





# Lumen Learning Trust

Learning together for a brighter future

## Walton Oak Attendance & Punctuality Policy

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<b>SIGNED EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL</b>	Mary Ellen McCarthy 	<b>DATE</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2021
<b>SIGNED CHAIR OF DIRECTORS</b>	Ray Vango 	<b>DATE</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2021



## Walton Oak Primary School

## **Introduction**

The Lumen Learning Trust puts the children's needs at the heart of its provision. Our whole school community is committed to enabling the children to become successful lifelong learners and happy, fulfilled adults who can make positive choices about their future.

At the Lumen Learning Trust attendance and punctuality are very high priorities. We want motivated enthusiastic learners who get to school on time, ready to learn and who thus establish good habits for lifelong learning.

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to make sure that children come to school regularly and on time. Our schools have a legal duty to mark the register and record the attendance of every child on its roll and to specifically code which children are absent or late and the reasons why. There is now a statutory requirement that schools publish statistics about their attendance rates. We have challenging targets set each year against both local and national averages.

## **Every child is expected to achieve 100% attendance.**

Absences fall into two groups: authorised and unauthorised.

### **Authorised absences**

Authorised absences involve children having time out of school for approved reasons, for example: illness, urgent medical appointments, attendance at funerals, religious observance or visits to new schools.

- The school will need an explanation from parents or guardians if they are to authorise the child's absence. For an illness absence parents are required to call the school absence line and leave a message confirming the name of the child and the type of illness. For any other absence an Application for Exceptional Leave of Absence must be completed for the relevant Headteacher to review.
- Absences are then coded appropriately in the register.
- Absences can only be approved by a school, not by a parent. A school is not obliged to accept the offered explanation as a valid reason for absence. If there are doubts about the explanation offered, or there is no explanation offered at all, the absence will be treated as unauthorised.
- Parents and carers are expected to make every effort to arrange routine dentists and GP appointments outside school hours. However, it is understood that specialist hospital or clinic appointments may have to be made during school hours.

### **Exceptional authorised leave**

Parents who wish to take their children out of school for any other reason during school time are asked to make this request to the Headteacher. It is important to make the request in good time – **at least two weeks before the period of requested leave**. The Headteacher can only consider a request if it is made by a parent with whom the child normally resides. Each request for exceptional leave will be considered as a separate case and the Headteacher's decision will take into account the following:

- The reason for the leave and why it could not be taken in school holidays;
- The number of days requested;
- Previous requests for leave during term-time;
- The child's attendance and punctuality record;
- The age of the child;
- The time of year proposed for the trip;
- The child's stage of education, any additional needs they may have, their current attainment and level of progress and any impact the leave will have on their learning.

### **What are unauthorised absences?**

Unauthorised absences involve children having time out of school without explanation, or where the reason for absence is one that the school cannot authorise, for example: shopping trips, birthday celebrations, baby-sitting for younger children, tiredness, a late night due to family celebration, not realising a term had started or because other members of the family are ill.

If the Headteacher does not authorise exceptional leave in term time, and it is still taken, this is always classified as unauthorised. Parents/carers of pupils who have a period of 5 or more days unauthorised absence

are liable to receive a fixed penalty notice of £60 per parent per child to be paid within 21 days or £120 per parent per child if paid within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period the Local Authority must prosecute the recipient for failing to ensure regular school attendance under section 444 Education Act 1996.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2013 state that if a child has failed to return to school 10 school days later than the agreed return date, that the child's name be deleted from the admission register i.e. the school place is taken away, provided that both the school and the Local Authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the child is.

### **Routines for managing and improving attendance**

*To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors*

- Talk about attendance and expectations at induction meetings.
- Provide termly data on attendance to Governors through the Head Teachers report.
- Promote expectation of absence letters/phone calls from parents.
- Address attendance and punctuality in newsletters.
- Continue to have a welcoming 'open door' policy where parents feel fully involved in the life of the school and feel able to come and discuss any concerns they have.
- In accordance with "Keeping children safe in education", it is the school's duty to inform the Local Authority if a child fails to attend regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.
- Use of school website and staff handbook.

*To have a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks*

- Clear procedures for registration.
- Clear procedures for the reporting of absence by parents and carers.
- Clear late registration procedures (parents/carers to sign reason for lateness).
- Respond swiftly to persistent unauthorised non-attendance and lateness using a regular and frequent reporting system to year group leaders.
- Class teachers will speak to parents and letters will be issued if no improvement.
- Have clear referral procedures and make best use of Home School Link Worker (HSLW) and Inclusion Officer (IO).
- Review attendance regularly.

*To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils*

- Highlight attendance in PHSE curriculum and assemblies.
- By having excellent communication with parents, involving parents/carers from earliest stage.
- Parents of children whose attendance figure is below 90% will be contacted as a child is considered a Persistent Absentee. Communication will remind parents of their responsibility in ensuring their children attend regularly and punctually and also informs parents of the likelihood of the Local Authority becoming involved with their child and the family in order to support the child's attendance.
- Communication also takes place with parents of children who are consistently late arriving at school or have sustained periods of illness absence each half term.
- If written correspondence does not lead to an improvement in attendance parents can be invited to meet with a member of SLT to discuss their child's attendance. At the Headteacher's discretion, additional staff e.g. Inclusion Manager, Home School Link Worker, Class Teacher or Inclusion Officer may also be invited to this meeting.

*To maintain a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data*

- SIMS is used to record registration.
- A standardised system is used to record authorised and unauthorised absence.
- The collection and provision of information should be consistent.
- A daily report is sent to teachers advising of children's reason for absence.
- Year group leaders monitor trends in year group attendance.
- Identify developing patterns of absence and lateness.

*Promote effective partnerships with the Inclusion Service*

- Office staff to liaise with HSLW and IO and to carry out initial enquiries/intervention prior to referral.
- Head Teacher or designated member of the Senior Leadership Team to meet with parents after phone calls/letters have had no effect, before referral.
- Written referrals will be made where there are considerable concerns about attendance or punctuality and there is an unwillingness for parents to engage with the school. This will not simply be due to relatively low attendance figures; if there are patterns e.g. taking holidays in term-time every year, regularly missing a particular day, taking long weekends, persistent suspect illness or always returning to school late after a school break then a referral will be made.

*To recognise the needs of pupils when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence*

- Sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of returning pupils.
- Teachers have a clear script of how to reintegrate pupils returning to school.
- Peer support if necessary.
- Parent involvement as much as possible.
- Timescale agreed for reintegration plan.

**Reporting your child's absence**

Parents are asked to telephone the school before 9.00am to inform staff that their child will not be attending and giving a clear reason for absence. Parents are required to contact the school for every day of their child's absence.

If a child is not in school and no parental contact has been made with the school, a member of the school staff will contact parents before 11.00am to establish why the child is not in school. If the school have not had any contact with a parent/carer after three days of absence the school will write to the main home address.

Notes of phone calls received and made are kept in the school office.

It is ultimately at the discretion of the Headteacher as to whether or not to authorise an absence.

**Routines for managing and improving punctuality**

The school day at Walton Oak begins at 8.50am and finishes at 3.15pm for Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and 2 and 3.20pm for Year 3-6.

Punctuality is very important and sets important lifelong habits. The table below sets out the expectations for all children at Walton Oak :

Year group	Arrival from	Registers taken	Marked as 'Late' if arriving between	Registers closed
All	8.30am	8.50am	8.50am-9.20am	9.20am

All registers will be considered 'closed' at 9.20am. Any children arriving after this time and who do not have a good reason for doing so (for example a dental appointment) are marked as having an unauthorised absence.

**Involvement of Inclusion Officer**

Every half term our Lumen schools are visited by their link Inclusion Officer in order to scrutinise their registers and support school staff in identifying children whose attendance and/or punctuality is causing concern.

Each school also makes written referrals to the Inclusion Officer where there are considerable concerns about attendance or punctuality of a particular child and there is unwillingness from the responsible parent to engage with the school to rectify the situation. This will not simply be due to relatively low attendance figures; if there are patterns of absence e.g. taking holidays in term-time every year, regularly missing a particular day, taking long weekends, persistent suspect illness or always returning to school late after a school break, then a referral will be made.

In cases of persistent lateness, each school may request the Inclusion Officer to carry out "late gate" patrols whereby s/he waits at the entrance of the school to speak to parents and children arriving after the registers are taken. Where a child/ren arrives on their own, the IO will telephone their parent to remind them of the school's expectations regarding punctuality and identify the issues causing the lateness in order to implement a plan to address them. In cases where the situation still continues the school will invite the parent to meet with the Headteacher or member of the SLT to discuss the matter. At the Headteacher's discretion, additional staff e.g. Inclusion Manager, Home School Link Worker or Inclusion Officer may also be invited to this meeting.

If attendance and punctuality concerns persist for a significant length of time, and parents make no effort to work with the school and local authority to make improvement, the school supports the Local Authority's right to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to parents and if necessary to take court action.

### **The implementation of a Penalty Notice to Parents or Carers**

**Penalty Notices may be actioned by an Inclusion Officer in cases of poor attendance as follows –**

- ***Unauthorised absences or late arrival after the close of registration, on 7 occasions in any six week period (not including school closures).*** The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning from the Inclusion Service of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a maximum of 15 school days to effect an improvement. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further unauthorised absence. Where a formal warning letter has been issued to parents, the Local Authority will monitor attendance for a maximum of 15 school days and issue a Penalty Notice by first class post if the Local Authority determine that an acceptable level of attendance has not been achieved.
- ***Unauthorised leave of absence in term time of 5 days or more (this need not be consecutive) without the authorisation of the school.*** In the case of separated parents, the penalty notice will be sent to the parent requesting leave of absence and/or taking the pupil out of school. No written warning will be given where it can be shown that the parent/carer had previously been warned of their liability to receive a Penalty Notice.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **1. Registration of pupils at Lumen Learning Trust schools.**

- 1.1.** The monitoring of children's attendance at a school is a key function of all school staff, especially class teachers.
- 1.2.** Registration and attendance procedures are statutory requirements. Registers are legal documents which record whether parents have fulfilled their obligations and may be produced as the evidence for an offence. They must therefore be kept correctly.
- 1.3.** Head teachers and governing bodies must ensure an Admission Register and an Attendance Register is kept. Every child should be on both registers. The Admission Register and the attendance registers at Walton Oak are electronic registers.
- 1.4.** The Attendance Register must be marked at the beginning of each a.m. session at 8.50am and at the earliest time possible in the afternoon session by 1.15pm. The codes to be used are attached as Appendix B.
- 1.5.** Leave of absence: If the child is not sick or absent for some other 'unavoidable cause', the absence can only be authorised as 'leave' by the school (not by the parent). Leave will only be granted on certain grounds e.g. a) Close family bereavement or other exceptional circumstances, b) Sitting of entrance exams and visiting secondary schools, c) approved and licensed 'performances' (e.g. film modelling). Parents and carers are asked to fill in a permission form at least 2 weeks before the required absence and each case will be looked at individually. The Governors at Walton Oak Primary school have decided that family holidays taken in school time will not be authorised and may incur a fine/monetary penalty. (SEE PENALTY NOTICES – APPENDIX C)
- 1.6.** Lateness: Children enter the classrooms from 8.30am. Registration opens at 8.50am. Any child entering school after 8.50am will be marked as late (L code on the register). Registration closes at 9.20am. After this time a child will be marked absent. Should a child enter school after 9.20am and the close of register they will then be marked in using the code (U) and a note of the exact time of entrance recorded.
- 1.7.** Deletion from the Admission Register – this happens when a) the child has been registered at another school, b) when the parent has given written notification to the school that they are educating the child 'otherwise' than at school, c) when the child has stopped attending and no longer 'ordinarily resides' at a place which is a reasonable distance from this school d) when a child has not returned within ten school days after exceptional leave of absence, except by virtue of illness or other unavoidable cause, e) after six weeks, continuous absence and the school and the LA have failed, after reasonable enquiry to locate the pupil, f) at the end of the process of any permanent exclusion.
- 1.8.** Other situations cover where the pupil has died, or is permanently medically unfit for school or where he/she ceases to be of compulsory school age.

### **2. Promoting attendance and punctuality**

- 2.1.** As well as telling the LA about all children who are deleted from the Admission Register all schools are required to inform the IO of children who 'fail to attend school regularly' or who are continually absent for more than two weeks without adequate explanation. Children who are regularly late will also be referred to the IO, after attempts to resolve this by the office and the Head Teacher have failed.
- 2.2.** It is expected that Lumen schools will first have attempted to resolve problems of unauthorised absence and lateness by letters home, absence procedures, first-day contact, inviting parents to meetings etc. to ensure that the situation cannot be improved without the need for intervention by the LA.
- 2.3.** The Lumen school may also wish to discuss children who are having large amounts of 'authorised absence'.

**Each year an Absence Target is set for the school.**

**APPENDIX B**

<b>Code</b>	<b>School Meaning</b>	<b>Statistical Meaning</b>	<b>Physical Meaning</b>
/	Present (AM)	Present	In for whole session
\	Present (PM)	Present	In for whole session
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
C	Other authorised circumstances	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
D	Dual registration (attending other estab.)	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence	Out for whole session
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)	Unauthorised	Out for whole session
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence	Out for whole session
I	Illness (not medical appointments)	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
J	Interview	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
L	Late (before reg. closed)	Present	Late for session
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
O	Unauthorised Abs (not covered by other code)	Unauthorised	Out for whole session
P	Approved Sporting activity	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
R	Religious observance	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
S	Study Leave	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
T	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
U	Late (after registers close)	Unauthorised Absence	Late for session
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
W	Work experience	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
X	DSCF School closed to pupils	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
Y	Enforced closure	Attendance not required	Out for whole Session
!	DSCF Non-compulsory school age absence	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
#	School closed to pupils & staff	Attendance not required	Out for whole session

## APPENDIX C

### Penalty Notices

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

#### Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued

- Unauthorised absences or late arrival after the closure of registration, on 7 occasions in any six week period. The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning from the Inclusion Service of the possibility of a penalty notice being given and a maximum 15 school days to effect an improvement. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further unauthorised absence.
- Pupils identified by police and Inclusion Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences. The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning from the Education Welfare Service of the possibility of a penalty notice being given and a maximum 15 school days to effect an improvement. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further unauthorised absence.
- When an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours within the first 5 days of an exclusion without justifiable reason. No written warning will be given where it can be shown that the parent/carer had previously been warned of their liability to receive a Penalty Notice

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 states that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

- Where a child is taken out of school for 5 days or more within a three month period (these need not be consecutive days) and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.
- Parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Inclusion Service team will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration, without good reason.

**With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.**