



# **LEAVESDEN GREEN JMI SCHOOL**

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Autumn 2019**

Leavesden Green JMI School aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all students are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

Improving attendance at Leavesden Green School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents and staff.

### **Parents and Carers**

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Parents are legally obliged to ensure that their child attends school at all times unless they are too unwell to attend.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents should:-

- Ensure that their children arrive at school on time and be ready for learning.
- Instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- Take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging effective learning.
- Work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues, which may lead to non-attendance.
- Notify us if their child/children are going to be late for, or absent from school.
- Where possible, avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- Avoid booking holidays during term time.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

Parents will be regularly informed in writing of any concerns, which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents whose child's attendance is a cause for concern will initially be written to by the Family Worker and will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss issues leading to poor attendance. Where possible, support will be offered to enable issues to be resolved leading to improved attendance. If the child's attendance continues to be of concern, the Headteacher will write to the parents.

Parents whose first language is not English or have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication as far as we are able.

## **Pupils**

All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually.

There is a certificate system organised by County school opts into that awards annual certificate for excellent attendance.

## **School**

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

## **Registration**

Registers will be completed promptly at 08.50 am and at 1.00 pm in EY and Y1, at 1.15 pm in Y2 and KS2 and will be marked into SIMS.

The school doors will close at 8.50am. If the door is closed parents must take children to the office. Classroom doors cannot be reopened for safety reasons.

Registers will close at 09.00 am and at 1.10/1.25 pm. If a pupil fails to arrive before the registers close, he/she will be marked as 'absent'. Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the general office and their parents must complete the Inventory sign in system. If a pupil is persistently late, the Family Worker will contact the parents in writing to arrange a meeting.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

## **Procedures**

1. Once dinner registers are returned to the office, a member of the office team will text/telephone the parents/carers of any child with an unexplained absence. This will happen by 9.30am
2. If no response is received following the text/telephone calls, two members of school staff will visit the home address by 10.30am.
3. If there is no response at the home address, a note will be left and the police will be contacted to carry out a welfare check.
4. If a child's attendance is below 95% a letter will be sent home informing them.
- 4a. One a child's attendance is 90% or less, the Family Worker will contact the family via letter **and** telephone to invite them to attend a meeting with the head teacher to discuss their child's absence. Where possible, support will be provided.
- 4b. The Family Worker will contact the family via telephone or in person the day before the meeting as a reminder.
5. If attendance and/or reasons for absence does not improve, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting. These meetings will then continue every 2 weeks until there is an improvement.
6. If there are 6-8 unauthorised sessions, individual B1 letters will be sent to both parents (even if living at same address) warning that they are at risk of receiving a fixed penalty notice.
7. If there are 15 unauthorised sessions, a fixed penalty notice will be issued from HCC.
- 7a. If the fine is paid and attendance does not improve, contact the Attendance Improvement Office for support.
- 7b. If the fine is not paid, each parent will be prosecuted.

## **Authorised/Unauthorised Absence**

It is vital that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

Leavesden Green JMI School will decide on how an absence is to be recorded according to 'School Attendance: Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence'. This states that:

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation in relation to a particular absence does not, itself, oblige the school to accept the explanation offered if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence.

Where a child is continuing to have low attendance and the absences are being supported by parents giving medical reasons then the school will contact the Attendance Improvement Officer for further advice. Parents will be informed of this as appropriate

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- The pupil was absent with leave granted by the Headteacher
- The pupil was ill 'or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause'
- 'The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs'
- The school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LEA for the child's transport to and from school
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their intention to return.
- The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition
- The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance
- The pupil is involved in a one off **exceptional** special occasion (e.g. if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling) and their attendance is over 95% Repeated exceptional occasions will not be accepted...

Absence will be **unauthorised** if:

- No explanation is forthcoming
- The child was absent for more than 3 days without a doctors note.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation

- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances)
- The pupil stays at home because of parental organisation issues e.g. taking relative to hospital, mum ill, parent appointments
- The pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (e.g. a birthday)
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday or a period of time longer than that negotiated with the school
- The pupil is on a family holiday without permission
- The parents/cares have been notified that additional medical certification is required to support medical absence

### **Holidays (now known as Leave of Absence)**

Parents are not allowed to take children out for family holidays during term time. Where restrictions at work mean holidays can only be taken in school time then school will ask for a letter from employers to confirm this before authorisation will be granted. Attendance must be over 95% for authorisation to be considered. Please ensure that you complete an "Application for Leave of Absence" form, which is available from either the school office or our website. This must be submitted at least three weeks before the absence date together with any evidence if required.

It remains the discretionary power of the head teacher to authorise any leave of absence.

### **Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

- Leavesden Green JMI School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupils' needs
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice

- Office staff will collect attendance information to highlight any pupils with persistent poor attendance
- Fortnightly meetings will take place between at least two of the following:
  - ✓ Headteacher
  - ✓ Administrative Assistant
  - ✓ Family Worker
- Good attendance awards will be presented at the end of each school year
- The head teacher will discuss attendance at half-termly Performance and Progress meetings and at half-termly Full Governing Body Meetings
- When appropriate the school will liaise with other agencies - Educational Psychology Service, Social Care, Attendance Improvement Officer, Family Support worker or Child and Family Guidance, etc – to support children with attendance issues.
- The head teacher, family worker and administrative assistant will have termly meetings with the school's Attendance Improvement Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

### **Penalty Notices for Truancy**

At Leavesden Green School we expect parents/carers to work with us to address attendance problems. If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (1/2 day equals 1 session) unauthorised absence in a term (including unauthorised holidays), and/or a previous term, the Head Teacher may ask the local authority to issue a penalty notice. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if it is paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid the local authority may prosecute the parents/carers in court for the irregular attendance. Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.

Whenever possible the school will always try to celebrate the good attendance of the vast majority of children and will work with parents to ensure attendance and punctuality is good.

Children can only access their learning and achieve their best if they attend school and are able to access the curriculum and other opportunities the school offers. For the small minority of families where attendance continues to be an issue the school will take action.

In the first instance parents will be informed in writing where there are concerns regarding attendance by the school; the letter will remind parents of their legal obligation to ensure that their child attends school every day. If attendance does not improve the parents will be requested to provide medical evidence to support any absences and reference will be made to

the Attendance Improvement Officer monitoring the situation and the risk of a penalty notice being issued.

If attendance does still not improve and unauthorised absences are continuing and approaching 15 sessions the parents will be formally informed in writing that they are at risk of a penalty notice.

If there is no change and the child exceeds 15 sessions unauthorised absence then a request for formal penalty notice will be made by the school and the parents will be informed of this by post.

E.G. a 2 week leave of absence in term time will account for 20 unauthorised absences to be recorded. Any additional unauthorised absence will mean that a penalty notice would be issued.