



# **Lincoln Christ's Hospital School**

## **Attendance Policy**

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## **1 Aim**

The school endeavours to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome. For a student to reach their full educational achievement a high level of attendance is essential. The minimum school expectation for attendance is 96% attendance. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance and absence targets. These will take into account both national and internal attendance targets. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

As we return to normal, post-pandemic, maintaining good attendance is more important than ever.

## **2 Principles**

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. Moreover, education is important. Missing school means a student missing out on reaching their potential.

Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority (LA).

Many children are sometimes ill or unhappy about attending school. Families can be going through unsettled times, which can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties, are best sorted out between the school, the parents, and the child at the earliest possible stage.

## **3 Responsibilities**

### **Parents are expected to:**

- encourage good attendance;
- inform the school via phoning either student reception or main reception on each day of every absence before 08:30 (the start of tutor time);
- if they have any concerns around their child's attendance or wellbeing in school to contact their child's Pastoral Manager, Progress Leader or tutor;
- discuss planned absences with the school in advance through a formal request in writing outlining any extenuating circumstances (e.g. exceptional family events) taking on board the school's policy around not authorising any holidays during term time.

### **Staff Roles:**

#### **The Tutor**

The class tutor is seen as the key figure in promoting regular punctual attendance. The tutor should:

- provide a good example by always being punctual to registration;
- carry out registration in the prescribed manner;
- alert the Pastoral Manager when there is a problem or concern regarding a student's attendance;
- build an effective relationship with students and parents/carers to encourage excellent attendance;
- positively support reward systems for attendance linking progress, behaviour and achievement;
- support students returning from longer absence;
- talk to students about any absences and check planners for parental contact.

## **The Subject Teacher**

Subject teachers should:

- take a register at the beginning of every lesson (and ensure that the students know that a register is being taken);
- monitor individual student attendance;
- follow up any suspected internal truancy by checking with the tutor or Pastoral Manager immediately;
- provide relevant work for students who have been detected internally truanting to do in detention.

## **The Progress Leader/Pastoral Manager/ Assistant Headteacher**

We:

- will telephone if parents haven't rung the school to report their child's absence;
- monitor attendance on a regular basis, setting targets for improvement as appropriate;
- contact parents of absent students on a daily basis, if the reason for the absence is unknown, to ensure high levels of attendance;
- monitor the performance of individual tutor groups, following up with individual tutors instances where patterns of absenteeism are not being effectively addressed;
- review registers and attendance and punctuality figures on a weekly basis;
- regularly put attendance onto the agenda of Line Management Meetings;
- ensure that contact is made with parents of poor attenders, supporting the Pastoral Manager where appropriate in dealing with parents directly;
- keep detailed records of interventions, meetings and visits with outcomes noted;
- meet with the Education Welfare Officer on a weekly basis in order to discuss students who have not responded to the school's strategies and, when necessary, to make referrals;
- follow up internal truancy with appropriate sanctions;
- promote good attendance and punctuality through assemblies, commendations, rewards, etc;
- organise attendance panel meetings;
- provide staff with the appropriate data;
- carry out home visits with the support of the Education Welfare Officer;
- Ensure letters are sent every half term to acknowledge excellent attendance and any attendance concerns.

## **4 Procedures**

### **Reintegration:**

The return to school for a pupil after long-term absence requires special planning and the Progress Leader/Pastoral Manager/SENCo will liaise with the parents and SLT Link to ensure that individual needs are met and managed as well as the student being made to feel welcome.

All staff need to be aware: this is a difficult process; it will require careful handling; any problems should be conveyed to the appropriate staff member as soon as possible. Information will be disseminated in regular staff briefings.

At LCHS we work with the LA supported Attend/EBSA assessment approach. Which means that programmes may be tailored to meet individual need and may involve phased, part-time return, with support in lessons as appropriate. Support from the SENCo may be required.

Staff will be notified of the return of the long-term absentees via email/daily briefings.

## Registration

- Registration will be carried out between 08.30 and 08.55 and between 12.30 and 13.05
- Registers will be marked promptly at these times and will be closed at 09.30 and 13.30 respectively. Should a student arrive after the start of registration but before the registers have closed they will be marked as late for that session;
- Registers should be marked in accordance with the appropriate guidelines.

## Lateness

- Students who arrive at school after morning or afternoon registration should sign in at Student Reception, entering their time of arrival and the reason for their lateness on the late slips. Tutors should regularly inspect the slips and, if necessary, liaise with their Pastoral Manager. Students who arrive at school late should not be admitted to class until they have signed in at reception. This is important for health and safety reasons. All students that are late for school will receive a detention in line with school procedure.
- Students have 5 minutes between lessons; therefore, there is no reason to be late to any lesson throughout the day. Failure to follow this expectation will lead to a sanction in line with school procedure.

## Reasons for absence

Every half-day absence from school legally has to be recorded by staff at the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or another unavoidable reason.

Unauthorised absences are those that the staff at school do not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence by the parent and can include:

- keeping children off school without a good reason;
- truancy before the register has been marked;
- absences that have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- taking holidays that have not been approved by the school in advance.

A letter will be sent to parents/carers inviting them in for a meeting with the EWO to discuss issues surrounding attendance and to offer support, if a student's attendance causes concern.

If further problems persist, the parent/carer will receive a letter after further persistent absences and will be required to attend a School Attendance Panel meeting. Following that meeting, if the unauthorised attendance reaches a level of 15-20 unauthorised school days, a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued or the EWO may carry out legal procedures against the parents/carers, in conjunction with the Local Authority which could result in court procedures.

## Five days absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 5 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is *at risk of missing*. Children's Services staff will visit the

last known address and alert key services to locate the child. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **Continued or ongoing absence**

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentee*. Absence disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90%, we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, may involve the Education Welfare Officer and invite parents to attend an Attendance Panel Meeting.

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. This level of absence adds up to missing 19 days out of the whole school year. Pupils who miss this much school are called 'persistent absentees' by the government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children who are at risk of falling into this category.

### **Leave of absence in term-time**

Absence during term-time for holidays or other events interrupts teaching and learning for the pupil and disrupts the routine for others in the school. It can have a serious impact on progress and attainment.

On 1 September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration/England/Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force. This changed the law about how and when schools may grant leave of absence during term-time. The new regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term-time for holidays and other special occasions unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Parents should note that there is no right to such leave; if granted, it is at the sole discretion of the Headteacher.

Any request for leave must be made in advance; schools cannot grant such leave retrospectively. Any leave taken without prior agreement will be recorded as unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absence may lead to parents being issued with a penalty notice or being prosecuted in the magistrates' court.

The school will consider any request for leave on its individual merits, but leave will be granted only in truly exceptional circumstances.

Leave would not normally be granted where:

- a child's attendance is less than 90%;
- there are concerns about the child's progress or attainment;
- the leave is close to or clashes with any tests, exams or other events in school.

### **Exceptional circumstances**

Situations that might be considered exceptional could include major family events, such as the wedding of a close family member, or visits to close relatives who may be critically ill.

Birthdays and shopping trips are not exceptional circumstances and neither is the lower cost of holidays during term-time.

### **Requests for leave of absence**

If a parent wishes to request leave of absence, they should write to the Headteacher well in advance of the proposed leave commencing. Parents will need to demonstrate that their circumstances and/or the nature of the leave requested are truly exceptional.

### **Medical and dental appointments**

Wherever possible, parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed in advance. A 'present' mark may still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

## **2 Attendance data**

A range of attendance data will be collected each half term in order to identify particular cohorts whose attendance causes concern. Progress Leaders and Pastoral Managers will be responsible for analysing this data and reporting back to the senior management team.

As part of this process a Weekly Attendance Report will be maintained and will identify any persistent absentees.

## **3 Communication**

This attendance policy will be communicated through:

- tutors, the pastoral team and assemblies;
- a key point summary in the Student's Planner;
- the home-school agreement;
- local authority attendance information leaflets;
- our school website.

## **6 Evaluation and Review**

This policy will be evaluated on an annual basis as part of the Governors' Annual Policy Review.

## **7 Summary**

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. All the staff at Lincoln Christ's Hospital School are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance. We hope that parents/carers will work with us on this matter.