

# **Limehurst Primary School**



## **Attendance Policy**

**Last updated: September 2024**

**Review: September 2025**

## 1. Introduction

In May 2022 the DfE published '*Working Together to Improve School Attendance*' guidance for all schools and Local Authorities. The guidance has been produced to help schools, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance. Our Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of that guidance.

The DfE has published a new version of '*Working Together to Improve School Attendance*', which became 'Statutory' guidance on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024. The updated guidance includes;

- New requirements for schools on keeping and sharing registers
- New rules around issuing fines for unauthorised absences
- More detail about supporting pupils with physical or mental ill health

At Limehurst Primary School, all staff work collaboratively to encourage every pupil to strive for excellence. Every child will be supported, challenged and valued. One way in which we strive to do this is by encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their maximum potential. We are determined in encouraging the development of high self-esteem and for our children to take pride and ownership of their learning. In conjunction with this, we will continuously provide a clear framework for parents and staff as well as clear procedures for involving parents and/or external agencies where appropriate.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable

Limehurst Primary School encourages all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that ***“parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly”*** (DfE).

## 2. Purpose

Our Policy is written in line with the above DfE guidance to ensure that all children at Limehurst Primary School have access to the full provision of education without unnecessary or avoidable disruption through poor school attendance.

Through this policy we aim to;

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- Ensure every child has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- Improve pupil's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of regular school attendance at every stage of a child's education
- Ensure that our policy includes Nursery and Reception aged children to promote good habits at an early age
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the LA Attendance Service to remove barriers that prevent pupils from accessing full time education
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties

We encourage parents to discuss any difficulties they may be experiencing and if you feel that the school can offer any support with improving your child's attendance please discuss with the school staff.

### **3. The Law on School Attendance and right to a full time Education**

- 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

### **4. Recording & Monitoring Attendance**

Schools have a responsibility to take an attendance register at the start of each morning session and again during the afternoon session - therefore, one school day counts as two absence sessions. Schools must record if a pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. Schools must also ascertain the reason for absence; ensure safeguarding action is taken; identify whether to approve absences or not; and, identify the correct absence and attendance code to use.

#### **The government expects schools and local authorities to:**

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

#### **Limehurst have systems in place to ensure we receive reasons for absence. These include:**

- We encourage parents to contact the school on the first day of absence to inform us why their child is absent, the reason for absence and when they are expected to return to school.
- We ask parents/carers to inform school in advance if it is known a child will be absent, such as for an appointment and to provide evidence of appointments.
- If we have not heard from parents, we text/phone/visit (including leaving a visiting slip) to ask for a reason for absence.
- If we do not get a reply, a letter asking for a reason for absence may be sent or a further telephone call made.
- If a pupil is absent for several days we may contact her/his parent/carer to enquire about the pupil's wellbeing and when we can expect her/him back into school.
- We may ask the LA Attendance Officer to conduct a home visit

- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10<sup>th</sup> day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be “missing from education.”

**As part of our attendance monitoring processes we will:**

- We use attendance data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve. Persistently absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully.
- Where a child has poor attendance or a concerning pattern of absence we may ask for further information to verify that he/she was unable to come to school. For example, if we are told a pupil is unwell, we may request further information to verify that he/she was too unwell to come to school. This could be evidence that the pupil has visited a doctor, such as an appointment slip, a doctor’s note or a prescription. If you do not provide this evidence the school can record your child’s absences as unauthorised.
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with our Associate Headteacher if absences persist
- Create a personalised action/support plan to address any barriers to attendance
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services if appropriate
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions
- Issue penalty notices to any pupil with 10 unauthorised sessions

**5. Positive measures to encourage good attendance**

We are committed to recognising and rewarding good attendance and will;

- Complete and monitor registers daily
- Class attendance cup awarded in weekly assembly
- ‘100% attendance club’ - certificates and prize draws each term for pupils with 100% attendance
- Certificates to persistent absentees with improved attendance
- Termly / annual class reward for the class who has had best attendance

**6. Types of Absence**

See appendix 1 for types of absence codes used on school registers.

- **Illness absence:** We all get ill from time to time. On most occasions children can continue to attend school when they are unwell. However, we must take a common sense approach to judge when a child is too unwell to come into school. Please speak to one of our staff for advice about whether a child should be cared for at home or can come into school.
- **Appointments:** We encourage all appointments, such as medical, dentist and optician, to be taken outside school time; this will help to reduce lost learning time. If this is not possible, appointment cards that show the time and date of the appointment should be shown to the school office. On most occasions, only one session of lost learning will be authorised for an appointment and, when possible, pupils should attend school before and/or after an appointment. If a pupil leaves after registration no absence will be recorded for that session.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** The school will work with the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notice Warnings when a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences during a 12 week period. If a pupil has further unauthorised absences, a penalty notice fine may be issued. Penalty Notice Fines, without a warning period, may also be issued for unauthorised

absences, including for unauthorised term-time holidays. Penalty Notice Fines are £120 per parent/carer per child when paid within 28 days or reduced to £60 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days. Parents/Carers can also be prosecuted for failing to ensure their child regularly attends school.]

If schools have already complete Penalty Warnings with no positive affect to school attendance, Fast Track will be considered. This is a 12-week monitoring period where school and attendance officer hold 3 meetings with parent/carer and pupil offering solutions/support to help pupil improve school attendance. Within the 12 weeks, the child should achieve 95% or higher. At the end of the monitoring period, the school and attendance officer will decide if the case proceeds to court for poor school attendance.

- **Holidays:** Parents must complete a holiday form to notify school of absence due to holidays. All holidays that consist of 10 or more sessions of absence (5 full days) can result in a Penalty Notice being issued.
- **Religious observance:** The Pupil Registration Regulations 2006 Section 2 reads in relation to absence it should be “treated as authorised [absence] ... on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his parent belongs”. In Oldham the Local Authority guidance to headteachers and governors is that only one day for each religious festival (no more than three days in any one academic year) should be counted as authorised absence.

## 7. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to further absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed, miss vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

**The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Limehurst Primary School are;**

Year Group	Start time	Finish time
Nursery	8.55am	3.10pm
Reception	8.45am	3.15pm
Year 1 & 2	8.45am	3.15pm
Year 3 & 4	8.50am	3.20pm
Year 5 & 6	8.50am	3.20pm

At 9.20am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – ‘U’, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern the following escalation of action will be taken;

1. Letter home with details of lates recorded.

2. Referral to the Oldham Council Attendance Service.

Late marks adversely affect your child's overall attendance figure and lesson time missed

## 8. Limehurst Primary School's Improving Attendance Process

### **Stage 1 - Cause for concern (case specific attendance range between 95-90%)**

Send stage 1 letter to parent/carer and continue to monitor absences

### **Stage 2 - No improvement (attendance % decreases)**

Send stage 2 letter to parent/carer requesting medical evidence for any absences. At this stage any further absence (even if parents telephone) will be recorded as unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided

### **Stage 3 - No improvement (10 sessions of unauthorised absence)**

Once 10 sessions of unauthorised absence have occurred within a 10-week period (5 days) send PN warning to LA and invite parent/carer into school for attendance meeting.

### **Stage 4 - No improvement (penalty warning period)**

Penalty warning periods last for 15 days. Monitor and if a child is absent within that period issue a penalty.

### **Stage 5 - No improvement (2<sup>nd</sup> penalty notice)**

If penalty was **NOT** issued at stage 4 can issue a second penalty warning if attendance does not improve.

### **Stage 6 - No improvement (penalty warning period)**

Penalty warning periods last 15 days. If a child is absent within that period issue a penalty (only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period).

### **Stage 7 - No improvement (Fast Track)**

Fast Track - 12 week monitoring period. Within the 12 weeks, the child should achieve 95% attendance or higher for that period. At the end of the monitoring period, the school and attendance officer will decide if



## Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

Key to Codes	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Attending any other Approved Educational Activity
C	Other authorised circumstances
C1	Leave of absence - regulated performance or employment abroad
C2	Leave of absence - part-time timetable
D	Dual registration
E	Suspended or excluded without alternative provision
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
I	Illness
J1	Leave of absence - Interview for employment or transfer
K	Attending alternative provision arranged by the LA
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
P	Participating in a sporting activity
Q	Unable to attend - lack of access arrangement
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave for public examination
T	Travelling with parent for occupational purposes
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
W	Attending work experience
X	Not required to attend - non-compulsory school age pupil
Y1	Unable to attend - normal transport not available
Y2	Unable to attend - widespread travel disruption
Y3	Unable to attend - unavoidable partial closure
Y4	Unable to attend - unavoidable full closure
Y5	Unable to attend - criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend - public health Guidance/Law
Y7	Unable to attend - unavoidable other than Y1-Y6
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend / No mark recorded
#	Planned whole school closure