

Long Buckby Infant School ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Appendix 1 A brief guide to Penalty Notices

1 Aims

- To emphasise the importance of, and secure from pupils, maximum attendance at school
- To encourage pupils to take full advantage of their educational opportunities by attending regularly
- To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers & pupils) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed “authorised”
- To communicate to all parents/carers their legal responsibilities with respect to their child’s attendance and punctuality
- To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance and the best possible education for the pupils

Long Buckby Infant School is committed to creating a school in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well-being of every member of the school matter. We seek to create opportunities for all children to achieve their very best in terms of academic attainments and personal attainments. We aim to make the curriculum accessible to all in a stimulating learning environment in which success is celebrated in all areas. We strive to make everyone feel welcome. We endeavour to work with parents and members of the community to create a supportive environment for learning.

The staff of Long Buckby Infant School are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, pupils, governors and the Local Authority, to building a school which serves the community commendably, and of which the community is proud.

The school staff, alongside the Local Authority, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

At Long Buckby Infant School regular attendance and punctuality is crucial to the success of every pupil and we believe it is important that all stakeholders are aware of the schools expectations in this area. It is also a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home, means regular attendance at school.

Long Buckby Infant School aims to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality. All staff and governors see regular school attendance as essential for all pupils if they are to be successful and aims to work in partnership with parents/carers to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance. Long Buckby Infant School aims to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

2. Encouraging Attendance

Long Buckby Infant School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- by providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- by responding promptly to a child's or parent's/carer's concerns about the school or other pupils
- by marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration. If pupils arrive at school after the close of the register, the lateness will be recorded in a pupil signing in book by the parents/carers and the minutes late will be recorded in the register by the office staff
- by publishing attendance statistics
- by celebrating good and improved 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 Entitlement Team if the irregular attendance continues

3. Statutory Framework

Under Section 437 et al of the 1996 Education Act a pupil is required to attend regularly at school and the school is obliged to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. In line with the Education (Pupil Registration England) Amendment Regulations 2013, Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence for holidays during term time

4. Registration Procedures

It is a legal requirement that registers are taken at the beginning of a school session. It is also very important in the case of fire or evacuation of the school that there is an accurate record of which pupils are in the building.

- Registers will be taken at 9.00am and 1.00pm.
- Once registration has been taken the registers must be sent to the school office.
- Absence codes are attached to each class register and are filled in by the office staff/teachers.

5. Lateness Procedures

If a child arrives after the school gate has closed, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to enter their arrival in the pupil signing in book at the school office.

6. Authorised Absence

The Department for Education & Skills (DfE) guidelines, which the Headteacher must follow, affecting the children being away from school, are very precise. The Headteacher is not able, by Law, to grant time away from school except in certain circumstances. In such exceptional instances, the Headteacher may authorise an absence after receiving a written request outlining the reasons for the need for a child's absence during term time. The Headteacher may need to meet with parents on such occasions to discuss the issue. We ask that you make a written request well in advance of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether an absence is authorised or not. The DfE guidelines make it clear that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. A note from home does not automatically make an absence valid/justified. Parents will be informed of the outcome by letter. Absences without the Headteacher's permission, in advance, are classed as truancy and have to be recorded on the

child's school records as 'unauthorised absence'. Parents have the normal rights of appeal against a negative decision.

The following list gives examples of situations whereby a request for absence may be considered exceptional and might therefore be authorised:

- Specialist medical appointments
- Family bereavement
- Close family wedding on a school day - but not travelling unless abroad
- Family crisis
- Examinations off site i.e. music examinations
- Attendance at an event at the request of a public organisation
- Visit to a new school or house if the family are relocating
- Holidays where a family member (child or parent) has a terminal illness

7. Unauthorised Absence

It is a parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that their child attends school. Absence from school will not be authorised for the following:

- Family holidays and trips (no matter what length)
- Routine medical/dental appointments
- Birthdays
- Caring for brothers/sisters/relatives or because unsuitable child-care arrangements cannot be made
- Awaiting repair people
- Visit to new school but family not relocating
- Leaving early to travel to an event

Unauthorised absence are those where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents/carers
- The reason for absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence stated above

Staff are not obliged to provide work for pupils when parents have chosen to take their children out of school during term time.

Absences are closely monitored by the school and the Educational Inclusion & Partnership Team (EIPT) at the local authority.

A child's attendance record is deemed unsatisfactory (from June 2016) if the following occurs:

- 5 days of continuous unauthorised absence within a six week period
- any 5 day unauthorised absence within a six week period

If either of these situations occur the Headteacher will write to the parents explaining that a referral will be made to the County's Educational Inclusion & Partnerships Team (EIPT) who will decide what and if further action should be taken. The Educational & Inclusion Partnership may issue an initial fixed penalty notice of £60 to each parent for each child. So a 2-parent family with 2 children would be fined £240, with 28 days to pay. Failure to pay within 28 days could result in the local authority instigating prosecution in the Magistrates Court for the offence of poor school attendance. If proven this could result in a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child and/or a parenting order or a community service order.

All schools now have to submit attendance figures to the Department for Education (DfE) each year, giving details of both authorised and unauthorised absences over the school year.

Attendance figures are also collected on a monthly basis via 'Base 2 Base' Automated Data Transfer.

If a child's absence is below 95% over the previous 6 week term, the school will initiate the Absence Timetable procedure:

- Letter 1 – sent when attendance has dropped below 95% during the previous 6 week term (e.g. October half-term)
- If attendance had not improved by the end of the next term (e.g. the Christmas half-term) i.e. still below 95%, parents will be invited to attend a Parent Contract Meeting (Letter 2) at the school to set an improved target for attendance.
- If at the end of the next term (e.g. February half-term) there has been no response from the parent, the school will arrange a home visit and set a target for improved attendance.
- If at the end of the next term (e.g. the Easter half-term) there has been no improvement, the school will refer the case to the Educational & Inclusion Partnership Team.

8. Illness

Parents/Carers are asked to contact the school by 9.30am on each day of absence. Where it is clear from the onset that the illness will last for several days the parent/carer is not required to telephone in every morning, but instead will give an estimated day of return to school. This reason will be noted on SIMs (School Information Management System). The school can make a decision not to authorise prolonged or repeated absences without a doctor's note. Parents will be informed if the school seeks confirmation from the child's GP or other medical practitioner.

9. Lateness

Pupils arriving after the register has been closed will be considered as late. Pupils arriving after the main entrance gate to the school has been closed (9.00am) must report to the school office so that the attendance can be recorded. The pupil signing in book should be completed.

Parents/Carers will be contacted by letter if lateness becomes a persistent problem. Where a child is late on a regular basis i.e. more than twice a week for any six week term, parents/carers will be contacted by letter (Letter 3 - lateness concern letter).

10. Persistent Absence

The Department for Education focuses on both authorised and unauthorised absence. 'Persistent Absence' refers to absence of more than 5%, whether authorised or unauthorised. Our school notifies parents/carers if their child has been identified as a Persistent Absentee, when attendance has dropped below 95% in any 6 week term (autumn term 1 to summer term 6).

11. Procedures for following up absence

- Parents/Carers are required to inform the school office if their child is absent by 9.30am, leaving a message on the answer machine if necessary.
- **First morning response** – the office will make contact with the registered parent/carer as soon as possible and at the latest by 11.00am on the first day of absence if no reason is known.
- Reasonable attempts to contact a parent/carer will be made and an answer phone/voicemail message will be left if necessary. The office staff will try to make contact with all the named people on the pupil contact list where necessary.
- First response contacts and reply responses from parents/carers will be logged in the attendance folder.
- If a response is not received from a parent/carer by 12.00pm, arrangements will be made, wherever possible, to carry out a home visit.

- If a home visit cannot be made (e.g. the child lives in Northampton) or a home visit does not result in the safety and whereabouts of a child being known, the school will escalate the concern by contacting the Multi Agency Safeguarding Team (MASH).
- 'Children Missing from Education' – procedures outlined on the Northamptonshire County Council website will be applied.
<http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/schools-and-education/information-for-school-staff/pupil-support-and-inclusion/attendance-and-behaviour/Pages/children.aspx>

12. Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to an alternate school that they inform Long Buckby Infant School staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the 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
- Confirmation sent from the County Council stating that a place has been offered at an alternative school
- Contact from the new school requesting the child's data file

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 Entitlement Service as a 'child missing from education'.

13. School Organisation

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey 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:

Headteacher, Office Staff and Governors to:

- Adopt the whole attendance policy
- Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided
- Contact parents/carers on the first day of absence
- Ensure that key staff have time for liaison and follow-up work with the Education Entitlement Service and appropriate access to attendance data
- Monitor and evaluate attendance
- To ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually

Administration staff:

- To follow up any unexplained non-attendance
- To record all reasons for absences in the register and on School Information Management System (SIMs)
- To inform the designated person in charge of overall attendance
- 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 Headteacher

Attendance Policy

Author	Sarah Dugdale & Anita Turley
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Key	
CME	Children Missing Education
DfE	Department for Education
EIPT	Education Inclusion & Partnership Team
SIMs	School Information Management System

APPENDIX 1
Educational Inclusion and Partnership Team

A Brief Guide to Penalty Notices

Sections 444 Education Act 1996

Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

This leaflet offers you a brief summary about the (PN) scheme and what it could mean for you.

What is a PN?

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution and requires the parent(s) to pay a fixed amount as a fine for their child's irregular attendance at school.

It is issued per parent, per child. Please note only a head teacher can authorise absence from school.

Who issues them?

In Northamptonshire the Local Authority issues them through the Educational Inclusion and Partnerships Team

When are they used?

When a pupil has a minimum of 10 school sessions recorded as unauthorised in a 6 school week period; a school day is two sessions (morning and afternoon)

This includes: any absence marked in the register as unauthorised.

An absence in term time which has not been authorised by the Headteacher. The Government has directed that Headteachers may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances.

PNs can also be used during the first 5 days of exclusion. Parents are made aware of the consequences by letter when a child is excluded from school.

Please note:

If the school refers a period of absence that is longer than 15 consecutive school days; the Educational and Inclusion Partnership team may consider that a PN is not appropriate.

In these instances the matter may proceed to a prosecution.

Determination about whether it is appropriate to use a penalty notice will be based on the individual circumstances of each case.

If a parent knows that their child is failing to attend school regularly and there is reasonable justification for not ensuring that their child attends then it is for the parent/carers to prove that reasonable justification.

How much is the PN?

The PN is issued with an invoice for £120 and 28 days are given for you to settle the Penalty.

If the PN is paid within the first 21 days the amount payable is reduced to £60.

How do I pay?

The information on how to pay is included on the PN. Payment cannot be made in part or by instalments.

What happens if I don't pay?

If you don't pay within the 28 days the Local Authority will consider instigating a prosecution in the Magistrates Court for the offence of irregular school attendance. If proven this could result in a criminal conviction, fine of up to £1000 per parent per child and/or a parenting order or a community service order and also costs.

Can I appeal?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a PN has been issued.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice?

You cannot be prosecuted for the period of absence identified in the Penalty Notice. You may subsequently be prosecuted for further periods of unauthorised absence from school. Each case is considered on an individual basis

**** REMEMBER ****

School staff would much rather work with parents/carers to resolve irregular attendance than resort to enforcement actions like Penalty Notices or Court

For further information please contact

Educational Inclusion & Partnership Team

attendance-admin@northamptonshire.gov.uk

<http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/schools-and-education/Pages/penalty-notices-for-non-school-attendance.aspx>