



2gether
cluster

Attendance Policy

School attendance is a key protective factor in safeguarding children and young people

September 2024

Regular and punctual school attendance creates positive outcomes for children. When children do not attend school, it impacts on their overall achievement and well-being. Leeds City Council – Children’s Services clearly outlines the association between poor attendance and poor outcomes, and this is why improving attendance in Leeds is one of the Child Friendly Leeds ‘obsessions’.

Under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, it is the legal responsibility of the parent to ensure their children attend school. However, it is a collaborative responsibility of the parent, school, cluster and other related partners to work together restoratively to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to regularly attend school, providing our children with the skills to achieve the best possible future.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant legislation and guidelines from the Department for Education, as well as guidance from Leeds City Council – Children’s Services. Cluster procedures are defined in this policy to give professionals an understanding of their role and responsibilities when managing and promoting regular attendance in the 2gether Cluster. The safety, welfare and wellbeing of all our pupils is paramount. Therefore, if your child is absent and there is no contact between school and home, or there are safeguarding or child protection concerns for a child, this will be referred to a member of our safeguarding team and further action will be taken as necessary.

Schools in the 2gether Cluster have an attendance target of 96%

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between underachievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, schoolwork 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

% Attendance expressed in number of days absent:

Attendance / absence is presented as a percentage figure, but it’s helpful to equate this to a number of days off:

Attendance percentage	absence per week	absence per term	Absence per academic year
98%			fewer than 4 days absent is a school year
95%			fewer than 10 days absent in a school year
90%	½ a day	1 week 2 days	4 weeks
80%	1 day	2 weeks 4 days	8 weeks
70%	1 ½ days	4 weeks 1 day	12 weeks
60%	2 days	5 weeks 3 days	16 weeks
50%	2 ½ days	7 weeks	20 weeks

Over 5 years children with an average attendance of 85-90% will have missed half a school year of education while children with an average attendance of 80% will have missed a whole school year.

Department for Education guidelines class any child with attendance of 90% or below as persistently absent

Parental Responsibility on reporting absence:

If your child is absent you must;

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- Medical evidence may be required if your child has had above average illness, this could be a copy of prescription, appointment card or labelled medication.

If your child is absent we will:

- Make contact with you by telephone, text or home visit, if we have not heard from you, this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety
- If your child misses 10 sessions (5 days) in a term, they will be placed on the Fast Track initiative
- If absence falls below 90%, we may refer the matter to Leeds City Council (see appendix 2)
- If we believe that your child is absent due to a holiday you may be issued with a penalty notice, £60 per parent per child.

Authorised absence is defined as:

- Genuine illness
- Medical or dental appointment (routine appointments should be arranged out of school time)
- Bereavement – at Head teachers' discretion
- Religious observance – no more than two days per academic year
- Approved leave in term time where there are exceptional circumstances, as agreed by the Head teacher.

Unauthorised absence is defined by:

- Holiday's in term time where permission has NOT been given by the school
- Late, after registers have closed (a U code will be used)
- Unexplained absence. Any child whose absence is on-going and remains unexplained for 10 days will be referred to the local authority as a child missing education.
- Taking the rest of the day off, before or after a medical appointment
- Staying at home to care for sick relatives
- Birthdays, weddings or anniversaries
- Transport issues i.e. car broken down
- Going shopping or having a hair cut

Lateness

Being late to school has a significant impact on the amount of learning time lost over a school year.

The table give you an indication of how much time is lost if regularly late.

Minutes late per day	Number of days over year
5 Minutes	3.4 days
10 Minutes	6.9 days
15 Minutes	10.3 days
20 Minutes	13.8 days

Exceptional circumstances

Parents do not have the right to remove their children from school during term time. Absence in term time will only be considered if parents / carers make a request to the school on the appropriate form giving exceptional reasons why the application for absence has been requested and provide information to support their application. Please note that the definition of 'exceptional' means 'very unusual'. Therefore, a second request for absence based on 'exceptional circumstances' is unlikely to be authorised.

The Head teacher will decide whether or not the absence will be authorised. Parents / carers who take their children out of school during term time without authorisation, may be issued with a penalty fine. In order to request exceptional leave parents should complete the form in appendix 1.

Children Missing Education

If there is no contact between school and the family and the child's whereabouts are unknown it is possible for a child to be removed from a school roll. This will only happen in circumstances where children do not return to school for ten days after an authorised absence or are absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days

Fast Track Initiative

Fast tracks place pupils on a structured programme with monitored periods giving the opportunity for improvement. Where unauthorised absence continues parents will be invited to attend a formal School Attendance Panel to discuss the reasons for poor attendance and to examine any support needs. Parents may be issued with a penalty warning letter and subsequently a penalty notice for irregular school attendance if unauthorised absence persists.

Case work

A referral can be made to the attendance lead. School must have met with parents and made them aware of the attendance concerns. School should hold a meeting with parents and give them 4-6 weeks to improve attendance, if attendance continues to be a concern a referral can then be completed, an up to date registration certificate must be provided along with one from the previous academic year.

Continuing concerns around school attendance

School could start to ask for medical evidence before authorising any further absences if your child's attendance falls below 96%

If attendance continues to be a concern, then this will lead to a referral being made to the 2gether Cluster attendance Lead. Ultimately parents/carers can be held to account for failing to ensure that their children attend school punctually and regularly. Leeds City Council, school attendance service carries out this statutory function on behalf of the local authority to uphold the right of children and young people to access their education.

The safety, welfare and wellbeing of all our pupils is paramount. Therefore, if your child is absent and there is no contact between school and home, or there are safeguarding or child protection concerns for a child, this will be referred to a member of our safeguarding team and further action will be taken as necessary.

Where necessary statutory action can and will be taken under section 444 Education Act 1996 or Education Supervision Order under the Children's Act 1989 this may take the form of a penalty notice, prosecution of parents in the Magistrate Court resulting in a fine, or a statutory order.

Leave of Absence/Holiday Request

SCHOOL:		DATE OF REQUEST:	
First Name	Surname	Date of Birth	Class
Leaving date:		Date due back in school:	
Length of absence applied for (number of school days only):			days
Siblings in other schools: Please note this request information will be shared with the attendance lead in the school in which the sibling/s attend	First Name	Surname	School
Contact Details			
Parents: (eg. Mother, Father, Grandparent, Carer):	First name:	First name:	
	Surname:	Surname:	
	Address:	Address:	
	Postcode:	Postcode:	
	Email:	Email:	
	Home phone number:	Home phone number:	
	Mobile:	Mobile:	
	Alternative number while away:	Alternative number while away:	

Appendix – Referral form

Reason for absence including full explanation (use a separate sheet of paper if necessary) The exceptional circumstances are...	
Point of departure (eg. Airport, Coach, Train Station etc.):	Destination:
Time of departure:	Flight numbers and name of airline:
Emergency Contact Details (preferably someone who is staying in Leeds): First Name: Surname: Address: Postcode: Relationship to the child: Contact Number:	*Provide copies of travel plans to support your request.* If child is not leaving with parent(s) who is accompanying them? Who will be caring/responsible for the child? Why is/are the parent(s) not leaving with the child? Name: Relationship to child: Address: <u>Postcode</u> :

Statutory Declaration

Legal responsibility

As a parent/guardian I understand all children aged between 5 and 16 are required by law to receive an education, and under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, it is my responsibility as a parent to ensure the regular school attendance of my children and that failure to do so could result in legal proceedings being taken by the Local Education Authority.

*I understand that requests for leave can only be granted by schools if there are **exceptional circumstances**, and **holidays are not considered exceptional**. They must also be made to the school in advance, as the **Department for Education** has told schools that they cannot authorise any absences after they have been taken.*

Fines

- *First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.*
- *Second Offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.*
- *Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years) - the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. **A guilty verdict at the Magistrates' Court can lead to a fine of up to £1000, and a criminal record which can affect employment opportunities.***

Appendix – Referral form

School places

I am aware that a referral will made to the Local Authority Children Missing from Education Team (CME) if my request is unauthorised and my child hasn't returned to school on the agreed date. This can result in my child losing their school place.

I am also aware that there is a shortage of places in the area, so if my child loses their school place it could result in having to travel to a school out of area or my child without a school, being a detriment to their education and causing implications to my own employment.

Parent's Full Name:

Parent's Signature:

Date:

Parent's Full Name:

Parent's Signature:

Date:

School Section Any previous request Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Is the requested absence during exams Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Reason for refusal/Comments				
Authorised <input type="checkbox"/>	Approved		for School days	
Unauthorised <input type="checkbox"/>	Not approved		for School days	
Headteacher's Signature				

Appendix – Referral form

Any other significant people we should know about who do not live in the family home?						

Current School Attendance % Please attach registration certificate	
Previous Year School attendance %	

ARE THERE ANY OTHER AGENICIES CURRENTLY OFFERING SUPPORT TO THE FAMILY?		
Name	Agency	Contact details

PLANS IN PLACE		
Child Protection Plan	Child In Need Plan	Child and Family Assessment
Early Help Plan	Behaviours Plan or IEP	Education, Health and Care Plan
Lead Professional/Key person for the child or family		

Are you aware of any risks or concerns that should be considered when visiting the family at home? E.g. aggressive adults in the home, risk of domestic abuse, aggressive pets

Appendix – Referral form

	Yes	No	Details
Have you attached an up to date registration certificate with this referral?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the child/ young person had 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in the last 12 school weeks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have reasonable attempts been made to make contact with the parents/ carers whenever the child has been absent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has a meeting been held with parents/ carers within the last 6 weeks to discuss attendance concerns and offer support to address them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Date of meeting: We would expect a 4-week monitoring period following the meeting to allow parents to implement any changes and engage with any support			
Have parents been informed that this referral for an Attendance Officer would be made, and that they could face a legal penalty, if attendance did not improve?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What reasons, if any, have been provided for the child/ young person’s absences from school?			

What support has been offered to parents/ carers to improve school attendance prior to this referral being made? E.g.: breakfast club, referral to Cluster for parenting/behaviour support, referral to other services to address issues or support needs.

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Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. Where persistent absence is preventing this from happening, schools have a safeguarding duty to address this and can work with the Local Authority who have legal powers to prosecute parents where appropriate. As such, signed consent is not required from parents for this request to be accepted by the Cluster Team.

Following a request for a Cluster Attendance Officer, the school retain responsibility for making first contact with parents/ carers when their child is absent from school, and from conducting welfare visits as needed and in line with schools' policy. Please speak with the Cluster Attendance Support Offer for more information on what can be expected following allocation to an Attendance Officer.

Appendix 3 – How to manage problematic attendance

