

Introduction

Good attendance and punctuality make effective teaching and learning possible, while irregular attendance disrupts these processes. If students are to take full advantage of what school offers them and become effective learners, gaining the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will equip them for life, good attendance and punctuality are essential. Valuable learning time is lost when students are absent or late. Research shows that students who attend school regularly achieve better results in public examinations than those who have longer or more frequent periods of absence from school. Good attendance is an achievement in its own right and is recognised as such by the school.

Lees Brook's aim is to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy which enables staff, students, parents, and the local community and outside agencies to work together in partnership. The school will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention where a problem is identified. The school recognises that poor attendance may be as a result of difficulties students are experiencing in school, or may be the result of circumstances beyond the school's control, but whatever the circumstances, some students will need extra support in order to achieve and maintain good attendance.

Ensuring regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents and allowing a child to be absent from school without good reason is an offence in law that may result in prosecution by the Education Welfare Service. The school has a legal responsibility to report poor attendance to the appropriate agencies in order to safeguard the welfare of all our students.

Statement of Practice

Attendance

Aims of the Policy

- To improve the quality of school life.
- To create a culture in which good attendance and punctuality are seen as the norm.
- To ensure attendance remains above the national average and reaches or exceeds the target the school sets itself each year.
- To enable parents and students to understand the benefits of good attendance and to provide support and systems that allow all students to achieve this.
- To recognise that good attendance is an achievement in itself and to demonstrate to students, parents and staff that the school values good attendance.
- To ensure every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled to.

School Attendance Targets

As with standards of attainment and other areas of school life, there are school targets to improve attendance and every student has an important part to play in meeting these targets. At Lees Brook Community School we expect all students to achieve 95% and above school attendance.

Year	Target %	Achieved %
2014/15	95%	94.5%
2015/16	95%	95.1%
2016/17	95%	94.4%
2017/18	95%	94.2%
2018/19	95%	94.5%

Promoting Regular Attendance

Promoting and securing regular school attendance is the shared responsibility of parents, students and school staff. At Lees Brook, we will encourage good attendance by:

- providing a secure, caring and welcoming learning environment.
- responding promptly to any concerns a student or parent might raise.
- reporting to parents every half term if their child's attendance falls below the expected target rate.
- publishing and displaying attendance statistics around the school site.
- requiring students to record their own attendance and punctuality in the student planner.
- celebrating good and improved attendance in assemblies.
- monitoring students' attendance, informing parents/carers of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them where necessary to offer support and guidance; and referring the family to Derby City Education Welfare Service if the irregular attendance continues and further action may need to be taken.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. For this reason, information about the reasons for any absence is always required in writing, alternatively parents can send an email to; attendance@leesbrook.co.uk

Authorised absences are mornings, afternoons or whole days away from school for a good reason such as genuine illness, or a medical or dental appointment during the school day. Any other absence such as emergencies or other unavoidable causes will need to be discussed with the school's Education Welfare Officer.

Unauthorised absences are ones which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These include:

- Parents/carers keeping children away from school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school 30 minutes or more after the close of register without good reason.
- Shopping for school dress code items (or for anything else).
- Taking longer than is necessary for medical appointments.
- Looking after other children or family members who are ill.
- Taking time off to celebrate birthdays or anniversaries.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been approved by the school.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) 90% and below

Students become persistent absentees when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Attendance at or below 90% is considered extremely serious and all PA cases are monitored closely by the schools Education Welfare Officer. The persistent absence figure may be reached by students having time away from school for illness, holidays or for a combination of reasons. This means that even if your child has been ill and this absence has been authorised, they are still identified as a persistent absentee. It is recognised, however, that students could reach the persistent absentee threshold due to illness and we will always consider each case on an individual basis. In some cases medical evidence will be required.

The School's Attendance Improvement Officer

The school's Attendance Improvement Officer will work closely with parents and students to identify attendance concerns with the aim of resolving any problems at any early stage. If agreed strategies to improve a student's attendance fail and unauthorised absences persist, the school's Attendance Improvement Officer will refer the case to the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service who have the power to use sanctions such as a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Parents or students may wish to contact the school's Attendance Improvement Officer directly to ask for help. **The Attendance Improvement Officer at Lees Brook Community School is Mrs S Davies, telephone number 01332 671723 and email attendance@leesbrook.co.uk**

Lateness

We expect your child to be at their tutor base by 8.40am

- Registers are taken immediately and students who are not present in their tutor base by that time will receive a late mark.

At 9.30am the registers are closed.

- In accordance with regulations, students who arrive after that time will receive a mark showing them to be on site, but this will not count as a 'present' mark, and it means they have an unauthorised absence for the whole morning session.

At 1.30 pm the afternoon registers are closed

- A student with several unexplained absences will be referred to the school's Education Welfare Officer who will discuss the schools' concerns with the parents.
- When a student is persistently late without good reason, a telephone call will be made to parents, followed up in writing by the schools Education Welfare Officer.
- When a student accumulates 10 or more lates, they will be placed on an after school detention for an hour each time they are late.

If a student has a persistent late record parents will be asked to meet with the school's Education Welfare Officer to resolve the problem. If a parent has problems getting their child to school on time they can approach the school at any time to discuss the situation and to seek help. Arriving late into school on a regular basis is not full time education and may result in further action being taken.

Leave of absence requests during term time

The Government is extremely concerned about the high levels of absences from school that is attributed to parents taking their children on holiday in term time. Ofsted will closely monitor school attendance and will be inspecting school registers as part of their on-going drive to raise standards in all schools and academies.

If leave of absence is required for an explicit exceptional reason, parents/carers should contact the school to request a Leave of Absence form. This should be completed and submitted back to the school at least four weeks prior to the period of the absence. In some circumstances, additional supporting information/evidence may be requested. Please note that requesting leave does not mean that it will be authorised. In the majority of cases leave of absence will not be authorised.

The following reasons for a request are not deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Cheap availability
- Large family/friendship groups
- Work commitments
- Time share agreements
- Assuming the reason would be authorised by the school
- Excellent attendance and behaviour record
- Birthdays, anniversaries etc.
- Family weddings or visiting relatives.

All unauthorised holidays taken in term time are passed to Derby City Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice. If there is evidence to suggest a student has been on holiday without notifying the school then the same actions will apply.

- Fines apply per parent per child
- Payment is £120 if paid within 28 days – reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days.
- If not paid the matter will be placed before the court.

Children Missing in Education

Children missing education are at significant risk of under achieving, being victims of abuse and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

A pupil going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and we will always follow robust procedures to ensure we are monitoring and reporting any students who regularly have unexplained absences on their record or their whereabouts is unknown. We shall ensure we make the Local Authority aware of any pupil on our register that triggers the following;

- Parent has requested to remove their child from school roll to home educate.
- The child has ceased to attend school and no longer lives within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered.
- The family are moving out of the UK.
- The child is unable to attend due to health reasons which has been certified by a medical officer and a referral needs to be made for Hospital Medical Tuition.
- If the child's whereabouts is unknown and all efforts have been made to locate the child, the schools Education Welfare Officer will make a referral to the Derby City Children Missing Officer.

- If the child's whereabouts is known but they not attending, the schools Education Welfare Officer will follow non-school attendance procedure and investigate further.

The school will investigate any unexplained absences and will:

Contact parents by telephone on the first day of absence if there is no known reason for the student not being in school. A text will also be sent.

- A further telephone call will be made on day two of the absence if there continues to be no contact. 6
- If there is no response by day three, the school's Education Welfare Officer will undertake a safe and well at the home address and will hand deliver a letter requesting reason for absence. • If a child continues to be absent from school after day ten and we have been unable to contact a family member and we have no reason for absence we will discuss further with the Local Authority and the Local Authorities Children Missing Education Officer.
- If a child returns to school with no explanation of absences we will continue to contact parents requesting reasons for absence.
- Parents will be expected to attend a meeting with the school's Education Welfare Officer if their child has continuous absences with no explanation.
- Any student who misses' education on a regular basis and the reasons given are not satisfactory will be regarded as being an unauthorised absence and referred to the Education Welfare Service who may instigate legal proceedings against the parents

Our Expectations

At Lees Brook, we believe that to secure good attendance and punctuality, we should work in partnership with students, staff, parents/carers and other relevant external agencies.

Students:

We expect students to:

- attend school regularly and on time.
- record their weekly attendance percentage in their student planner and identify how this contributes to the whole school target.
- hand in absence notes to their form tutor promptly and hand in/take home any communication regarding attendance.
- discuss with staff any issues that arise which may interfere with their ability to attend school.
- be fully involved in strategies to improve and encourage their good attendance and punctuality.
- Take part in attendance interviews if required.

Parents/carers:

We expect that all parents/carers/persons who have day to day responsibility for the student to:

- be aware of their legal responsibilities with regard to attendance.
- ensure that the students in their care attend school regularly and punctually, and arrive prepared for the school day.
- contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence to let us know if their child is going to be absent.
- provide the school with up to date contact information so that we have the correct telephone numbers and addresses at all times.

- send a note or email explaining why their child was absent on the first day their child returns to school. As well as the reason, the note or email should contain the dates of the absence. It should be signed by the parent/carer and make clear their relationship to the student. If a parent/carer does not wish to put the reason for absence in writing, they should contact the school and speak to a member of staff in attendance or the Head Of Year. If we do not receive a letter or an email we will send a letter to parents to request further information.
- notify the school of any issues or concerns that may arise which may interfere with a student's attendance.

School Staff:

We expect that relevant school staff will:

- provide a safe, positive, mutually respectful learning environment which makes students want to attend school.
- keep regular and accurate attendance records for the students in their tutor group/teaching groups.
- monitor all students' attendance.
- A text will be sent by 10.30am to parents if their child has not received a mark to request reason for absence.
- contact parents by telephone on the first day of a student's absence (where possible) if there is no known reason for the student not to be in school.
- A home visit will be undertaken if we are unable to contact parents or the contact numbers we have are unavailable.
- contact parents/carers to raise any attendance and/or punctuality concerns at an early stage to avoid escalation and encourage early interventions where appropriate.
- inform parents/carers in writing where a student's attendance is identified as being a cause for concern (usually when it falls below 90%).
- contact parents/carers in writing about any unexplained or unauthorised absences within 3 days of the absence, giving parents the opportunity to provide reasons for the absence which may then allow the school to record the absence as authorised.
- visit parents/students at home when necessary.
- draw up and implement an individual action plan for specified targeted groups of students to encourage and support improved attendance.
- offer parents and students advice, strategies and support to improve attendance and punctuality.
- work effectively with the school nurse and other medical professionals to improve the attendance of those students with health related issues.
- recognise and reward good and improved attendance through:
 - Assemblies
 - Attendance certificates
 - Attendance prize draws
 - Letters home
 - Regular attendance updates/displays
 - Review meetings with students and parents.



**Education Welfare Service
Children and Young People Directorate**

Advice to Parents and Carers Penalty Notices

**To address poor attendance and
punctuality at school**

The Education Act 1996, section 444 (1)

- ***Penalty Notices and the Education Act 1996***

Section 444 (1) of the Act gives powers to the Local Authority (LA) and other designated bodies (including headteachers) to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance and/or punctuality.

- ***Why have they been introduced?***

Reducing absence and improving punctuality in schools is a key priority both nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines as well as the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer-term life opportunities.

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if their child fails to attend school regularly and punctually and the absence is recorded by the school as unauthorised. Absence is recorded as unauthorised unless it is taken with the permission of the school or is for some unavoidable reason. Punctuality is recorded as unauthorised absence when the pupil arrives after the register has been closed. Check with your child's school as to what time their register closes.

Depending upon the circumstances, such cases may result in prosecution by the LA under the Education Act 1996, section 444 (1). A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution.

- ***What is a Penalty Notice?***

A Penalty Notice is a fine which may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. It does not require a court appearance and does not result in a criminal record. Payment of a Penalty Notice enables the parent/carer to discharge the potential liability for prosecution and subsequent conviction.

- ***What is the cost of a Penalty Notice?***

Payment of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt and £120 if paid after this but within 28 days of receipt.

- ***How is a Penalty Notice issued?***

By post to your home.

- ***When are they issued?***

Derby City Council and Derby schools consider that regular attendance and punctuality is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be issued where a pupil has had periods of unauthorised time away from school at any point in the school year.

- where issuing a Penalty Notice will be an effective measure in helping the pupil return to school and/or ensure their future regular attendance/punctuality
- where the parent/carer is capable of ensuring the pupil's regular attendance/punctuality
- where the parent/carer has failed to cooperate in making use of advice/support offered.
- where the parent/carer takes a child on holiday during term-time without the school's permission.

• ***Is a warning given?***

In most situations the parent/carer will be given a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued. This written warning will advise the parent/carer about the extent of the child's absence and warn them that if the child's attendance and punctuality does not show a significant improvement and if this improvement is not maintained thereafter, a Penalty Notice may be issued without further warning.

NB. The school may, however, have already warned parents of its policy in respect of term-time holidays. In such cases, if a holiday is taken without the school's permission beforehand, a Penalty Notice may be issued without a further warning.

• ***Is there an appeal process?***

There is no statutory right of appeal. Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, it can only be withdrawn if it can be shown that it was issued in error.

• ***How do I pay?***

Details of payment arrangements will be included in the Penalty Notice. Payment in part or by instalments of a Penalty Notice is not acceptable.

• ***What happens if I do not pay?***

You will have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full. If you fail to do so, the Local Authority is required, by law, to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of poor school attendance and/or punctuality.

If convicted of this offence under the Education Act 1996, there are a number of possible sentences including a fine of up to £1000 (in the case of a prosecution under section 444(1)) or a fine of up to £2500 and/or a period of up to 3 months' imprisonment (in the case of a prosecution under section 444(1A)).

• ***What if my child has further unauthorised absence from school?***

If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences, you may be prosecuted for the further unauthorised absences but not for the absences during the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

- ***Can I get help if my child is not attending school?***

Yes. Both the school and Derby City Council Education Welfare Service are available to provide advice and support. The school can provide contact details of their named Education Welfare Officer.