISTENT ABSENCE

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Absences are 'unauthorised' when they are either unexplained or unjustified. Unauthorised absences are those which, in general, do not fall into any of the categories listed above.

Examples of absence which would not be authorised include:

- a day out or a birthday treat;
- going shopping
- looking after another child, a parent or keeping a family member company
- taking time out for a family holiday because it is cheaper

Lateness after the close of the register may also be recorded as an unauthorised absence if no acceptable reason for the lateness is provided.

In determining whether absences should be authorised or not, each case will be considered on its individual merits and with reference to the principles outlined above.

PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Persistent absence is defined as absence, whether authorised or unauthorised, of 15% or more. In 'real terms' this is the equivalent of 1 day's absence from school per week, and children with such low attendance are those who are least likely to benefit from school and whose attainment is likely to be lower. The school and EWO regularly monitor attendance, and will discuss with parents if their child's attendance is causing concern.

There may be a number of factors which contribute to low attendance, and for some children their attendance may only be very low for a short period of time, for example due to illness. Although the attendance of these children is still tracked, it is those children whose attendance is low over a period of time who cause most concern and for whom a referral to the Education Welfare Service is likely to be made. The EWO, school and other support services will work closely with families with the aim of improving attendance.

APPROVED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Pupils who are engaged in programmed educational activities cannot be marked present since they are not on site. However, school visits, field trips, approved sporting activities and work experience are classified as 'approved educational activities' and do not, for the purposes of registration, count as absence. To qualify for authorisation under this category, activities would normally be attended by a member of staff or another individual authorised by the school.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

The school has an attached Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who visits the school on a regular basis. The principal role of the EWO is to ensure regular attendance through working closely with schools in identifying attendance and behavioural problems. The Education Welfare Service also has more general responsibilities for the welfare of children, and the EWO therefore has an important role in liaising between various agencies.

The EWO will monitor registers and record:

- patterns of illness or other authorised absence which may be causing concern
- any instances of unauthorised and/or persistent absence (above the occasional day)
- any patterns of persistent lateness

The EWO will then liaise with the school and decide if any action is required. This may include home visits to offer support and guidance. In cases where there is persistent poor attendance (without justification), the Education Welfare Service is empowered to commence legal proceedings on behalf of the Local Authority.

PENALTY NOTICES TO ADDRESS POOR AND UNAUTHORISED ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

A Penalty Notice may be issued as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and will be used by Surrey County Council in the following circumstances :-

1. Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
2. Leave of absence in term time (5 days or 10 sessions or more). **Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.**

In such cases the Headteacher/Governing Body have to judge whether there are exceptional circumstances and may request that the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices when the absence is not authorised. Warnings will not be given where it can be shown that parents have been notified that such absences will not be authorised.

3. The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where it is judged that a parent is failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance. This will be considered if the attendance is below 90% and there are 10 or more unauthorised sessions in the previous 6 school weeks, which may include a pupil arriving late after close of registration.

If you believe at any stage that your child's absence from school may leave you liable to receive a Penalty Notice, it is extremely important that you take action without delay to secure their regular attendance. If you have any questions or require further support to achieve an improvement, please contact the school or the education welfare officer.

The school will consider the use of Penalty Notices only when all other appropriate measures to improve the child's attendance have been employed, and only after consultation with the EWO.

PENALTY NOTICES RELATING TO EXCLUSIONS

If a child is excluded from school, Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent/carer liable to a Penalty Notice. (Alternative education provision will be made available from the sixth day of any exclusion.)

AMOUNT PAYABLE FOR A PENALTY NOTICE

The amount payable for a Penalty Notice issued in any of the above circumstances is £60 if paid within **21** days of receipt of the Notice, rising to £120 if paid after **21** days but within **28** days. If the Penalty Notice is not

paid, the recipient will be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court for the offence for which the Notice was originally issued. The Head Teacher will adhere to the SCC Policy for Fixed Penalty Notices where appropriate.

Please be aware that each parent is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who incurs unauthorised absences, for example, if there are two parents and one child, each parent will receive one Penalty Notice.

If there are two parents, and two children incur unauthorised absences, each parent will receive two Penalty Notices, which in this case would amount to £120 each if paid within 28 days.

Advice and support is available from an Education Welfare Officer by contacting your local Education Office as follows :-

North East - Tel: 01372 833588

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Governors, the Senior Leadership Team and the EWO. This policy will be reviewed annually.

ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE

Long Ditton Infant and Nursery School encourages daily attendance in the following ways:

- By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- By responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- By marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration.
- By giving parents termly printouts of attendance
- By monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Education Welfare Service if the irregular attendance continues
- By celebrating good attendance each month, termly for 100% and yearly for 100%

RESPONDING TO NON ATTENDANCE

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- On the day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parents/carer by 9am the school will endeavour to contact them that day. If the family is not on the telephone, a letter will be sent.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If, by then end of the third day, no contact is made, (fourth day if waiting for a response to a letter), the school will send a letter of concern to parents/carers or invite them into school to discuss their concerns. The school will tell parents that if the absence persists that a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service.

CHANGING SCHOOLS

It is important that if a family decides to send the child/children in their care to a different school; that they inform the school staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- The new home address, if it is known

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

SCHOOL ORGANISATION

In order for the school's attendance policy to be successful, every member of staff makes attendance a high priority and conveys this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the school has the following responsibilities:

Head teacher, designated Governor and a member of school staff will take overall responsibility for attendance to:

- Adopt the whole policy
- Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided
- Initiate a scheme for contacting parents on each day of un-notified absence
- Ensure that key staff have time-tabled periods for liaison and follow-up work with the EWS (Education Welfare Service) and appropriate access to attendance data
- Consult and liaise closely with the EWS on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay
- Work in close collaboration with the EWS during their termly/half termly register analysis
- Institute an attendance award scheme
- Monitor and evaluate attendance with the EWS
- Termly Governor monitoring

Class teachers

- To complete registers accurately and punctually twice a day
- To inform the Headteacher of concerns
- To be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to the Head teacher.

VALUES

We are a Living values School. Each month we link and teach these Values within each area of the curriculum. Through our SMSC provision (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) we aim to enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils will learn right from wrong and to respect other cultural differences.