Lowerhouse Junior School, Burnley

ATTENDANCE POLICY	
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Inspiring a lifelong love for learning

Aspiration

Integrity

Respect

Resilience

Introduction

Our aim at Lowerhouse Junior school is to inspire a lifelong love for learning and this starts with excellent attendance at school.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.





Promoting Regular Attendance

At Lowerhouse Junior School all staff will work with parents and pupils to help create a pattern of regular attendance at school.

We promote regular attendance through:

- Creating a culture which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Encourage regular attendance through a range of initiatives
- Give details on attendance in our weekly newsletter
- Report to you half termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements

- Reward good or improving attendance through a range of rewards
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

Understanding types of absence: Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

How We Manage Attendance

The School Day:

- Gates open at 8:40 am. Children come into school at 8.45 am. Gates close at 9:00 am. After 9.00 am, children are classed as late.
- Children arriving after register closes (9:00 am) will be marked as U.
- School finishes at 3:25 pm.
- Each school day involves a morning and afternoon session.
- Afternoon registration is at 1:00 pm. Children arriving after 1:00 pm will be marked U.

If your child is absent:

Telephone or email the school **before** 8:30 am to speak to the office staff or to Mrs Marsden (Deputy Headteacher). Parents/carers can also leave a message on the office answerphone with:

- child's name and year group
- name of person making the call
- date of absence
- a detailed reason for the absence

This notification **must** be done on the **first** day of absence and **EVERY** subsequent day.

How we will manage absence:

- Check contact from home regarding each child's absence
- If no message is received a call will be made to the parent/carer by 10:00 am on each day of absence.
- The parent/carer will be encouraged to send their child to school as soon as possible **where appropriate**
- If no contact is made, **a home visit will be initiated as soon as possible from the first day of absence**
- If no one is home or answers the door during the home visit and school does not have information about your child's absence then the police/social services can be contacted for a welfare check.

How we will manage attendance concerns:

- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with our school Attendance Lead and/or Headteacher if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol.

Our attendance and punctuality expectations:

- All children are expected to aim for 100% attendance.
- Parents/carers work with schools and fulfil the legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time.

Punctuality

We will require a reason for lateness and will offer support where appropriate.

In **all** circumstances, the following will apply:

Week 1: Two or more late arrivals: contact made with parents/carers by the school office.

Week 2: Two or more late arrivals: again, contact will be made with parents/carers by the school's Attendance Lead.

Week 3: Two or more late arrivals again parents/carers will be invited in for a meeting with the school's Attendance Lead and/or Headteacher.

At this point a Punctuality Agreement will be put in place with a monitoring period agreed. Referrals to external agencies, including the Local Authority's Pupil Attendance Support Team, will also be discussed.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents/carers in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality:

- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff, Attendance Lead and the Headteacher;
- Parenting contracts;
- Use of the Early Help Assessment (EHA) and/or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority School Attendance Team)
- Attendance panels
- Penalty notices

The Local Authority School Attendance Team

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the PAST/School Attendance Team. They will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist the case may be referred to the Court Officers, who can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Use of Sanctions Including Fixed Penalty Notices

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however progress will be carefully monitored and where engagement strategies have not had the desired effect the Headteacher will issue a fixed penalty notice in line with the Local Authority's code of conduct.

Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the Local Authority to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carer must pay £60.00 within 21 days or £120.00 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

Headteachers have a duty to do everything possible to support excellent attendance, including the use of penalty notices where all measures to support families have failed or where parents/carers take a child out of school for unauthorised leave of absence. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The 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

Lancashire County Council penalty notice information is available on their website or in school.

Leave in Term-Time

Taking a child out of school in term-time will affect their schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **NO** automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time. **Holiday requests in term-time will not be authorised.**

All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent/carer of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office. Requests will only be authorised if the circumstances surrounding the request are considered to be **EXCEPTIONAL**. It is important that parents/carers understand that leave in term-time **WILL**

NOT be agreed by us at **any** time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

In considering the request we will also look at various factors such as:

- The timing of the request: When a pupil is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Pupils should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods e.g. SATs, phonics screening.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 95% or will fall below 95% as a result of taking leave.
- Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year

Religious Absence

The school will authorise one day's 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carer is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

Roles and Responsibilities for Attendance Matters

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence
- Avoid any leave in term-time and apply in advance using form
- Attendance at meetings in school
- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies
- Provide accurate and up-to-date contact details (minimum of 2 emergency contact numbers).

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parent/carer and teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Co-operate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher / Attendance Lead:

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure that there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision
- Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided

- Input and update the attendance registers
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance

School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Governors

- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly

- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy

- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures

- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

The Attendance Lead for school is Mrs Marsden (Deputy Headteacher), who can be contacted via the school office on 01282 426774 or email admin@lowerhouse.lancs.sch.uk if parents/carers would like to discuss their child's attendance or any concerns.