



Attendance Policy - Students

AIMS - our policy aims to:

- emphasise the importance to all students of maximum attendance at school as an essential pre-requisite for making full use of all educational opportunities and to maximising individual achievement;
- make explicit to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers and students) the Partnership's expectations on attendance levels;
- promote a consistent approach across the Partnership towards all matters relating to attendance;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Put simply, *absence* means *missed learning*; without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. It is a legal requirement that students 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 students missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. ***Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our students.***

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

Attendance is a national priority. All schools must submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will be scrutinised by OFSTED. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance rates and high examination performance. Specifically, pupils with no absence are 1.5 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*-C or equivalent and 2.8 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*-C or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils missing 15-20 per cent of KS4 lessons. In 2012-2013, 73% of pupils who had over 95% attendance achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. (DFE report on absence and attainment, Feb. 2015)

The vast majority of our students achieve over 96% attendance and this is what we expect from all of our students as a **minimum**. Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the pupil is marked present on all ten sessions); students should **not** have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the Academy.

Authorised Absences

The Education Regulations (2006, updated in 2013) state that Head teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The Department for Education (DFE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for **authorised** or **justified** absences:

- (i) a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) days of religious observance, notified in advance;
- (iii) absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as **approved sporting activities** that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school; professional discretion will need to be used in these cases as to whether the absence can be authorised.

A student's overall attendance record will be taken into account whenever a request for absence is made. We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; **routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible**.

Unauthorised Absences

These are absences where:

- no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of **authorised** absence above.

DfE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- minding the house;
- caring for relatives;
- awaiting repair people;
- shopping;
- a birthday or family celebration.

There are clearly some grey areas. The DfE guidelines look at the area of **Special Occasions** and make clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised; for example, absence resulting from a pupil attending the graduation of an older brother or sister could be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a theme park would **not**.

Holidays

We are no longer able to authorise family holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child (*this message is conveyed in our information leaflet to parents and in letters home*).

In common with the other 11-18 secondary schools in the county, we ask parents who feel it is absolutely unavoidable that they take their annual holiday (or any other proposed special occasions) during term time to notify the Academy, in writing, **at least four weeks in advance of the proposed date**, explaining the circumstances. The DfE guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave

as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. These amendments make it clear that **Head Teachers** should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. **A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid, justified or authorised.**

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for **6 consecutive sessions** (3 days) **or more** over a **4 week period**, not authorised by the school (under the exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. **Therefore Penalty Notices will be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. The absences must be recorded with a 'G' code in the attendance register.**

The Academy will **not** authorise holidays retrospectively.

Persistent Absence (PA)

With effect from September 2015 the DFE reduced the PA threshold from 15% to 10%. This means that if a student has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

At this stage the EWO will work in partnership with relevant Student Support staff to investigate the context surrounding the absence(s) and instigate Local Authority procedures as appropriate (see appendix 4).

Legal Action to Enforce Attendance

Formal legal proceedings may be implemented if actions taken by either Academy fail to result in the required improvement in attendance or if a student is removed from school when leave of absence has been denied.

Before a case goes to court, Parenting Contracts will be drawn up, setting targets for attendance levels; there may also be interviews which could lead to a fixed penalty notice. Issuing of a penalty notice results in:

- A fine of £60 per parent/carer per child if payment is made to the Local Authority within 21 days.
- A fine of £120 per parent/carer per child if payment is made within 28 days.
- Parents/carers who fail to pay the fine within this time will be liable to prosecution in a Magistrates Court where a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison.

The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis; decisions regarding whether or not to follow legal proceedings will be made in partnership with key Academy staff, our Attendance Manager, the Hunts EWO and, where applicable, outside agencies involved with the family. Penalty notices will only be served in accordance with CCC's code of conduct.

Home/Academy Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

- do all they can to ensure their child arrives **on time** for morning and afternoon school sessions; morning registration begins at 8:45am and afternoon registration is at 2:00pm. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken; **parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late;**

- registers officially close at 9:15am and 2:30pm; after this time, latecomers will be recorded as unauthorised absent for that particular session;
- if their child is ill, notify the school **on the first day** with an estimation of the likely length of absence;
- send in a written note with their child on the first day s/he is back at school. This should be taken to the Admin office and handed to the Attendance Officer. This is needed for our records and also authenticates the telephone message.
- get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude towards school.

In return the Academy will:

- contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home;
- contact home over any unexplained absences;
- follow up promptly any concerns parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;
- involve the School Support Services to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;
- regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- reward excellent or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

Our expectations are outlined in our **New Parents Booklet** within the attendance section. This is posted home in June of each academic year before Year 6 students attend our two Transition Days.

Rewards for Good Attendance

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance the Academy offers the following rewards:

- Half-termly, students with 100% attendance **and** punctuality receive an electronic certificate; this achievement is also recognised in school assemblies;
- Half-termly all students with 100% attendance **and** punctuality are entered into a draw within their school or year group to win a pair of cinema tickets to see a film of their choice
- Annually, students with 100% attendance **and** punctuality receive a certificate in assembly

The letters of congratulation are sent home directly, become part of the student's records and make a meaningful contribution to their reference for further education or the world of work. Entry into Longsands Sixth Form, prospective employers and Colleges of Further Education view attendance and punctuality as important indicators of motivation/attitude and our records and references are very valuable evidence of reliability.

Attendances and absences are included in termly Assessments, which are also sent home.

Roles and responsibilities

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie. The respective roles of the form tutor, Head of School/Year and Head of Key Stage are explained in **Appendix 1**. The administrative support provided by the

Attendance Officer is absolutely key. It is important that **all** members of staff are aware of the responsibilities of form tutors so that when they take on the role temporarily they know what is expected of them: **a robust system is dependent upon everyone playing his/her part.**

The Education Welfare Service

Our EWO visits each Academy regularly. Each Academy works very closely with her regarding students who are giving cause for concern; she visits homes, sees and supports students in school and is a vital component in our efforts to secure high attendance. The EWO is available to assist parents where difficulties arise and can be contacted via the relevant Key Stage staff at the Academy.

In extreme cases the Education Welfare Service also initiates legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility for getting their child to school. In these circumstances, our Attendance Manager will work in partnership with the Hunts EWO.

A Final Word

We feel attendance levels are an indicator of how effective and caring a school is. Failure to attend can be an indication that all is not well at home so that there is a welfare aspect to attendance as well. Equally, it is clear that regular, consistent attendance is an essential prerequisite for effective learning. Where appropriate, Student Support staff and/or a member of our Attendance team will initiate an fCAF assessment in order to engage the support of relevant Locality services.

We take attendance seriously across the Partnership and have put a lot of time and energy into getting our procedures as efficient and effective as possible. We urge you to give this matter the priority it deserves.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Absence Codes – Recorded on registers
- Appendix 2 Staff Guide to Registers and Associated Procedures
- Appendix 3 St Neots Learning Partnership - Attendance - Roles & Responsibilities
- Appendix 4 Education Welfare Officer: Procedure and Practice - Longsands
- Attendance letters sent home to indicate concerns or congratulations.

Absence Codes – Recorded on registers

A	Present at registration
B	Educated Off Site (Not dual registered)
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
D	Dual registered (ie present at another school or at a PRU)
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)
H	Agreed holiday
I	Illness
J	Interview
K	Exam
L	Late but arrived before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment
N	No reason for the absence provided yet
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)
P	Approved sporting activity
Q	Absent from class, working elsewhere
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience (not based working)
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils
Y	Partial and forced closure
Z	Pupil not on roll yet
#	School closed to pupils
AEA	Authorised Educational Activity - counted as present.

The Absence Codes have been updated by Capita and are now identical for all schools nationally

Staff Guide to Registers and Associated Procedures: Updated November 2016

This section complements the Attendance Policy and should be read in conjunction with it. It deals with the practicalities of completing the registers and associated procedures to do with attendance. Registers are important legal documents and we rely on accurate input in order to follow up any concerns as well as for data analysis.

Role of the tutor

Form tutors will take the statutory registration twice daily. They are responsible for following up absences and communicating reasons and letters of explanation to the Attendance Officer.

Reading the registers

The registers information is read every morning after registration (period 1). It is imperative that the data entered is accurate and that there is a mark for **EVERY** student (everyone **must** fall into one of the three categories of present, absent or late!). Staff must enter either 'present', 'absent' or 'late' (+ how many minutes late). **Schools have a responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care and it is vital that the information we have is as accurate as possible.**

We operate a policy of 1st day response regarding absence across the school. The Attendance team contact parents of any child not registered by Lesson 1.

Communication with/from parents

The DFE guidance strongly recommends a policy of same-day contact as this has been shown to be the single most effective strategy in improving rates of attendance; it is also important from a Safeguarding perspective.

We stress to parents, via information on the website, the newsletter and in the student logbook, the importance of their contacting the school as early as possible on the **first** day of absence to notify us of their child's absence; there is a dedicated line on which parents can leave messages about absence.

We do, however, require **ALL** absences to be covered by a letter, e-mail, phone call or note in the logbook from parents/guardians in addition to the initial telephone contact (texts are not accepted). Communication is required for every day of a period of absence. Every Friday the Attendance Officer will provide Tutors with a list of students whose absence has yet to be authorised with a communication from home. It is the form tutors' responsibility to chase these up and report back to the Attendance Officer. All absence notes should be initialled and dated by the form tutor when received and should relate to precise periods of absence. **All notes must be sent with students to the Student Admin Office and given to the Attendance Officer.**

Lates

- Statutory Registration starts at 8:45am and 2:00pm and closes at 9:15am and 2:30pm. Thereafter students' absence will be recorded as unauthorised (U, Late after registration closes) unless a valid reason is provided such as a medical or dental appointment.
- A student should only be marked as **late** when the teacher has completed the whole register and a pupil arrives after the register has been "sent" (electronically). Tutors must therefore ensure that registers are taken in a timely manner.
- It is important that we are consistent in our procedures across the school: parents with siblings in the school do sometimes cross-check to see that the same standards are being applied and we are consistent in our approach to latecomers. So please record lates and the number of minutes late then re-send registers.
- Students who are late for an assembly should visit the Attendance Officer to record their attendance and then report to the appropriate Key Stage office to discuss the reasons for their lateness. If the reason given is not satisfactory then students will return for a break detention when reasons for their lateness will be discussed further.
- Lates are counted as present when the data is collected; however, parents have been successfully prosecuted for failing to get their child to school consistently on time. Therefore we will take a robust response to those who are regularly arriving late.

N.B. If for any reason you are unable to take an electronic register, a paper register must be taken and given to the Attendance Officer by the end of the relevant tutor period. Remember to record details of the group, time, etc.

Attendance Data provided to form tutors

Form Tutors have access to any student's attendance data via SIMS. In addition, summary data is provided on each set of assessments which go home termly. There is also a spreadsheet available to view on the school system which details the pattern of attendance for each student and any intervention currently taking place.

Use of Form Time for Attendance Matters

Housekeeping procedures:

- Take accurate registers during am and pm registration, making use of appropriate codes (present, absent, late).
- Monitor attendance of individuals.
- Raise issues of attendance and punctuality with student, parents and Head of School/Year as necessary.

St Neots Learning Partnership – Attendance: roles and responsibilities

Form Tutor/Teacher

- Mark registers accurately in tutor time and subject lessons;
- practise good housekeeping - chase up absence letters for coding, pass on letters for filing;
- in the weekly pastoral meeting, or earlier if needed, inform the Head of School/Year of any students giving cause for concern;
- assist students in recording attendance targets in their logbooks, where necessary;
- report attendance data to students and parents/carers during mentoring and Parents' Evenings.

Student Support Staff - Overview of whole Key Stage

- Liaise with:
- **Daily** - Attendance Officer, to investigate any immediate causes for concern;
- **Weekly** – Senior Attendance Officer / Attendance Manager:
 - to discuss cause for concern cases and general attendance issues, high PA¹ and FSM² focus;
 - to analyse weekly and termly attendance data;
 - and Head of School/Year to ensure appropriate level of response to attendance concerns;
 - and Head of School/Year in order to ensure all meetings take place in an efficient manner.

Head of School or Year

- Liaise with form tutors over students who are late (Years 7-11);
- liaise with Attendance Officer and Attendance Manager over targeted pupils **on 94.9% attendance or below**;
- use assemblies regularly to reinforce the importance of punctuality and good attendance and praise students with consistently high punctuality and/or attendance;
- monitor students and raise any concerns with EWO;
- assist EWO in arranging meetings with students and/or parents/carers;
- follow up all requests for term time absence in partnership with the Deputy Headteacher

Attendance Officer - Longsands

- Liaise with form tutors regarding students who are late (Years 7-11);
- ensure all registers are complete and follow-up where necessary;
- ensure codes are recorded accurately (**see Appendix 2**);
- input all missing marks after returns from Form Tutors and teaching staff;
- first day contact students checked and parents contacted where necessary;
- attend KS meetings weekly;
- liaise with KS on daily absence and take any action if necessary;
- liaise with other schools / outside agencies with regard to attendance information;
- provide weekly tutor group reports and half termly 100% attendance data;
- issue letters to parents to chase up unauthorised absence;
- liaise with Attendance Manager weekly and monitor those students giving cause for concern.

¹ PA – Persistent Absence

² FSM – Free School Meals

Attendance Manager - Longsands

- Liaise with parents, organise and hold Letter 2 meetings
- In conjunction with KS teams, agree letters to be sent and keep records of these
- Liaise with EWO weekly and provide any attendance evidence required
- Complete EHA forms to initiate support for a family and/or child
- Manage the spreadsheets
- Provide attendance figures when required
- Undertake home visits when appropriate
- Work with FIP, local Police and other outside agencies
- Apply for PNs in regards to Unauthorised Holidays
- Hold KS attendance meetings weekly
- Work with the local authority and the police on any attendance related initiatives.

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

- liaise with Attendance Manager, Student Support staff and Head of School/Year to discuss causes for concern and decide appropriate level of intervention;
- follow escalation process with students and families giving cause for concern (see procedures and practice policy);
- set targets for those students whose attendance is 94.9% and below;
- liaise with Hunts Senior EWO when absences persist and all previous intervention methods have not had an impact (and attendance is below 90% over previous 6 weeks);
- prepare case studies on 3 individual cases (including PA and FSM) on a termly basis.

Deputy Headteacher - Longsands

- Meet Attendance Manager and team regularly (minimum twice per half term) to discuss individual cases and overview of attendance data;
- collate summary cumulative %/sessions missed (high PA) and individual attendance data;
- analyse data to identify trends, areas of improvement and areas needing improvement;
- investigate strategies to improve attendance of students at the Academy;
- liaise with Student Support teams and Attendance Manager regarding individual cases and trends in sub-groups (10% PA, FSM, gender, year group);
- report impact of strategies to SLT and Local Governing Committee.

Attendance Officer - Ernulf

- Liaise with form tutors regarding students who are late (Years 7-11);
- ensure all registers are complete and follow-up where necessary;
- ensure codes are recorded accurately (**see Appendix 2**);
- input all missing marks after returns from Form Tutors and teaching staff;
- first day contact students checked and parents contacted where necessary;
- attend attendance meetings weekly;
- liaise with KS on daily absence and take any action if necessary;
- liaise with other schools / outside agencies with regard to attendance information;
- provide weekly tutor group reports and half termly 100% attendance data;

- issue letters to parents to chase up unauthorised absence;
- liaise with Attendance Manager weekly and monitor those students giving cause for concern.

Office Manager – Ernulf

- To support Attendance Officer
- Liaise with parents, organise and hold Letter 2 meetings
- In conjunction with KS teams, agree letters to be sent and keep records of these
- Liaise with EWO weekly and provide any attendance evidence required
- Complete EHA forms to initiate support for a family and/or child
- Manage the spreadsheets
- Provide attendance figures when required
- Undertake home visits when appropriate
- Work with FIP, local Police and other outside agencies
- Apply for PNs in regards to Unauthorised Holidays
- Hold KS attendance meetings weekly
- Work with the local authority and the police on any attendance related initiatives.

Assistant Headteacher - Ernulf

- Meet Attendance Manager and team regularly (minimum twice per half term) to discuss individual cases and overview of attendance data;
- collate summary cumulative %/sessions missed (high PA) and individual attendance data;
- analyse data to identify trends, areas of improvement and areas needing improvement;
- investigate strategies to improve attendance of students at the Academy;
- liaise with Student Support teams and Attendance Manager regarding individual cases and trends in sub-groups (10% PA, FSM, gender, year group);
- report impact of strategies to SLT and Local Governing Committee;
- organise rewards based targets for pupils across the school.

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

- Meet with attendance team fortnightly
- liaise with Attendance Manager, Student Support staff and Head of School/Year to discuss causes for concern and decide appropriate level of intervention;
- follow escalation process with students and families giving cause for concern (see procedures and practice policy);
- set targets for those students whose attendance is 94.9% and below;
- liaise with Hunts Senior EWO when absences persist and all previous intervention methods have not had an impact (and attendance is below 90% over previous 6 weeks);
- prepare case studies on 3 individual cases (including PA and FSM) on a termly basis.

EWO and Attendance: procedure and practice – Longsands (see update)

1. Data collection, input and analysis:

Responsibility for data collection and input lies within the Key Stage teams, specifically the administration support for these areas. Analysis takes place within the weekly attendance meeting with the Attendance Manager, Attendance Officer and Key Stage representatives.

2. Early Intervention:

The Attendance Manager will identify students whose attendance is 94.9% or below. Intervention will be agreed with Student Support teams before any action is taken in order to take into account any mitigating circumstances. Meetings take place weekly where the decisions to send letters and/or arrange meetings with parents are made. Initially, a letter one will be sent home. The EWO will look at issues under 95% following at least 6 weeks of intervention work by us. An EHA form is completed to accompany the referral documentation.

3. No improvement: phone call and letter 2.

Attendance must be under 94.9% over the previous 3 week period, not an average of the school academic year. Monitoring and identification of students is conducted by the Senior Attendance Officer in conjunction with Student Support team. The need for an EHA will be considered at this stage to support families via the Locality team.

Parents are invited into school for a meeting to discuss any reasons for poor attendance and to set an attendance target for the following 4 weeks. A meeting record form is completed by the Attendance Manager. An EHA is offered at all of these meetings and CAF Central are informed if one is declined.

Any further absences are unauthorised unless a medical note is provided.

4. If no further improvement: letter 3

Letter 3 sent home warning about the possibility of a penalty notice fine if attendance fails to improve over a final monitoring period. Further support is offered to parents to support good attendance.

5. Still no further improvement

A letter is sent to parents informing them that the involvement of the EWO has been requested. The EWO will then work with parents taking them through a parent contract process followed by a pre-court meeting and prosecution if this is necessary

Example Letter 3

Date:

Dear

Re: D.O.B

As the Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance for Longsands Academy, it has been brought to my attention that «chosen_forename» has been absent from school for «total_unexplained_sessions» sessions this school academic year. I enclose a record of «chosen_forename»'s attendance which is currently running at «percentage_attendance»%

As parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under **Section 444 of the Education Act 1996**, to ensure that your child attends the school at which «he_she» is registered, regularly and punctually.

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%. «chosen_forename»'s current attendance exceeds this figure. This means that if a child or young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

I am therefore writing to inform you that if attendance falls below 89% during the next 2 weeks, the case will be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council and a Penalty Notice fine will be issued. If attendance improves, we will continue to monitor it closely as the case will be referred on if there is a further concern later in the school year. Obviously, the Academy is keen to avoid this course of action, therefore, please do contact us if there is anything further we can do to assist you and your child in improving their attendance.

Yours sincerely



Mrs C Greaney
Deputy Headteacher

Enc. Record of Attendance