



Limehurst Academy Policy Document

Attendance - Students

Date Approved by Governors: August 2021

Review Date: August 2022

Headteacher's signature:

Chair of Governors' signature:

Introduction

At Limehurst, we recognise the clear link between the attendance and attainment of students. The aim of this policy is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality for students within Limehurst to support learning and achievement.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding issues. It is important to see our young people every day and provide an educationally safe and secure environment.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that all students attend regularly and on time. Students should aim to attend every day that the school is open. We set a target for all students to aim for 100% attendance with the expectation all students achieve at least 96%. ***As a school we define regular attendance as 96% or above.***

We believe Teachers, Parents, Carers, Students and all members of the Limehurst community have an important contribution in improving attendance and punctuality, ensuring students attend to achieve. This Policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

Aims

- Maximise the overall percentage of student attendance and punctuality at Limehurst Academy.
- Reduce the number of students who are persistently absent and raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community.
- Provide support advice and guidance for parents, students and staff.
- Develop clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for students.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data.
- Ensure a whole school approach to ensure consistency of intervention strategies.
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children's Services, Health and other partner agencies.

Promoting regular Attendance at Limehurst Academy:

This is everyone's responsibility, all members of staff, parents/carers and students. To help us all focus on this, we will ensure:

- Appropriate interventions are in place to deter poor punctuality.
- An appropriate curriculum is provided and will be reviewed regularly.
- The need for high quality teaching and learning throughout the school is recognised as being essential to the promotion of attendance.
- Students are provided with appropriate support to minimise disaffection from school. This includes Limehurst Academy and multi-agency provision as appropriate.
- Special Educational Needs disadvantaged and Looked After students and other vulnerable groups are given appropriate support, and attendance is monitored rigorously.
- Effective partnerships with parent/carers are encouraged through regular contact and support provided.
- Parents/carers are kept informed of students' attendance and punctuality through first day contact, termly progress reports, individual letters and meetings when required.

- Good attendance and punctuality is rewarded through regular individual student incentives.
- Attendance and punctuality is regularly discussed with students in form time and at assemblies.

Attendance Expectations and Absence Procedures

A child not attending school is a safeguarding matter. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is required.

Expectations of students

- Ensure you arrive for AM registration by 8:50am.
- Be in your class for your first lesson by 9.00 am.
- Arrive to lessons on time.
- Always attend every lesson.
- Never leave the school site without permission.
- Always use the signing in/out system when late or leaving school for appointments.
- Following any absence complete any missed work that may be provided by the school.

Expectations of Parents/Carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law. Parents are provided in good time with the necessary information from the school, which will enable them to meet these obligations. This includes:

- The timings of the school day.
- School dates and holidays.
- School procedures relating to attendance and punctuality and its importance.
- School expectations regarding lateness.
- Prompt communication of matters causing concern.

The school expects that all parents communicate with the school, giving a reason:

- In advance of any planned absences.
- Immediately following any unplanned absence.
- During any absence expected to last more than three days.

Parents/carers who do not conform to the above are contacted and requested to provide an explanation for their child's absence. Any non-compliance on the part of the parents/carers is documented.

If a student is absent we will:

- Telephone and text Parent/Carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by 9:30am.
- If no response is received after three days unauthorised absence, the Community Liaison Officer will conduct a home visit. If there are safeguarding concerns, contact will be made with the family, as soon as possible, by the Attendance Officer.
- If a student's absences are increasing and we are not aware of a good reason the parent/carers will be invited to meet the Assistant Headteacher responsible for attendance.
- If absences persist the Attendance Officer or Assistant Headteacher responsible for attendance will discuss further actions.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school accepts there is good reason for absence. If suitable contact numbers are available, parents/carers of students who are absent will be sent a text message asking for acknowledgement that their child is absent. An authorised absence requires a communication from the parent/carers. In most cases, parents/carers can email the attendance team at attendance@limehurst.org.uk, telephone the school and leave a recorded message on the school answerphone or speak to a member of office staff. A written record is made of telephone messages of this type. Students who return to school following an absence, without having notified school will be deemed to have had an 'unauthorised absence'. Parents/Carers of such students will be contacted by phone or given an absence letter to be completed and returned to school the following day.

Unauthorised absence is any absence which does not fall into the following categories:

- Absence due to illness or other avoidable cause.
- An absence for religious observance sanctioned by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong.
- Medical appointments that **cannot** be taken outside of normal school time.
- A leave of term time absence under exceptional circumstances (authorised by the Headteacher)

Parents/Carers of students who have an unauthorised leave of absence, may either be issued with a Penalty Notice of £120 per parent per child (discounted to £60 if paid within 21 days), or, the case could be referred by the Local Authority directly to the Magistrates Court for the purposes of a criminal prosecution

Persistent Absence

- Students are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DFE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DFE expects Schools to intervene well before students reach a level of persistent absence.

- Whilst we understand that students can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. If a student is reluctant to attend or a parent/carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school as soon as possible to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution.
- Parents/Carers are asked to contact your child's Head of Year or the Attendance Officer in the first instance.

Why Regular Attendance is very important:

Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect students' learning. Students who have time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

- 90% attendance is equivalent to a student missing one half day of lessons per week or approximately 118 lessons per year

The DFE has published a strong link between poor school attendance and low levels of achievement:

Students' attendance	Chance of achieving 5 good pass grades at GCSE
100% - 96%	73% of Students achieve 5 good pass grades.
96% - 94%	64% of Students achieve 5 good pass grades.
93% - 90%	55% of Students achieve 5 good pass grades
80% to 70%	Only 20% chance of achieving 5 good pass grades
50% and below	Only 6% of Students achieve 5 good pass grades

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

The Attendance Officer (AO)

- The school's Attendance Officer provides support for parents/carers and advice on problems relating to attendance and encourages good communications between home and school.
- They will always try to resolve the situation by agreement with the family but, if a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the student's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists the Attendance Officer will be required to consider the instigation of legal proceedings which include; Penalty Notices, Parental Prosecution and Education Supervision Orders. Details regarding attendance law, penalty fines and legal interventions are available from the Local Authority.

Leave of absence in Term Time

The Law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in truly exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Parents/carers can receive a Penalty Notice fine for taking their child on holiday during term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively.

Headteachers cannot grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Lateness

Staff must mark a student as late on Go 4 Schools if they arrive after the following times without a valid reason:

Registration	8.50
Period 1	9.00
Period 2	10.00
Period 3	11.15
Period 4	12.15
Period 5	13.45

Students arriving at school after 8.50 will be marked as late and the following consequences will be adhered to on a weekly basis:

- 1st Late = Warning
- 2nd Late = 15 min same day detention
- 3rd Late = 30 min same day detention
- 4th Late = 45 min same day detention
- 5th Late = 1 day in Inclusion

The Attendance Officer will contact parents/carers as students receive an after-school detention on the same day.

Rewards

Good attendance is regularly promoted through the tutorial programme, assemblies and posters displayed around the school. Rewards for attendance are given in the following ways:

- Regular School communication will inform and congratulate parents/carers and students on excellent attendance.
- Letters will be sent termly congratulating parents/carers and students on excellent and improved attendance.
- 96%+ attendance certificates are presented in end of term year assemblies.
- Termly prize draws for all students with 96%+ attendance to take place during Whole School Assemblies (Autumn and Summer) and Year Assemblies (Spring). Students with full term's attendance are given a reward each term (e.g. half a day trip, theatre trip, inflatable session etc.) Rewards increase as the year progresses.
- Students who have poor attendance and are being supported by the Community Liaison Officers and pupil support, are rewarded if attendance improves at the discretion of pupil support, Community Liaison Officers and School Attendance Officer.

- Students who achieve 96%+ attendance and punctuality for the duration of a whole school year will receive an additional award.

Reintegration of Long-Term Absentees

When long term absentees return to school, it is important that they are sympathetically treated by all staff.

For each student, the Head of Pupil Support will draw up a reintegration action plan. This plan will acknowledge reasons for the student's absence and any additional support required. All staff who teach the student will be advised in advance of an anticipated return, so that they can plan how to re-introduce the student to their scheme of work.

New Students

Students commencing school in Year 7:

- The importance of good attendance and punctuality is overtly expressed at the Parents' Induction Evening and forms part of the Home School Agreement between school and parents/carers.
- Meetings and records from primary schools can identify potential poor attenders who should be targeted for close monitoring from the beginning of term.

Students who commence at a later date:

- These students are monitored over their first few weeks, to see how well they settle into their new school, including attendance and punctuality. As part of an interview for prospective entry, this review process will be clearly articulated as a support to the student and a means of directly informing the parent of the achievement of their child.

Attendance Meetings

Regular meetings between the Assistant Headteacher and the Attendance Officer take place, to discuss trends in attendance and individual students whose attendance is failing. Students who are identified will have a meeting to talk about poor attendance and the consequences if their attendance does not improve.

Children Missing in Education

Definition

A Child Missing in Education (CME) is defined as a child or young person of compulsory academy age who is not attending school, not placed in alternative provision by an LA, and who is not receiving a suitable education elsewhere. This definition also includes children who are receiving an education, but one that is not suitable; this could include children who are not receiving full-time education suitable to their needs, e.g. age, ability, aptitude, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Children go missing from education for a number of reasons including:

- they don't start school at the appropriate time and so they do not enter the educational system.
- they are removed by their parents.
- behaviour and/or attendance difficulties.
- they cease to attend, due to exclusion, illness or bullying.
- they fail to find a suitable school place after moving to a new area.
- the family move home regularly.
- problems at home.

The law requires all children between the ages of 5 and 18 to be in full time education.

Parents' responsibilities

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education. Some parents may elect to educate their children at home and may withdraw them from school at any time unless they are subject to a School Attendance Order.

Where a parent notifies the school in writing that they are home educating, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform the local authority. However, where parents orally indicate that they intend to withdraw their child to be home educated, the school should consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Children with Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP) can be home educated. Where the EHCP sets out SEN provision that the child should receive at home, the local authority is under a duty to arrange that provision. Where the EHCP names a school or type of school as the place where the child should receive his or her education but the parent chooses to home educate their child, the local authority must assure itself that the provision being made by the parent is suitable. In such cases, the local authority must review the plan annually to assure itself that the provision set out in it continues to be appropriate and that the child's SEN continue to be met.

School Responsibilities

Children missing from education can mean either a child being unenrolled or a child on extended absence.

As mentioned previously, the school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school may contact the Local Authority who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

Limehurst have a legal duty to inform the appropriate LA if:

- A child is absent for 10 days following on from a period of approved leave.
- A child is absent for 20 consecutive days without approved leave.
- A child fails to attend school regularly.
- A child is deleted from the register when the next school is not known

Parents should be aware that Leicestershire County Council reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their child/children to school on a regular basis.

With due regard for Children Missing Education (September 2018), Limehurst Academy will notify local authorities when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the 15 grounds listed in the regulations (Annex A). These 15 grounds continue to include:

- When the family has apparently moved away.
- When the child has been certified as medically unfit to attend.
- When the child is in custody for more than four months.
- When the child has been permanently excluded.
- The child has been taken out of school to be home educated

This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points and/or when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by us. When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority will include contact details as well as the reason for removal. We will also notify local authorities within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a nonstandard transition point. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point and/or at the start of the first year of education normally provided by us.

We will obtain written confirmation from parents or carers, if and when we find out that one of our pupils is being removed to be educated outside of the school system. A copy of this will be forwarded to the appropriate Local Authority.

When a child has been referred to the CME Team, we will continue to make welfare checks following the process below:

Step	Actions
1	Nominated person from the pastoral team calls home once per week. The student must be spoken to directly or whilst on speakerphone to the parent. Should there be no answer, a message will be left stating the reason for the call and requesting that the parent calls back as soon as possible. All contacts on SIMS should be tried.
2	Following two unsuccessful phone calls, a text message should be sent, "We have been trying to contact you to check that you are safe and well, please make contact with school today."
3	Message sent to student on Teams to request that they get their parents to call. Email sent to parent requesting that contact is made.
5	Text message sent home, "We have been trying to contact you to check that you are safe and well. Please make contact with school today. The next step will be to complete a home visit."

6	Any external agencies involved with the family (e.g. a Social Worker, Family Support Worker or Youth Worker) are informed them that we have not been able to make contact and to establish if they have heard from or seen the family.
7	Text message sent home, "We have been trying to make contact to check that you are safe and well. As we haven't heard from you, a staff member will complete a doorstep visit today."
8	Doorstep visit completed. Repeated if unsuccessful. Note left at the home to record that a visit has been made and to make contact with school. Second visit note to record that a referral will be completed to Children's Duty.
9	Referral to Children's Duty. Text message sent home to inform parent that the referral has been completed.

This will continue until a GRIP Worker is allocated and a plan is put together in conjunction the Inclusion Team.

Safeguarding:

- There are significant risks for children who regularly go missing from education.
- All children, regardless of circumstance, are entitled to full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any SEN they may have.
- Procedures are in place to identify and respond to this, particularly those who are repeatedly missing or where there is an emerging pattern (see above).
- With due regard for Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021), Limehurst Academy acknowledges the importance of information sharing between schools and appropriate Local Authorities to help identify children missing education and help protect children from potential harm.
- A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect (including CSE, FGM, travelling to conflict zones and forced marriage) and staff must be alert to any possible signs or indicators.
- We will review information from the government's 'missing children and adults' strategy' and 'children missing education' guidance when appropriate and applicable.
- Please see the Safeguarding and other relevant policies for further information.