



Leigh Academy

**High Halstow**

# Attendance Policy

Reviewed: September 2024 (updated)

Next review date: September 2025

Principal: Mrs Gemma Stangroom

Attendance Lead: Miss Alice Limb

Ratified by Chair Governor: Kate Robinson

Date - 15/10/2024

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# 1. Introduction

Regular attendance at school is essential to promote the education of all pupils and to enable them to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. The academy's ethos demonstrates that children feel that their presence in school is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late. The academy will take appropriate action when necessary in order to promote the aims of the policy. Leigh Academy High Halstow encourages 100% school attendance. We continually aim to be above the 96% Leigh Academy Trust target. .

At Leigh Academy High Halstow we take our responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all our pupils seriously. We acknowledge that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

## 2. Aims

Leigh Academy High Halstow aims to meet obligations relating to school attendance by:

- Maximising attendance for all children and reducing absence (including persistent and severe absence)
- Providing an environment that encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated at the school
- Monitoring and supporting children whose attendance is below expectations, working in partnership with parents and carers
- Analysing attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice
- Working closely with the wider community, including the Attendance Advisory Practitioner and multi-agency teams

Parents and Carers are expected to support their child to ensure:

- Attendance at school every day when well enough to be in the academy
- Arrival at school by 8:45 am each day

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

The following people have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

### 3.1 Governors

- To set out and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy

### 3.2 Attendance Lead: Miss A Limb

- To ensure that effective systems are in place to accurately reflect individual pupil and group and whole school attendance patterns
- To monitor individual pupils, group and whole school attendance and punctuality.
- To work in partnership with key agencies if attendance and punctuality is an issue
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of the policy and practice
- To write to parents/carers regarding any concerns about their child's attendance
- To arrange meetings with parents/carers to discuss support and set targets for those experiencing attendance difficulties

Miss Limb can be contacted on:

01634 251098

[info@highhalstow.latrust.org.uk](mailto:info@highhalstow.latrust.org.uk)

### 3.3 Class Teacher

- To provide an accurate record of attendance for each child in their class via Bromcom
- Send any notes from parents to the office daily or update on Bromcom directly
- To promote good attendance with pupils and parents regularly

### 3.4 Office Staff

- To prepare, manage and coordinate the use of the Bromcom to manage attendance
- To monitor and track attendance patterns for all children and prepare relevant attendance reports when necessary
- To ensure that first day calling takes place and a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child and where this is not possible absence recorded accordingly and safeguarding concerns reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- To make a judgement in conjunction with the Principal whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised
- To liaise with LA if there is a concern about a child's attendance.
- Parents/carers should contact the School Office to report absences in one of the following ways:
  - Email to the school office ([info@highhalstow.latrust.org.uk](mailto:info@highhalstow.latrust.org.uk))
  - Telephone call before 9am on 01634 251098 (parents can also leave message)
  - Message via MCAS (email) or text message to school on 07860054448.

### 3.5 Pupils

- Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the academy and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

### 3.6 Parents

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies

- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. illness), and no later than 9am
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible
- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support
- For Persistently Absent pupils (attendance below 90%), or pupils at risk of becoming Persistently Absent (attendance below 96%), parents are expected to work with the school and Local Authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance, and proactively engage with the formal support offered, including any parenting contract or voluntary Early Help plan, to prevent the need for legal intervention.
- Parents must provide medical evidence for absence when requested. Failure to do so may result in the child's absence being recorded as unauthorised.

## 4. Attendance and Punctuality Expectations

### 4.1 Punctuality

The gates open for the morning session at 8:35am and close at 8:45am, when registers are taken. Pupils arriving after 8:45am must report to the School Office for their late attendance (Code L) and meal choice to be recorded. Registers close at 9:15am. Pupils arriving after registers close will be marked late after registers closed (Code U) which is recorded as an unauthorised absence, unless a satisfactory reason is given (for example a doctor's appointment). If medical evidence is not provided, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

Registers are taken between 1:00 pm and 1:10pm for the afternoon session, and close at 1:20pm.

Action to address lateness will be taken in line with the school's strategy to improve punctuality. Pupils who are consistently late disrupt not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern our Attendance Lead or Office Team will contact the family and liaise with the Attendance Officer (AO).

## 4.2 Illness

Parents/carers must report a child's absence for illness to the academy by 9am on the first day of absence, providing details of the child's illness. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that the child is safe. Where no reason is provided for absence, or there is insufficient information to authorise absence, the School Office will contact parents/carers by telephone on the first day of absence. Should a child's absence remain unexplained, a home visit from school staff may be conducted.

If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, the Assistant Principal or Principal should be informed.

## 4.3 Medical or Dental Appointments

Parents/carers are encouraged to make all medical appointments out of school hours. In circumstances where this is not possible, parents/carers are requested to provide written confirmation of these appointments, such as a named, dated appointment card or letter.

## 4.4 Authorisation of Absence

The 1996 Education Act clearly states, "If any child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, the parents/carer of the child shall be guilty of an offence". The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 also introduced the use of penalty notices as an additional sanction to address the problem of poor school attendance. Failure to ensure your child's regular attendance at school may result in prosecution in the courts or a Penalty Notice being issued. If there is a requirement for additional support, the academy will work with

parents and carers to improve attendance and punctuality. If more intensive support is required a referral may be made, with consent, to Early Help.

In the event of 10 unauthorised sessions recorded, a referral may be made to AASSA. If your child incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a ten school week period, a Penalty Notice may be requested. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in court prosecution for your child’s irregular school attendance. As of August 2024, if a parent receives a second penalty notice for the same child within any three-year period, the charge will be a flat rate of £160; there will be no reduction if paid within 21 days. A parent cannot receive more than two Penalty Notices for the same child within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, another action such as a Parenting Order or Prosecution will be considered. The Local Authority may proceed the case to court if necessary.

<u>Period of unauthorised absence</u>	<u>Penalty fee</u>
10 sessions (5 school days) unauthorised during 10 week period	Penalty notice of £160 reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days
10 further sessions (5 school days) unauthorised absence during the same 3 year period	2nd penalty notice starting at £160
After this limit is exceeded, parenting order or prosecution is considered.	

## 5. Holidays During Term-Time

Proposed leave of absence to be taken during term time should be put in writing (email, letter, note in link book) at least 2 weeks in advance, addressed to the Principal, advising of the dates the pupil will be absent from the Academy, and the date of intended return.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Principal’s ability to authorise leave of



absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow for authorised absence (leave) in “exceptional circumstances”.

In some instances, there may be a need to apply for leave for exceptional circumstances and these will be considered on an individual basis and a decision will be made regarding authorisation of absence. Leave of absence for family holidays will not be authorised, and leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent’s or child’s rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil’s previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by ‘unavoidable’ it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that the Principal can agree to the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence. The Principal will not authorise more than 3 days absence without extreme exceptional circumstances. In the case of an event where travel is required, one day will be granted for that and one day per each journey there and back.

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons on their return. Should a child's attendance be a cause for concern there may be a referral to the Attendance Advisory Practitioner who may issue a Penalty Notice. The Local Authority may proceed the case to court if necessary.

## *Penalty Escalation*

- First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.
  - Second Offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.
  - Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years) - the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.
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- Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand.

## 6.Children Not Collected After School Hours

There are rare occasions when perhaps due to an emergency, parents/carers are not able to collect their children promptly from school, or make arrangements for their collection at the end of the school day. If the child is not collected, the school will make enquiries to contact parents/carers using the emergency contact numbers provided on file. If after one hour it has not been possible to contact parents/carers then the local Police will be informed of the situation. The Principal will also contact the Referral Team at Social Services to inform them of a possible concern.

# 7. Reporting to Parents and Carers

All absences, both authorised and unauthorised, and lateness will be reported to the parent/carer at the end of the year within their child's report as well as through MCAS.

# 8. Administration

## 8.1 Storing and Monitoring Attendance Data

The academy uses Bromcom to store and monitor its legal responsibilities in relation to attendance. Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions

Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Failure to complete a register accurately leaves the school vulnerable to complaint from parents or carers and constitutes a risk if an emergency evacuation has to take place.

Sharing school attendance data is a statutory requirement on schools under the following legislation:

- [Section 537A of the Education Act 1996 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Education \(Information About Individual Pupils\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#) (as amended, including by the Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024)

## 8.2 Attendance Codes

The following codes will be used to indicate the reason for absence in the register:

Code	Reason
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L	late - between 8:45am and 9.15am for the morning session and between 1:10pm and 1:20pm
U	Late - Late after 9.15am (morning) and 1:20pm (afternoon) - unauthorised absence for whole of morning or afternoon session
M	Medical - hospital admission, dental, optician, hospital or doctor's appointment
I	Illness (not appointments)
G	Unauthorised holiday
O	Unauthorised

Further codes for your information on the attached document - [Attendance codes August 2024](#)

Attendance data will be analysed to establish patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with:

- Incomplete weeks
- Monday and Friday absences
- Lateness
- Periods of extended absence
- Periods of unauthorised absence
- Children with attendance below 90%

Patterns of absence will also be analysed termly on a whole school and individual pupil basis, including:

- Whole school and individual pupil basis
- Groups e.g. Free School Meals, Pupil Premium, Special Educational Needs, Children in Care, Children with English as an Additional Language

Attendance data will be compared with local and national averages. Relevant attendance reports will be shared with key staff to aid discussions with families, and data will be used to understand the impact of interventions and support.

This data will be discussed with the Attendance Advisory Practitioner as part of the regular meetings held at school. The Principal and Attendance Advisory Practitioner will discuss the impact of the School's Attendance Policy and the strategies used to promote good attendance annually.

### 8.3 Systems and Structures to Tackle Attendance and Punctuality Issues

When children's attendance and punctuality is a concern to the school the following systems and structures are followed.

Attendance:

<p><b>On the first day of absence</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parents called to enquire about child's wellbeing</li> <li>● Establish when the child will return. Enter 'I' for illness or 'M' for medical appointment on system</li> <li>● If no contact can be made, emergency contacts are called.</li> <li>● If contact cannot be made or an acceptable reason cannot be established, absence is recorded as 'O' unauthorised, and a home visit may be conducted to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>When initial concerns are raised about attendance for a pupil, or a pupil becomes at risk of becoming a Persistent Absentee (attendance below 96%)</b></p>	<p>An 'Attendance Concerns' letter is sent out inviting parents/carers to meet with the school, stating that unless attendance improves they may be liable for a penalty notice. This meeting is a supportive measure and enables the academy to work with parents to identify any barriers to good</p>

	attendance and agree on actions to improve attendance. If a requirement for further support for the family is identified, a referral may be made for Early Help support, with consent of the family.
<b>After 5 or more days of unauthorised absence following the 'Attendance Concerns' letter – within 10 week period</b>	A letter will be sent outlining that we will be working with the Local Authority to initiate a penalty notice.
<b>If attendance does not improve or attendance drops below 90%</b>	Prosecution might be considered for further periods of unauthorised absence. Action may be taken by local authorities against parents/carers who fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. The action may result in a formal warning, a fine, or an appearance at court.

Punctuality:

<b>On the fourth instance of lateness</b>	'Lateness Concerns' letter is sent to parents reminding them of the importance of punctuality, school timings.
<b>Following 3 more instances of lateness</b>	'Attendance Meeting' letter is sent out stating that the parent must come into school for a meeting with the Principal and/or Attendance Advisory Practitioner to address concerns. This meeting is a supportive measure and enables the academy to work with parents to identify any barriers to attending school on time and agree on actions to improve punctuality..
<b>If punctuality does not improve</b>	If a requirement for further support for the family is identified, a referral may be made for Early Help support, with consent of the family.  Prosecution might be considered for further periods of unauthorised absence. Action may be taken by the school and local authority against

	parents/carers who fail to ensure that their child is properly educated. The action may result in a formal warning, a fine, or an appearance at court.
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**If expectations are not met, the school will follow the following as appropriate:**

- Telephone call
- Attendance concerns letter
- Request for medical evidence
- Attendance meeting including Attendance improvement plan if necessary
- Notice to Improve (review 3-6 weeks, suggest 3 weeks max with a caveat such as NB – A Penalty Notice may be issued as soon as an unauthorised absence is recorded)
- Referral to LA (Local Authority)

## 9. Incentives for Good Attendance

At High Halstow student leaders work to promote attendance across the school. This is celebrated during weekly celebration assemblies.

## 10. Removing a Pupil from Roll

As per The Education Regulations Act 2006 Section 8, when all possible actions have been taken we will remove the student from academy roll due to continued serious absence.

Where a pupil has failed to attend the Academy within 10 school days, immediately following an authorised leave of absence, and there are no reasonable grounds for the pupil not to attend,

the Academy and Local Authority will make reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the pupil is, and if unable to establish the pupil's whereabouts we will remove from roll.

Where a pupil has failed to attend the Academy for 20 school days or more and absence is unauthorised, and there are no reasonable grounds for the pupil not to attend, the Academy and Local Authority will make reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the pupil is, and if unable to establish the pupil's whereabouts we will remove from roll.

[\(Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006\).](#)

## 11. Education for Health Needs including Mental Health

Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable and (normally) full-time education for children of compulsory school age who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not receive suitable education without such provision.

This means that where a child cannot attend school because of a physical or mental health need, has medical evidence and cannot access suitable full-time education, the local authority is responsible for arranging suitable alternative provision.

Where possible, the child's health needs should be managed by the home school so that they can continue to be educated there with support, and without the need for the intervention of the local authority. However, as soon as it is clear that the home school can no longer support the child's health needs and provide suitable education, the school should speak to the local authority about putting alternative provision in place.

There is no absolute legal deadline by which local authorities must start to arrange education for children with additional health needs. However, as soon as it is clear that a child will be away from school for 15 days or more because of their health needs, the local authority should arrange suitable alternative provision. The 15 days may be consecutive or over the course of a school year.



Where full-time education would not be in a child's best interests for reasons relating to their physical or mental health, local authorities must arrange part-time education on whatever basis they consider to be in the child's best interests.

The Academy will operate according to its statutory duties under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 and DFE: [Working together to improve school attendance - August 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

To support the attendance of students with mental health issues, the school will consider:

- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and break times.
- A 'Time Out Card', which allows a pupil to request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time away from a situation they are finding difficult.
- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

While Leigh Academy High Halstow will apply this policy fairly and consistently, the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance will be considered, along with the schools' obligations under the: [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK](#) and [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

## 12. Links to other policies

This policy is linked to our [Child Protection and Safeguarding policy](#).