



# Learn-AT

Learning ~ Fellowship

## School Attendance Policy

**LAT060 Version 1 Updated November 2022**

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**Please note that this policy supersedes and replaces any equivalent policies or sections of policies. This policy is non contractual and can therefore be amended without consultation. Before you use this policy, please check you have the latest version using the footer reference and Learn-AT Policy Index.**

**This policy applies to all Learn Academies Trust schools and should be read in conjunction with the latest associated guidance issued by Learn-AT.**

## **1. PRINCIPLES**

- 1.1. Learn Academies Trust schools expect good attendance from their pupils in order that they take full advantage of the learning experiences provided for them, and aim to support pupils in developing positive attitudes towards punctuality and attendance. Pupils should be made aware, by both parents and staff, that their presence is important.
- 1.2. Parents of pupils of compulsory school age are legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends and stays at school; they risk prosecution if they fail in this duty. Pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year unless there is a good reason for absence.
- 1.3. Parents should be aware that absence from school may have a detrimental effect on their child's education. Learning is a complex process in which knowledge, skills and understanding are developed and built on systematically. Interruptions to this process can lead to gaps in a child's knowledge and understanding, missed stages in the acquisition of new skills and lost opportunities to share in and grow from new experiences. If parents insist on taking their child out of school during term time then they must accept that they bear responsibility for the consequent effects upon their child's education. The school cannot influence a child's education if the child does not attend school.
- 1.4. Good attendance is important because:
  - statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
  - regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
  - regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
  - regular attenders find learning more satisfying
  - regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

## **2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Responsibilities of the school's attendance leader**

- 2.1. A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed, that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.
- 2.2. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

#### **Responsibilities of classroom staff**

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

#### **Responsibilities of office staff**

- Check registers promptly each morning and afternoon and identify any children who are not accounted for.
- Answer telephone calls and monitor answer phone messages for reports of absences.
- Contact parents/carers of children who are not accounted for to find out why their child is not at school. If it is not possible to speak to a parent or carer the Missing Child Policy should be followed.

#### **Responsibilities of pupils**

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Arrive at registration and lessons on time.

#### **Responsibilities of parents/carers**

- 2.3. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 lays a duty on parents to ensure that their child receives an efficient, full-time education, which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs that they may have. Parents may be prosecuted if they fail to ensure their child receives an education.
- 2.4. Parents/carers should:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence by telephone or text on the first day of absence and contact the school again if the absence goes on for more than three days..
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

### 3. ABSENCE

3.1. There are two types of absence:

3.1.1. **Authorised** (where the school approves pupil absence), which might include:

- pupil sickness
- serious or critical illness of a close relative
- unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- exceptional short term domestic circumstances
- religious observance
- bereavement
- wedding of immediate family member
- attending an embassy to arrange a visa or renew a passport where this cannot be arranged out of term time
- attendance at or in connection with a Children's Hearing or Care Review
- approved activities for sports and the arts
- travelling (where ascribed to the Traveller Community).

3.1.2. **Unauthorised** (where the school will not approve absence)

Absence will not be authorised for events such as:

- shopping trips
- birthday or other day trips
- non-medical appointments
- closure of a sibling's school for training days
- family holidays.

## **4. REPORTING AN ABSENCE**

- 4.1. If a child is absent from school, parents should call the school on the first day of absence by 9.30a.m. stating a reason. In the event of illness, there is no necessity to ring the school every day following the initial call. However, if a child's illness lasts for more than 3 days, then the parent should ring the school again to inform them of their progress. The school will also make a well-being call to the parent and may ask to have a brief conversation with the child for safeguarding purposes.
- 4.2. Learn Academies Trust schools take their safeguarding duties very seriously. If the school has not been informed by 9:30a.m. on the morning of a child's first day of absence, they will ring the parent or carer to ask the whereabouts of the child. This system is known as 'First Response' and is in place in many schools across the country. By doing this we can be secure in the knowledge that all pupils are safe and are where they should be. This will also enable the school to enter the correct attendance code in the register. (see Appendix A)
- 4.3. The school will decide whether to authorise an absence. If no explanation is given for an absence and office staff are unable to contact a child's parents/carers, the Learn-AT Missing Child Policy will be followed.

## **5. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

- 5.1. An absence will automatically be recorded as unauthorised if there is no telephone/written explanation received from parents.
- 5.2. Holidays or other non-essential absence taken without the school's prior approval will also be recorded as unauthorised absence.

## **6. REGISTRATION**

- 6.1. Registers are legal documents and provide a daily record of the attendance of all pupils. The class teacher is responsible for marking the register at the start of morning and afternoon sessions.
- 6.2. Registers are taken at 9.00am in the morning and 1.10pm in the afternoon.
- 6.3. Children who arrive in school after 9.00am must go directly to the school office where their arrival time and reason for lateness is recorded. They are then marked as late (L) in the register. Arrivals after 9.30am. will be considered as absences and require authorisation.
- 6.4. It is a statutory requirement that numbers of authorised and unauthorised absences are reported to the Department for Education. Absences are recorded electronically, with daily and weekly attendances figures completed.

## **7. FAMILY HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME**

- 7.1. Parents are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term time. A pupil's absence in term time can seriously disrupt the continuity of their learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days that they are away, but they are also less well prepared for the lessons building on this when they return. Absence also disrupts their friendships.
- 7.2. From 1st September 2013, amendments to the Education Regulations in relation to absence from school give NO entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must only be in exceptional circumstances and the headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of leave (for example, in the case where a family holiday is judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events or the holiday might be a unique, one-off never-to-be-repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested).
- 7.3. Parents must notify the headteacher in writing if they wish to apply exceptional for leave of absence from school for any reason using the appropriate form (see Appendix C). Each request will be considered individually, case by case, taking into account the circumstances and the child's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.
- 7.4. The following will not be deemed as exceptional circumstances:
  - the availability of cheap holidays or desired accommodation
  - holidays which overlap the beginning or end of term
  - holidays booked by a third party.
- 7.5. Parents are strongly discouraged from applying for leave of absence which coincides with the start of the school year, as the first few weeks of the school year are very important for learning routines, establishing relationships and expectations, and building friendships.
- 7.6. The school reserves the right to withdraw authorisation should a child's attendance deteriorate between the leave of absence application and the time when the absence is due to occur.
- 7.7. The school recognises that parents' circumstances (financial position, working commitments etc) vary enormously but the headteacher is nonetheless required to ensure that pupils only miss school if it is absolutely unavoidable.
- 7.8. If a child is taken out of school for a holiday of 5 days or more in term time and an application for leave of absence for the holiday has been refused by the school this absence will be unauthorised and the local authority can issue a Penalty Notice in the sum of £60 per parent/carer per child.

## **8. PUNCTUALITY**

- 8.1. It is important to foster positive attitudes to arriving at school on time. Pupils who

arrive late miss vital information given at the beginning of lessons and can also feel self-conscious about arriving in the classroom after an activity has started.

- 8.2. We expect all children to be in school by 9.00a.m. ready for morning registration.
- 8.3. We keep a record of lateness and this information will be shared with the courts should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- 8.4. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents or carers will be invited to attend a meeting at the school to discuss the problem and what support might be offered.

## **9. STATUTORY TESTING**

- 9.1. Parents of pupils in Year 6 are made aware of the fact that statutory testing takes place annually in May and cannot be taken at any other time.
- 9.2. The Headteacher is unable to grant Leave of Absence permission for Year 6 pupils during the week of the statutory tests.

## **10. LEVELS OF ATTENDANCE / ATTENDANCE GIVING CAUSE FOR CONCERN**

- 10.1. Whilst encouraging 100% attendance if possible, we recognise that there are circumstances in which attendance may not be possible. It is our expectation that all pupils will achieve attendance of 96% and above. Attendance is monitored closely. Parents will be contacted if their child's attendance falls to 90% as the child may be at risk of becoming a persistent absentee.
- 10.2. Parents of pupils with attendance below 85%, which is considered to be persistent absenteeism, and with a high level of unauthorised absence, are at risk of fixed penalty notices. It is highly unlikely that the headteacher will authorise exceptional leave of absence in cases such as these.
- 10.3. Where there is no significant improvement in attendance the parents/carers will be invited into school to discuss the situation.

## **11. FREQUENT MEDICAL ABSENCES**

- 11.1. In the case of a child with a large number of absences for medical reasons (e.g. over 20 sessions) the school will require medical evidence in order to authorise future absences of this nature.

## **12. MONITORING AND IMPROVING ATTENDANCE**

- 12.1. Learn Academies Trust is committed to promoting a strong attendance ethos.

- 12.2. The following positive measures are in place to encourage 100% attendance:
- promoting good attendance and punctuality in assemblies
  - annual reports to parents to indicate level of attendance:
    - 85.0% or less Attendance is a serious concern (persistent absentee)
    - 85.1 – 94.9% Attendance is being monitored (contact with parents at 90% threshold)
    - 96% or above Attendance is good
- 12.3. Schools will aim to resolve any problems regarding a pupil's attendance as early as possible, in consultation with parents/carers.
- 12.4. If a child is regularly absent/late, the headteacher will contact parents to notify them of the school's concern and to emphasise the parents' legal responsibility to ensure regular attendance. If persistent absence continues and the school's efforts to improve attendance are unsuccessful, the matter will be referred to the Local Authority Pupil Services Court Team who may issue a Penalty Notice or begin court proceedings.

### 13. Further information

- [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#) (DfE)
- [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (DfE)



## 14. Appendix A: School Register - Attendance Codes

### **Present at school:**

Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Present in school during registration

L Late arrival before the register has closed

### **Authorised:**

B Off-site educational activity

C Leave of absence authorised by the school

D Dual registered – at another educational establishment

E Excluded

H Holiday authorised by the school

I Illness (not medical/dental appointments)

J At an interview with prospective employers/or at another educational establishment

M Medical or dental appointment

P Participating in a supervised sporting activity

R Religious observance

S Study leave

T Traveller absence

V Educational visit or trip

W Work experience

### **Unauthorised:**

G Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the headteacher

N No reason yet provided for absence

O Absent from school without authorisation

U Arrived in school after registration closed

### **Administrative codes:**

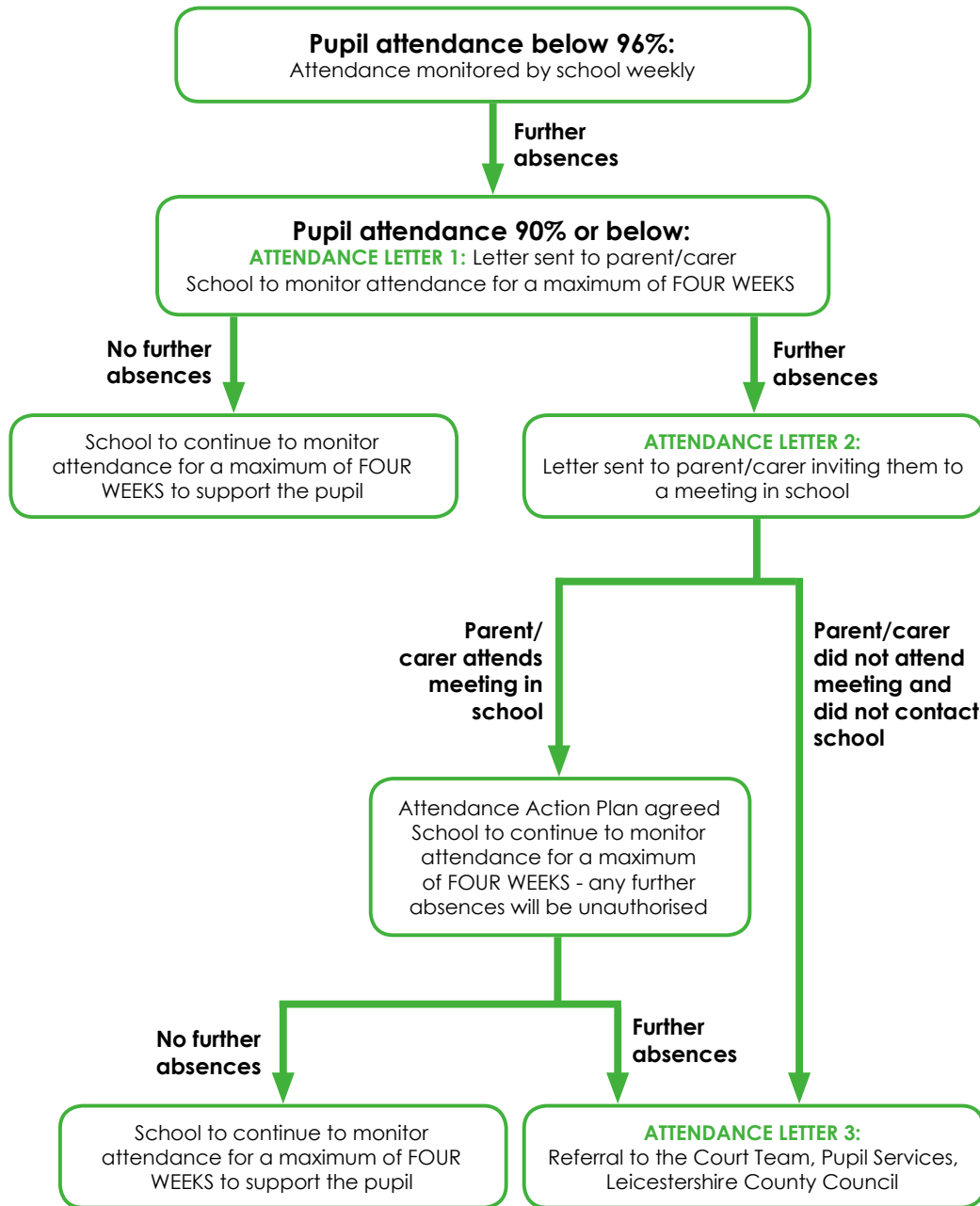
X Not required to be in school

Y Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Z Pupil not on the admission register

# Planned whole or partial school closure

## 15. Appendix B – Attendance Flowchart



## Model Letter 1 (Please copy onto your school letterhead)

[Parent Name]  
[Address]  
[Postcode]

[Date]

Dear

**[PUPIL NAME] [DOB] [CLASS]**

At [SCHOOL NAME] we believe that regular attendance and punctuality are essential to enable children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. We are therefore committed to achieving good levels of attendance and punctuality for all children at our school.

As part of our strategy, we closely monitor children whose attendance falls below 95% and I am writing to express my concern that [PUPILS NAME]'s attendance is currently at [XX]%. This means that [PUPIL NAME] has missed [NO. OF SESSIONS] sessions since the beginning of the academic year. I have attached a copy of [PUPILS NAME]'s attendance certificate for your information.

We know that sometimes absence is unavoidable due to illness and if this is the case we would encourage you contact us as soon as possible to discuss any health issues or concerns so that we can work together to support you and your child.

We will continue to review [PUPILS NAME]'s attendance regularly over the next few months and very much hope to see an improvement. Our School Attendance Policy, available from our website, outlines in more detail our expectations for attendance and punctuality and the procedures that will be followed if attendance continues to be a concern.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Model Letter 2 (Please copy onto your school letterhead)

[Date]

Dear

**[PUPIL NAME] [DOB] [CLASS]**

Further to my letter dated XXXX, XXXX's attendance is still significantly below the level that is expected for pupils to be classed as attending school on a consistent and regular basis. XXXX's attendance currently stands at XX%.

I would like to invite you into school on XXXXXX at XXXX to discuss XXX's attendance. In this meeting, we would like to discuss any barriers to attendance that XXXX may have and how we can help support you and XXXX to return to suitable full-time education.

When absence from school is due to illness or medical issues, we request that all future absences are now supported by medical evidence. Medical evidence could be a doctor's appointment card, a letter in relation to any ongoing medical issue which may be causing absence from school or proof of medication prescribed. Failure to provide medical evidence or exceptional reasons for future absence will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. This may lead to a referral to the local authority Attendance Team for further action and you may be at risk of a fine and/or prosecution under the Education Act 1996.

Please contact me on XXXXXX or by email at XXXXX if the meeting time and date is not suitable.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Model Letter 3

### **NOTICE OF REFERRAL TO THE ATTENDANCE TEAM AT LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL** **YOU ARE AT RISK OF A FINE AND/OR PROSECUTION**

[PARENT NAME]  
[ADDRESS]  
[POSTCODE]

[DATE]

Dear

**[PUPIL NAME] [DOB] [CLASS]**

Further to my letter dated XXXX I am disappointed that XXXX's attendance is still significantly below the level expected, despite previous correspondence and interventions. XXXX's attendance currently stands at XX%.

We have not been provided with any evidence which may have prevented your child from attending regularly and/or on time.

Parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Further details and guidelines are available on the Department for Education website [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk) or from Leicestershire County Council [www.leics.gov.uk](http://www.leics.gov.uk).

This letter is a formal warning that you are at risk of receiving a fine and/or prosecution because of your child's unauthorised absence from school.

Please feel free to contact me on XXXXXX or by email at XXXXX to discuss the contents of this letter.

Yours sincerely

## 16. Appendix C: Request for Exceptional Leave

(Please copy onto your school letterhead)

Please note: the school expects that all parents/carers will ensure that their child attends school as often as possible. Good attendance is an important factor in a child making good progress at school.

I understand that there may be exceptional circumstances where a parent has to request a child's absence during term time. In these circumstances, I am able to authorise absence. If agreed I will then determine the number of days that will be authorised.

Children's Names

Class

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

I am requesting permission for my child/children to be granted authorised absence for the following reason

.....  
.....

from..... to ..... - a total of ..... days

Signed..... Date.....

## 17. Appendix D: Exceptional Leave Reply

Children's Names

Class

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Reply from the Headteacher

<p>I am able to give permission</p> <p>The number of days granted is.....</p> <p>from ..... to .....</p>
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<p>I am unable to give permission</p>
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Signed..... Date.....