

## **Rationale:**

Litherland High School is committed to providing a learning environment in which each of its members can thrive, feel secure and be successful. We want our students to do well at school, have high aspirations, be happy and healthy and to grow to be productive and responsible members of the local and wider communities. Regular and punctual attendance is essential in ensuring that every individual can have full access to the opportunities provided by school and can reach his or her full potential.

## **Aims:**

This policy aims to:

- Make **attendance and punctuality** priorities for everyone associated with the school.
- Provide clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of parents and carers, students themselves, the school and its staff and of supporting agencies.
- Promote consistency in carrying out procedures for reporting and dealing with attendance and poor punctuality.
- Outline regulations regarding the granting of leave of absence in term time, including those relating to requests for holidays.
- Make clear the steps school will follow when the attendance of individual students is seen to be damaging to their educational prospects: these steps are included in our Attendance Stages Protocol which can be found in Appendix 1.
- Explain the use and application of Fixed Penalty Notices in relation to situations in which parents and carers are in breach of their legal responsibilities regarding attendance at school.

## **Promoting regular attendance:**

Helping to create a culture of engagement and success through good attendance is the responsibility of parents and carers, students and all members of school staff.

Ensuring regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents and carers. By law, all children of compulsory school age must attend school. Poor attendance not only undermines a child's education and future life chances, it can also put children at risk and there is some evidence to suggest it can lead to anti-social behaviour. Permitting absence from school without good reason constitutes an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## **Parents and carers should:**

- Familiarise themselves with the school's Attendance Policy.
- Ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- Contact school on the first and each subsequent day of absence.
- Provide a note if their child needs to leave school during the day for any reason which will be exchanged for an Exit Note.
- Contact school early where problems with attendance are emerging.
- Support the school in intervention and action plans, including attendance meetings as required.
- Participate in Attendance Panels/Parenting Contracts.
- Avoid taking holidays during term time.

**Students must:**

- Attend registration and lessons punctually. Students are expected to be in class by 08.50.
- Meet or exceed the Government's minimum individual attendance requirement of 95%.
- Provide a note of explanation to the school office from a parent/carer on the day of return after a period of absence.
- Participate fully when action plans are put in place.
- Collect an Exit Note from the Attendance Officers if they need to leave school during the day.
- Report to the school office if leaving (with an Exit Note) or arriving at any time during the school day.

**School will:**

- Provide an education which prepares students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.
- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all students, parents and carers, teachers and governors.
- Promote and further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Operate a robust absence management system.
- Actively discourage holiday absence or extended leave of absence during term time.
- Operate a consistent approach to applications for leave of absence during term time, working within the Government guidelines and statutory targets.
- Monitor, analyse and set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels in line with statutory targets.
- Work in partnership with local schools, other agencies, the Local Authority and Court Officer within the guidelines issued by the Department for Education.
- Implement the following protocol and ensure prosecution under section 444(1) and 444(1a) of the Education Act 1996, to ensure attendance at school.

**Absence Procedures:**

If a student is absent parents/carers should:

- Contact school by 09.00, on the first day of absence and each day thereafter. The dedicated telephone number is 0151 214 3434.
- Parents/carers may also call into the school and report to reception staff, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with them.
- For absences that extend to a week (5 school days) some form of medical evidence is required: this can be in the form of a doctor's note, an appointment card or letter, a copy of a prescription or sight of prescribed medication.

If a student is absent the school will:

- Telephone/text parents/carers on the first day of absence if a message explaining the absence has not been received.
- Invite parents/carers to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer at school if absences persist.
- Authorise a home visit by the Attendance Officer, if this is deemed necessary.

### **Contact Numbers**

There are times when the school will need to contact parents and carers on a range of issues, including absence. It is essential that the school has up-to-date contact numbers at all times. There will be regular checks on the contact details throughout the year.

### **Lateness**

- From 08.00 – students can access the school building.
- At 08.50 – the school day starts and students are expected to be in class at that time.
- At 09.30 registers are closed.
- A student who arrives after 09.30 will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may mean that parent could be issued Fixed Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day they can miss valuable lesson time and late arrival at lessons disrupts the learning of others. A student who has two or more lates in a week will result in a 30 minute detention with the Senior Leadership Team on Friday after school.

If the student has a persistent late record parents/carers may be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer to resolve the problem. Parents/carers can approach the school at any time if they experience problems getting their child to school on time.

### **Types of Absence:**

Every half day absence from the school has to be classified by the school as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. Registers are taken in each lesson to record attendance marks. They are legal documents which staff are obliged to complete accurately. Attendance marks are also recorded in every lesson to monitor punctuality and guard against truancy.

Information about the cause of any known absence is always required from parents/carers, preferably in writing. For all absence known in advance, written evidence such as dental appointment cards or letters of invitation to interview, should be provided. A decision will be made by the school as to whether or not the absence should be categorised as authorised or unauthorised.

### **Authorised:**

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the school for a good reason such as:

- Illness.
- Medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time
- Interviews with prospective employers or for a place at another school (including entrance examinations)
- Dual registration where a student is registered at two institutions

- Dual registration when Traveller children are enrolled at another school during periods of travelling
- Public performances which the Local Authority has licensed
- Birth of a child to a student who will receive 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child
- Approved off-site educational activities

### **Unauthorised:**

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave of absence has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. The types of unauthorised absence include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Students who arrive at school after 09.05. A student arriving late after that time will be recorded as a U (unauthorised).
- Shopping.
- Looking after other children including siblings who are unwell.
- Birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Oversleeping.
- Inadequate uniform.
- Confusion over term dates.

Any problems with regular attendance are best addressed between the school, the parents or carers and the student. If a student is reluctant to attend, parents/carers should not condone the absence or give in to pressure to excuse non-attendance as this gives the student the impression that attendance at school and therefore learning and education are unimportant.

### **Employment:**

While young people are of compulsory school age, they may not be employed full time. They are, however, free to undertake a range of part time jobs. All children of compulsory school age who choose to work part time must be registered with the Local Authority. For further information, contact should be made with the Educational Welfare Service.

### **Early leaving:**

Young people enrolled in a school remain on the register until the Friday of the last week in June after their sixteenth birthday and cannot leave earlier as was previously the case. This does not mean they have to be on site full time, every day until their leaving date.

### **Leave of Absence:**

Due to regulations which came into force in September 2013, the Principal is no longer able to allow leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Should a student be taken out of school in such circumstances and without permission, the absence will be categorised as 'unauthorised' and the parent/carer may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60 on a per parent per child basis.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when 10% or more of the school year is missed for whatever reason. Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects. The school expects parents' and carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. Parents/carers will be informed of the concern immediately. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our Attendance Stages Protocol, a copy of which is attached at Appendix I. This is combined with academic mentoring as absence inevitably affects attainment.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices:**

Penalty Notices for absence from school can be issued by the Local Authority Attendance and Welfare Service based on requests from schools.

The following circumstances are considered appropriate as reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Truancy, including attendance and exclusion sweeps (formerly truancy sweeps).
- Parentally condoned absences.
- Holidays in term time.
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed.

A student has to be absent from school in one of the above circumstances for at least ten school sessions lost to unauthorised absence in the current term and/or eighteen sessions lost to unauthorised absence over two consecutive terms to trigger the process. A 'session' is defined as the morning or afternoon period of a school day.

Payment of a penalty within 28 days of receipt of the notice is £60. Payment after this time but within 42 days of receipt of the notice is £120. [The Education (Penalty Notice) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012].

Following a request by the school for the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice a check is made by the Local Authority Attendance and Welfare Service to ensure that the request meets the terms of the Code of Conduct.

### **The Role of the Attendance Officers:**

Parents and carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the Attendance Officers in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. The Attendance Officers will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the parents or carers will be requested to appear at a Governors' Attendance Panel. The parent/carer may be required to sign a Parenting Contract.

### **Children missing in education:**

No child will be removed from roll without consultation between the Principal or their designated senior member of staff and the Local Authority Attendance and Welfare Service. Where a child is missing from education with prolonged absences that are unexplained or if a family move away from the area but do not register with another school, the school will alert the Local Authority who will then take action according to the Child Missing in Education Policy and Procedures. Movement of children between Local Authorities and schools is tracked nationally.

### **Publication of attendance figures:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. School staff are committed to working with parents and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

### **Conclusion:**

Litherland High School seeks always to work with parents and carers in the best interests of its young people. Good attendance at school is an absolutely essential requirement for academic success but also develops the good habits which will be expected by employers, colleges and universities in our students' futures. If we truly have high expectations of our students and believe there are no limits to what they can achieve or become, if we are truly 'together in the business of learning', then from the very outset we have to insist on high standards of attendance and punctuality. They are the cornerstones of all we are trying to achieve, the cornerstones of our students' future success.

### **Attendance Stages Protocol**

Litherland High School is committed to providing a positive and productive learning experience for all its students. Attendance at school is the primary and most critical factor in ensuring this can take place. The following 'Attendance Stages Protocol' is designed to clarify the steps school will put in place to address concerns about the attendance, and consequently the learning and progress, of individual students.

#### **Attendance Stage 1:**

If a student's attendance is between 96% - 100% they will be monitored by the form tutor and encouraged to maintain high attendance through the whole school praise and reward system.

#### **Attendance Stage 2:**

If a student's attendance is between 93% - 96% they are at risk of underachievement and will be closely monitored by the form tutor to address any issues which emerge to improve attendance.

#### **Attendance Stage 3:**

If a student's attendance is between 90% - 93% they are at serious risk of underachievement and will be closely monitored and tracked by the Assistant Head of Year. Parent will be required to attend an Attendance Review meeting to discuss attendance and the impact on student progress. Individual barriers to learning will be identified and an Attendance Support Plan will be drawn up. Assistant Head of Year intervention may include attendance letters, meetings with student and parents, support programs, student assessment and working closely with external agencies.

#### **Attendance Stage 4:**

If a student's attendance falls below 90% they are at risk of severe underachievement and will continue to be closely monitored by the Senior Parent/Student Support Officer and Senior Leadership Team. Parent and students are required to attend an Attendance Panel meeting with SPSSO and SLT. A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued. The Local Authority will become involved and may commence legal proceedings. The Fixed Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 to be paid within 21 days or £120 if paid up to 28 days after issue. If the fine is not paid after 28 days, Government guidelines stipulate that prosecution and a court appearance may follow.

#### **Attendance Stage 5:**

If a student's attendance falls below 85% they are at extreme risk of underachievement and will be closely monitored by the SPSSO, SLT and Education Welfare Service. Parent and student are required to attend a Local Authority Attendance Panel which may result in court action. Fixed Penalty Notices will continue to be issued. Students may be deemed to be at risk of neglect due to the parents failure to carry out their legal responsibilities in ensuring their child's right to an education is fulfilled. In order for the school to fulfill its duty of care any Safeguarding concerns will be reported to Social Care on the basis of neglect.

With regard to unauthorised absence, the school can request a Fixed Penalty Notice at any time in accordance with the Code of Conduct produced by Sefton Council.

At any point in this process, a student may be moved to a higher or lower Attendance Stage should it seem appropriate or necessary to do so and particularly where concerns escalate rapidly.

**Students are required to catch up with school work missed due to absence from school.**

#### **The Impact of Absence on Learning**

<b>Attendance during one school year...</b>	<b>Days absent...</b>	<b>Which is approximately weeks absent...</b>	<b>Which means this number of missed lessons...</b>
<b>95%</b>	10 days	2	50
<b>90%</b>	20 days	4	100
<b>85%</b>	30 days	6	150
<b>80%</b>	40 days	8	200
<b>75%</b>	50 days	10	250
<b>70%</b>	60 days	12	300
<b>65%</b>	70 days	14	350

This chart shows that a student who is absent for 10% of one school year will miss 100 lessons. Students at Litherland High School now begin Key Stage 4 in Year 9, so a person who missed 10% each year would lose the learning from 300 lessons. A student with 85% attendance would lose 450 lessons.

A great deal of research has been done on the impact attendance has on attainment. The latest figures are for the GCSE results of 2012-13 for research presented in October 2014. This shows that for students with less than 4% absence over the whole of Key Stage 4, 75% achieved five or more A\*-C grades including English and Mathematics, for those absent 6-10% of the time the figure was 55% and it was 21% for those absent 20-30% of the time. For those who were only present for half their lessons, only 4% achieved five or more A\*-C grades including English and Mathematics. Students with poor attendance are therefore almost certain to perform significantly less well in their exams than they would do otherwise. They are at a disadvantage compared to students who attend regularly, even if they would expect to do better based on performance at a younger age. In stark terms, those who attend more will get better qualifications and can expect to get better, higher paid jobs with all the benefits that that entails for their futures. In the case of genuine illness this is unavoidable, but where parents and carers have failed to ensure attendance at school, it is a matter which requires very clear and honest reflection and which demands action from the school and other organisations and agencies concerned with child welfare.