

Good attendance at school is essential to ensuring a child's academic progress, wellbeing and wider development.

*'The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.'*

### **DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance. September 2022**

At Levens CE School, attendance is central to our vision and ethos. We value the importance of good attendance alongside high standards of behaviour. All pupils benefit from high standard of education and regular school attendance is essential to ensuring every child can make good or better progress year on year. 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 in a timely way.

#### **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 pupils at Levens School want to attend school to learn; they are enthusiastic about their learning, enjoy opportunities to socialise and interact with their peers; and recognise the importance of attending school regularly in preparing them fully for their future. We have high expectations of attendance in school and share these expectations regularly with parents and pupils in a variety of different ways.

The school's target for attendance is 98%. Attendance data and contextual information is regularly reported to the school's governing body who ensure school leaders are fulfil statutory requirements and are proactive in promoting good attendance.

#### **Expectations**

School expects that all our pupils will:

- attend school regularly;
- arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.

School expects that parents will:

- contact the school office, as soon as is practical and before 9am, whenever their child is too ill to attend school. This can be via email to [office@levens.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:office@levens.cumbria.sch.uk) or by calling the office on 01539560694 between 8.30am and 9am. This may be followed by school staff via a phone call or email.
- endeavour to keep health appointments, particularly dental appointments, out of school hours;
- take all family holidays and trips out of term time;
- inform the head teacher immediately 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;

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 promote good attendance by:**

- providing regular, consistent and 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 throughout 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 and the end of the academic year for 100% attendance.

**The school responds to non-attendance by:**

- contacting parents on the first day of an absence, by text or telephone call, if no reason has been received by 9.15am. 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 the end of the first day 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 poor 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 informal meeting with the headteacher. The headteacher may seek support or guidance from the LA School Attendance Support Team.

**Severe or Persistent Absence**

In the event of the persistent absence (below 90%), the headteacher will contact the parent/parents of the pupil to invite them to attend an attendance review meeting to discuss the underlying causes of poor attendance and determine how we can work in partnership to improve attendance over time. This meeting may involve identifying the barriers to being in school so that actions and interventions can be implemented in a timely way. This process may involve opening an Early Help and include referrals to external professionals and organisations, for example the LA access and inclusion officer for attendance, particularly if poor absence is one element of wider issues. Actions are regularly reviewed with parents and families to ensure interventions are having a positive impact on attendance; and if necessary adjustments or amendments can be made to the approach.

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.

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

**Punctuality**

All pupils are expected to be in classrooms by **8.45am** each morning when the morning session register is taken.

We expect that all our pupils will arrive on site between 8.30am and 8.45am. Pupils are met by school staff on our playground when our doors open at 8.35am. At 8.45am, the gates onto our school site are closed and locked in order to keep our site secure and pupils arriving after this time will be marked 'L' (late) in our morning session register.

The punctuality of pupils is regularly monitored by all class teachers and the headteacher. Where appropriate, cases of persistent lateness exist, the school will work in partnership with parents to try to improve punctuality. In the first instance, the headteacher writes a formal letter to the parents/carers reporting concerns about repeated lateness to seek an immediate improvement. School may also seek the support of external organisations and professionals such as the Local Authority Access and Inclusion Officer.

### **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**

*'As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.'* DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance, September 2022.

**Any request for absence in term time should 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.

A request for absence in term time must also be submitted by the parents or carers of children in Nursery and Reception who are not yet statutory school age.

If the request is for a family holiday and therefore not considered as exceptional circumstances, but a parent or carer nevertheless choose to withdraw their child/children from school this **will be recorded as unauthorised leave**. **All unauthorised absences, including holidays that have not been sanctioned by the headteacher, can lead to the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The amount of the FPN is £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.**

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 (at least 7 days) as leave will not 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. 'The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.' DfE September 2022.

Parents are 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 are not considered to be exceptional reasons for family holidays in term time.

### **Access and Inclusion**

At Levens School we ensure our policy and procedures on attendance are applied fairly and consistently but in doing so we also consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. In development and implementation of our policy, we consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Some pupils have greater barriers to good attendance than their peers and this may be due to their additional educational needs, disability or medical conditions. At Levens School, our ambition for good attendance of these students is the same as any other pupil and we use a range of strategies in order to ensure these pupils can access fulltime education and that their families feel supported by School.

### **Safeguarding**

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

All Staff are aware of children missing from education procedures in accordance with KCSIE September 2023 and our safeguarding practices in school.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

All staff are required to closely monitor the attendance of the pupils in their direct care in accordance with their day to day duties and responsibilities to safeguard all children.

The attendance of individuals, cohorts and groups is closely monitored by the headteacher regularly throughout the school year.

Attendance data and contextual information relating to specific cohorts or groups is reported to the School's Governing Body at each full governing body meeting.

The designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance is the head teacher, Jane Farraday.

The governor with responsibility for attendance is the chair of the governing body, Suzan Bishop.

This policy has been reviewed and updated in accordance with recommendations stated in 'Working together to improve School attendance' DfE September 2022.

### **Policy Review**

This policy was agreed by the Governing Body on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

Signed: S Bishop, Chair of Governors

This policy is due for review by Autumn term 2024.