

At Levens CE School, we believe that all pupils benefit from the education we provide and therefore, from regular school attendance. In order to achieve this, we will take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any problems which may impede full attendance are acted on as quickly as possible.

Aims

School aims to ensure that all pupils have an equal right and access to an education in accordance with the National Curriculum. We recognise that the majority of pupils want to attend school to learn; to socialise and interact with their peers; and to prepare themselves fully for their future. We have high expectations of attendance in school and share these expectations regularly with parents and pupils.

The school's target for attendance is 98%. This target is regularly reviewed by governors with regard to context of our school and cohorts; and in relation to national statistics.

Expectations

School expects that all our pupils will:

- Attend school regularly;
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day as stated in our Home/School Agreement which parents are asked to sign when their child starts school.

School expects that parents will:

- Endeavour to keep health appointments out of school hours when possible;
- To take all family holidays and trips out of term time;
- Inform a member of staff of any reason or problem that may hinder their child from attending school;
- Fulfil their legal responsibilities and ensure their child/children attend school regularly;
- Contact school, as soon as is practical and before 9am, whenever their child is unable to attend school.

Parents and children can expect the following from the school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance;
- Early contact when a pupil is absent without explanation;
- Action on any attendance problem notified to the school;
- Referral of specific attendance issues to supporting agencies where appropriate.

We encourage attendance by:

- Consistent, clear, communication with parents and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt, attendance;
- Formal and informal reporting to parents on individual attendance at various points through the year;
- Setting targets for improved attendance and sharing these with governors, parents and pupils;
- Accurate completion of registers at the start of each session;
- Attendance certificates and prizes at the end of each term for 100% and also good (98%+) attendance.

The school responds to non-attendance by:

- Contacting parents on the first day of an absence, by telephone, if no reason has been received;
- If there is no response, the school will continue to telephone parents throughout the day. School will also contact other emergency contacts for the pupil on the first day of absence. School holds at least two emergency contacts for every pupil in school;
- If no contact has been made by day two of the absence, the HT, accompanied by another member of staff will attempt a home visit. In the event of no contact being made within 48 hours, the HT will then contact the police;
- Where a pattern of non-attendance or persistent lateness is emerging, the parent/carer will be contacted by school and the issues causing non-attendance or lateness will be discussed at an attendance panel meeting

with the headteacher. Any action plan generated at the attendance panel meeting that fails to improve the child's attendance, will result in a full assessment of the children's needs and family circumstances. The headteacher will then contact the Local Authority Inclusion Officer explaining the actions and support provided so far and will discuss the possibility of an Attendance Review Conference. At this stage, it may be agreed that an Early Help Assessment may be the most appropriate intervention to support the family and improve attendance.

School will inform the Local Authority Access and Inclusion office of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's authorisation.

All Staff are aware of children missing from education procedures in accordance with our safeguarding practices in school.

In accordance with our Supervision of Pupils Procedure, the expectation is that children should arrive on site in the morning no earlier than 8.35am and ready for the bell at 8.45 am. Registration is at 8.45 am. Children arriving after 8.45 am will be recorded as 'late'.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the term 'Traveller'. This includes Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen and Circus People. Absence can be authorised for families identified within this group when travelling for occupational purposes and when this has been agreed with school. However, they are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school. There is also an expectation that pupils can be registered with more than one school so that absence can be significantly reduced for those undertaking extensive travelling in any academic year.

Leave of Absence in Term Time, including Holidays

The headteacher is not permitted to grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. **The application must be made at least seven days prior to the proposed absence and must be requested in writing using the 'Parent Request for Absence form available from the school office and published on our school website.** The headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave.

The DFE identifies exceptional circumstances as follows:

- Family needs arising from service in the armed forces or from a parent working abroad;
- Family bereavements;
- Exceptional family ceremonies;
- A holiday necessitated due to disability or illness in the family.

If the request is for a family holiday not considered to be identified as exceptional circumstances, and you nevertheless that your child out of school for the leave of absence this **will be recorded as unauthorised leave.** **All unauthorised absences, including holidays that have not been sanctioned by the headteacher, are accumulated and parents who fail to ensure regular attendance of their children at school can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The amount of £60 (per parent per child) if paid within 21 days and £120 (per parent per child) if paid between 21 and 28 days. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice will result in prosecution, except in limited circumstances.**

In considering the decision whether to authorise, the following will be taken into account:

- Reasons given for the holiday;
- Any holiday leave taken in previous academic years (authorised or unauthorised);
- Your child's previous attendance record; this includes attendance in the current academic year – which should be over 95% - as well as attendance in previous academic years;
- Whether your child will miss any tests/examinations (or important preparation for their tests);

- Whether your child is making good progress; is on track to achieve age related expectations; and how the absence might impact attainment and progress.

All leave of absence requests must be completed on the official form. Letters and emails will not be accepted. All requests must be made prior to the leave being taken as leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.

The impact of poor attendance has been extensively researched in the UK. Pupil absence figures and both GCSE and primary school test results highlight the importance of clamping down on pupil absence to ensure more pupils regularly attend school, and ultimately leave with the qualifications needed to succeed in modern Britain. A Department of Education report published in 2015 clearly outlined the impact of low attendance: *'Primary pupils with no absence are around 1.5 times more likely to achieve the expected level of attainment and 4.5 times more likely to achieve above the expected level than pupils that missed 15-20% of key stage 2.'*

Parents will be informed in writing of decisions about whether planned absences are to be recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

Schools are advised that the cost of holidays, work rotas of parents and working in tourism or farming can no longer be considered to be exceptional reasons.

We do have concerns, as do other Headteachers, that families may feel they cannot share with schools that they plan to take time off during term time. This could mean that children will not be able to share any experiences they may have had and it could even encourage them to lie about their absence. This is not a situation we would want any of our families or children to be in.

Not sharing planned absence from school could also lead to safeguarding issues. If families have not informed school that they are taking a break and school cannot contact them for an explanation of absence; school may need to take all necessary steps to ensure the children and family are safe and well.

Policy Review

This policy was agreed by the Governing Body on 23rd May 2019

Signed: Ray Gillard, Chair of Governors

This policy is due for review by Autumn 2020.