Long Buckby Junior School Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Aims

- To emphasise the importance of, and secure from pupils, maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities.
- To make explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations over attendance levels.
- To clarify roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance.
- To communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised".
- To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without this, the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put it simply: absence means missed learning. It is also a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance and high examination performance.

"The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment." Working together to improve school attendance (Updated August 2024)

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

The vast majority of our pupils achieve over 96% attendance (attends a minimum of 183 out of the 190 school days in a year) and this is what we expect from all of our pupils **as a minimum**. Sickness usually comes as a block of time over a continuous period, rather than lots of occasional days. What the school is looking for is unbroken weeks of attendance. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and the school has a duty to follow these up.

Key Staff

Senior School Attendance Champion	Mr Cox
School Attendance Data Manager	Mrs Gregory
Early Help and Senior Mental Health Lead	Mrs Eltherington

SENDCo	Mrs Bees

Reporting Absence

- It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school either via email: bursar@longbuckby-jun.northants-eccl.gov.uk or a phone call to the office, 01327 842445, before 9.00 am if their child is to absent from school detailing the reason why.
- The registers will be checked by 9:30 am and if a child is absent and this absence is unexplained the school will work its way down the list of phone numbers, logging each number tried and the result, to determine that the child is ill and that the parent/carer knows where and who they are with.
- Should the school be unable to get a reply on any of the numbers we will try the numbers we will repeat the process until 11.00 am when a decision will be taken to undertake a home visit to check on the child's welfare.
- Should this be unsuccessful then the school will follow the LA's 'Child Missing from Education' policy.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of absence is required.

Authorised absence

- Sickness – children with persistent illness will require a doctor's note confirming the illness.
- Emergency medical appointments
- Days for specific religious observance
- School is closed due to unforeseen circumstances
- Exceptional Circumstances
- A child being educated off site (approved offsite educational activity, alternative provision, approved sporting activity, educational visit or trip organised by the school, work experience).

Unauthorised Absences

- Family holiday no matter what length
- Family trips – including days off for family birthdays.
- Leaving early to travel to an event/holiday

- Lateness after the register has closed at (9:15am)

Where possible routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours. The school reserves the right to ask to see medical appointment cards when a child has a pattern of poor attendance.

The DFE makes it clear that the decision whether or not authorise an absence is the school's; a letter from home does not automatically authorise an absence.

Irregular Attendance

If you take your child out of school for an accumulative total of 5 days or more (10 sessions) (90%) over a period of 10 weeks, the school will deem this as irregular attendance and will consider a referral to the Local authority for consideration of legal action.

This could include:

- a Penalty Notice payable up to £160 fine
- prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000
- prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment

Holidays

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 has removed all references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten days. The amendments make it clear that the **school cannot grant any leave of absence unless it is in exceptional circumstances**. Holidays during term time will not be authorised.

Promoting Good Attendance

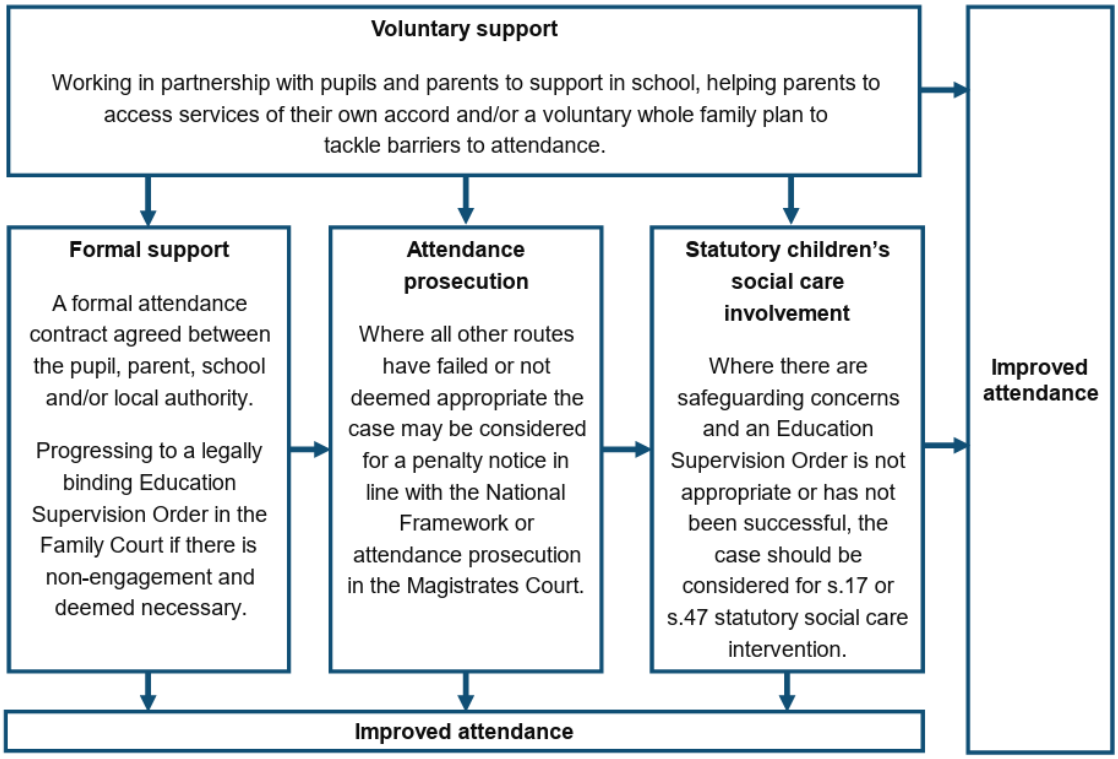
The school works to promote good attendance by:

- The school monitors attendance every morning and will follow-up on any absence the same day.
- A reason for all absence will be sought from the parent/carer.
- Attendance registers are monitored on a weekly and termly basis with low attendance being challenged by the school.
- Support is offered to families and children who are struggling with attending school. This can take the form of:
    - Daily 'Meet and Greet' for the child
    - Structures put in place to minimise any anxiety the child may be facing about entering school.

- Regular contact with the parent/carer to ensure partnership working.
- Support offered to families with children with long term health conditions that leads to absences form school.

The school will follow the flow diagram shown below which is from the DFE's 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (2024)

Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



Should informal support **not** be effective then:

- The school may use more formal support. An Early Help Assessment or Attendance Contract.
- Work with the School Attendance Support Team at the Local Authority to support the family.

If the measures shown above do not improve a child's attendance then the school may have to work with the Local Authority and use other measures such as Fixed Penalty Notices or Education Supervision Orders.

<u>Penalty Notices</u>

DFE guidance states that a penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

The current criteria for the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices is:

- Where there has been an unacceptable level of unauthorised absence from an educational establishment and enforcement is necessary to improve attendance. Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from a head teacher or other authorised representative from the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. The categories of authorised and unauthorised absence are explained in the Guidance to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- DFE guidance states that the threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

In the case of a unauthorised holiday taken during term time, if;

- Parents have not sought permission from the Head Teacher before taking their child out of school for a holiday in term time.
- The Head Teacher has refused the request but the absence occurs anyway; *or*
- A pupil has not returned to school by the agreed date with no satisfactory explanation.
- Each case is considered on its own individual merits.

Also

- A pupil is persistently late to school, i.e. arrives after the register has closed;
- Under truancy sweeps carried out under Crime and Disorder Act 1998 powers, a minimum of 5 sessions of unauthorised absence may generate a Penalty Notice, if these unauthorised absences occur in the 6 school weeks (maximum) after the child was stopped on a the truancy sweep; and
- When an excluded child is present in a public place during school hours on a day which is one of the first 5 school days to which the exclusion relates or, where that exclusion is for a fixed period of 5 days or less, any of the days to which the exclusion relates, under the protocol for Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Non-Compliance with an Education Supervision Order

Local Authorities have the power to prosecute:

- Parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order issued by the local authority to require a parent to get their child registered at a named school (under section 443 of the Education Act 1996). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
- Parents who fail to secure their child's regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences: section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. The section 52 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence my result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision (under sections 444 and 444ZA). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000), or if the parent is found to have known the child was not attending regularly and failed to ensure that they did so, a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who persistently fail to comply with directions under an Education Supervision Order (under Schedule 3 to the Children Act 1989) or breach a Parenting Order or directions under the order (under section 375 of the Sentencing Act 2020). These may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).

<u>Summary</u>

In summary the school will use the following steps to support and encourage a child's good attendance at school:

1. Share clear expectations	Share our expectation of at least 96% attendance at school **(attends a minimum of 183 out of the 190 school days in a year)** with parents and develop a culture where children

	can and want to learn.
2. Closely Monitor every child's attendance	Monitor registers on a daily, weekly, monthly, termly and annual basis to detect any concerns and possible barriers to good attendance.
3. Listen and understand when there are genuine barriers to a child attending school.	Meet with parents of children whose attendance is a concern to identify any potential barriers.
4. Put in place informal support where necessary to overcome possible barriers to good school attendance.	Work with the parents to improve a child's attendance and monitor impact/improvements.
5. Put in place more formal support to overcome possible barriers.	This could be in the form of partnership working with the Local Authority and could be through an Attendance Contract or Education Supervision Order.
6. Follow statutory intervention.	Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Sub Committee Reviewed (date)	Signed (Head teacher)
Full Governing Body Ratified (date)	Signed (Chair of Governors)
Review Date	September 2027