



LORD LAWSON OF BEAMISH ACADEMY

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Originator: Joanne Walsh

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Date of next review: December 2020



Named personnel with designated responsibility for Attendance:

Academic year	Principal	Assistant Principal (Attendance)	Attendance Officer	Chair of Governors
2020-2021	Andrew Fowler	Alex Rayner	Joanne Walsh	Chris Smith

Our academy attendance target is 97%



Attendance Policy

Introduction

The Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy Attendance Policy takes into account the guidance set out in the DFE Document 'School Attendance; Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities July 2019'.

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Students need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Lord Lawson fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure students are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of students who are registered at our school on our school website or available from reception for those without access to the internet.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the staff and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all students are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.



Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and Governors in our academy are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve students' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the academy
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and students of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education
- Work in partnership with students, parents/carers, staff and the local authority so that all students realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in students a sense of their own responsibility
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance
- Recognise the role of class teachers as they will be able to identify where attendance is having an impact on attainment.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and students
- Ensuring that parents/carers have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, students, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting students who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.



Procedures

Our academy will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes
- To maintain appropriate attendance data
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents/carers and students
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time
- To work with parents/carers to improve individual students attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Legal Intervention Team (LIT) or appropriate agencies, any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve their attendance
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE when requested
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Attendance Officer.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Maintaining class registers and completing them accurately in accordance with school policy
- Informing the relevant person where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Where poor attendance reoccurs ensuring appropriate school staff are informed
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Ensuring appropriate school staff are informed of additional information provided by the child so it can be recorded in line with school policy



- Discussing attendance issues at parents' evenings where necessary.

The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence, including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the LIT
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's senior leadership team
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Staff in the House Blocks are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information
- Taking and recording messages from parents/carers regarding absence
- Ensuring the daily absence is recorded
- Contacting the parents/carers of absent children where no contact has been made
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers and reporting concerns to the EWO
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- Improving school attendance by carrying out home visits, attending meetings with the parent/carer
- To identify with parents/carers the reason for poor attendance and work with them to achieve improved attendance and reduce exclusions
- Monitor attendance levels and punctuality
- Identify patterns of absence
- Talk to students on a 1:1 basis regarding attendance related matters
- Refer to outside agencies for additional support for families including School Health, CYPS, Attendance Service, Police, Youth Offending Team and Social Care



Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually, unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance to a medical appointment.
- Contacting the relevant house block on the first morning of absence
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent/carer telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents or carers will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Registers

1. Registers are legal documents and will be marked twice a day
2. Parents/carers must always give reasons for absence to the school
3. Schools are to determine whether absence is authorised or unauthorised in exceptional circumstances, considering factors such as frequency, duration, attendance patterns, i.e. within reason. Staff must be observant of situations where absence is continually condoned by parents.



The guidelines below clarify possible actions

Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
Illness	Absence without a valid reason
Medical/Dental Appointment (For the time of appointment including travel time)	Latecomers beyond 30 minutes after the session has started
Family Bereavement	Persistent lateness within the first 30 minutes of the day
Religious Observance	Babysitting children including siblings
Interview/Work Experience	Shopping during school time
Excluded Children	Special occasions, e.g. birthday
Sports/Music/Exams	Holidays
Agreed other educational activity at the discretion of the Principal	

Reintegrating Long Term Absentees

Following a long period of absence, a child may feel vulnerable, so staff may wish to arrange a phased or gradual return, allocation of a 'Key Worker', consider whether Special Needs support is appropriate, ensure that all staff are aware of the situation and nominate a key person to monitor the child's reintegration into school. All children must feel welcomed back and know from whom they can seek help. Never leave children sitting in corridors or outside an office for long periods.

Registration

All the school doors open at 8.30am until 8.45 am. This time is sufficient for all students to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any student who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the lesson with registers updated upon a students arrival.

All attendance records are documented using Bromcom software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.



Lateness

Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of 1996 Education Act. The school seeks to improve general punctuality and to improve attitude of persistent offenders by:-

- a. Informing parents of our expectations and offer ways of helping combat lateness
- b. Parents of persistent offenders must be contacted
- c. Praise and acknowledge latecomers who improve
- d. Ensure that staff set a good example by arriving punctually for lessons
- e. All children and parents must understand that lateness is actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases
- f. Schools may use other incentives to improve levels of punctuality.

Once the doors are closed at 8.45am the only way to get access school is via the main entrance doors. Any student who enters school this way from 8.45am, will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those students who are late; this is documented on Classcharts for each student.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently arrive to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of a lesson day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with full and accurate details of the reason for their absence and expected date of return. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. House block staff have the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence, a message is sent to the parent/carer requesting these details by house block staff. If this message is not acted upon and contact made, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)



First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent/carer, house block staff initiate a first day contact process. House block staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those students who are absent. On occasions where we are unaware as to why the child is absent, we will contact the parent/carer to obtain the reason for their child's absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to provide learning material for the student (ideally online), so they can keep up with their school work and maintain progress.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the local authority to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside of school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents/carers to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card/letter or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from the parent/carer for the school to make their own enquiries. Alternatively we may make a referral to the School Health Advisor to offer support.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of Head teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Head teachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. Parents/carers are encouraged to keep open lines of communication with school over absence, as persistent absence can be considered a safeguarding matter.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 97% from all students.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their secondary school career. It is the responsibility of the EWO, Assistant Principal (Attendance) and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In our academy parents/carers are to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore when we become concerned about attendance we will inform parents/carers of those concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents/carers via letters that are posted home; parents/carers will be offered support where needed. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the academy with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's



attendance record does not improve over a period of time, the academy has a responsibility to make a referral to the LIT.

The LIT will look at each case and may issue fixed penalty notices to parents where there is poor attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

Our house block staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on our Bromcom attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the EWO to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings, such as letters sent to parents/carers or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents/carers.

At Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy we follow a staged process in managing attendance (See appendix A), the purpose of which is to identify students with poor attendance early, to prevent any further decline in attendance and offer the required support to parents/carers who need it.



Persistent Absence

A student becomes a Persistent Absentee (PA) when they miss 10% of their schooling across the academic year for **whatever reason**. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the full support and co-operation of parents'/carers' to combat this. Any student whose attendance has reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority for intervention. Intervention may be via:

- An action plan to improve attendance will be created which may involve a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and referrals to other agencies, alongside meetings between relevant Academy staff and parents/carers
- Where parents/carers fail to co-operate with support and strategies provided by the Academy, further intervention may take place which could lead to legal sanctions being imposed by the local authority
- Persistent Absence data is communicated to the relevant Local Authority via the School Census on a termly and annual basis.

Rewards and Recognition

Although good attendance is an expectation, the school seeks to improve whole school attendance by offering incentives, this may include:

- 100% Attendance certificates
- Prizes
- Positive postcards home
- Letters
- School/class events
- Praise points



Appendix A

Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy staged response Procedures

