



Lodge Farm Primary School

Attendance Policy

Reviewed: January 2024

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

At Lodge Farm, we believe that promoting regular attendance cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in all our school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The legal position

'The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.' (Working together to improve school attendance 2022)

2. Inclusion

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) 3 and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study)' (Working together to improve attendance 2022).

Lodge Farm carefully considers all policies with respect to the impact on equality and the possible implications for pupils and staff with protected characteristics.

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance> from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold. This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

4. Procedures

4.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

4.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health as soon as practically possible. Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 7.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

4.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Lodge Farm follow the process below:

1. EXPECT: Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can,
2. MONITOR: Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched. and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.
3. LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND: When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
4. FACILITATE SUPPORT: Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.
5. FORMALISE SUPPORT: Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

6. ENFORCE: Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

4.6 Reporting to parents

Lodge Farm will report at least annually to parents their child's attendance.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
3. The death or terminal illness of immediate family.
4. To attend a wedding or funeral of immediate family.
5. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 4 above, the Headteacher agrees to consult with the principal education welfare officer prior to any authorisation being given to the parent. The principal education welfare officer will discuss each case with an independent Headteacher and will make a recommendation to the referring school.

Please note: required in each case.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 4.2 and 4.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils traveling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can decide to use the local authority process of issuing a fine to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the local authority, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Lodge Farm promotes attendance through celebration assemblies. Each week the class with the highest attendance receives the attendance trophy. Good attendance is promoted through general assemblies and its importance is highlighted to the children here and by the class teachers. In the weekly newsletter, there is a section on attendance, which comments on the attendance for the week as well as letting parents and children know their class' attendance.

7. Attendance monitoring

Lodge Farm recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and has a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school.

Responsibilities include the following, taken from 'Working together to improve school attendance' 2022:

- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes, oversight of data analysis, and communicating messages to pupils and parents.
- Making sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Making sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding. Where possible this should include attendance or pastoral support staff (either school based or contracted) who can work with families, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders, the local authority's School Attendance Support Team and other partners.
- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicating these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels. In doing so, schools should help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development.
- Providing clarity on the short- and long-term consequences of poor attendance.
- Visibly demonstrating the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include in displays, assemblies or in registration periods. Where used sensitively and without discrimination, this may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year group, class/form and individual level.
- Recognising that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies.
- Recognising that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

The attendance lead monitors pupil absence on a weekly basis. Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2). If the office has not heard from a parent or carer by 10am, a welfare check may be made.

If a pupil's absence goes above the national requirement days the school will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this. If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to raise, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer. The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

Lodge Farm uses attendance data to track attendance and identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

8. Roles and responsibilities

Lodge Farm procedures will follow the guidance below:

'The attendance and punctuality expectations of pupils and parents, including start and close of the day, register closing times and the processes for requesting leaves of absence and informing the school of the reason for an unexpected absence.

- The name and contact details of the Senior Leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Information and contact details of the school staff who pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day to day basis (such as a form tutor, attendance officer etc) and for more detailed support on attendance (such as a head of year, pastoral lead or family liaison officer etc).
- The school's day to day processes for managing attendance, for example first day calling and processes to follow up on unexplained absence.
- How the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance.
- The school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most.
- The school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority.
- The point at which Fixed Penalty Notices for absence and other sanctions will be sought if support is not appropriate (e.g. for an unauthorised holiday in term time), not successful, or not engaged with.

(Working together to improve school attendance 2022)

8.1 Persistent and severe absence

'Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools and the relevant local authorities will work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, schools should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners.

A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school. 87. If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect.

Schools and local authorities should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, conduct a full children's social care assessment. Further information is available in the statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education'

(Working together to improve attendance 2022)

Lodge Farm and the relevant local authority are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family.

These are:

- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

8.2 The local governing board

The local governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

8.3 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy and their school's procedures are implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors three times a year. The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

8.4 The attendance officer

The attendance lead:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

8.5 Class teachers

Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

8.6 Office staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. The attendance support staff track attendance figures and report these to the attendance lead on a daily/weekly basis.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher and SLT. At every review, the policy will be shared with and ratified by the governing board.

Appendix 1: Leave of absence request form



"Learning in mind, community at heart"

email: admin@lodgefarm.herts.sch.uk
www. lodgefarm.herts.sch.uk

Lodge Farm Primary School
Mobbsbury Way
Chells
Stevenage
Herts SG2 0HR

Tel: 01438 236600 Fax: 01438 236601
Information Line: 08453 316191

Headteacher: Ben Hodson

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST

"Every Lesson Counts"

There is a strong correlation between good attendance and good achievement at school and clearly we want all our children to leave Lodge Farm with the best life chances possible. School is important and whilst we fully appreciate how expensive a holiday can be, we cannot condone holiday during term time.

Children find it very difficult to catch up on the learning they have missed and in the longer term this can have a negative impact on their progress. Also, what message are children being given about the value and importance of going to school if holidays are taken frequently?

May we remind you that if your child's attendance falls below 85% they are now classed as a "persistent absentee" and their attendance will be monitored by our Attendance Improvement Officer. The Government expectation is for every child to attend school at least 95% of the time.

Please be aware that, in line with the attendance policy, Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued if your child has more than 21 sessions of unauthorised absence over 2 consecutive terms. (Previous good attendance is not taken into account when issuing these Fixed Penalties).

As a parent or carer you should still fill in this form if you want to take your child out of school during

Please be advised that _____ (Name of child) Class _____
will be absent from Lodge Farm School

from _____ to _____

in order to take part in an annual holiday. I understand that this will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

If there are any exceptional circumstances you feel we should be aware of, please detail below and continue overleaf if necessary. Please be advised that exceptional circumstances will be considered individually and will not automatically mean that your request is authorised.

term time to go on an annual holiday. Please return this form to the office for our records.

For office use only

Headteacher's Signature:

No. of sessions to date	No. of sessions (this occasion)	No of sessions unauthorised	Letter Sent
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