The LETTA Trust

Attendance Policy

Approved and adopted:	Autumn 2024	**To be reviewed:**	Autumn 2027
Reviewed by:	Trust Board	**Signed:**	

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1. Aims

Attendance is key to every pupil's success at school. Quite simply, if you don't come to school regularly and on time, you are not going to be able to make the most of the rich curriculum experiences that we offer you.

Our aim is to promote high attendance so that our pupils achieve well at school. Regular attendance is also crucial for making friends and developing good relationships with school adults.

We are committed to:

- ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- promoting good attendance and reducing absence, in particular persistent absence
- acting early to address patterns of absence
- building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

It also refers to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

This policy also complies with our trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Trust Board is responsible for:

- setting high expectations of all trust and school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
    - Making sure all schools in the trust record attendance accurately in the register, and share the required information with the DfE and local authorities
    - Making sure all schools in the trust work effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keep them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the trust's/school's policies and ethos
- making sure the schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- making sure the trust has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- identifying and monitoring attendance patterns across the trust's schools to identify common issues and barriers, and share effective practice between schools
- making sure all staff receive training on attendance
- sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across the trust and providing regular opportunities for staff from different schools to come together, learn from each other and share resources

3.2 The Local Governing Board (LGB)

The LGB is responsible for:

- reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge

3.3 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- the implementation of this policy at the school
- monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the LGB and CEO
- supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- authorising the issue of fixed-penalty notices
- working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs

- communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

3.4 The attendance leader

These members of staff are available each day to give support and advice on improving children's attendance. They also provide a range of learning activities for parents during school time. The attendance leader is responsible for:

- championing and improving attendance across the school
- monitoring attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- delivering a systems of rewards to encourage good attendance
- reporting on attendance to senior leaders
- working with other professionals to tackle persistent absence
- arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.5 Class teaching staff

Class teaching staff are available to parents at the end of each day to discuss any issues that may affect children's attendance and progress. Appointments are available for longer discussions with the class teacher or a senior member of staff, by calling the school office. Class teaching staff are responsible for:

- recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office
- encouraging their pupils to come to school every day
- discussing absence with pupils when they return to school
- discussing attendance with parents at meetings

3.6 School admin staff

School admin staff are expected to:

- take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system
- contact parents if their child does not arrive at school
- collate attendance data

3.7 Parents

We build relationships with parents from the outset and set clear expectations about attendance. Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that their children attend school regularly and are punctual.
- calling the school to report their child's absence before on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- providing the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- ensuring that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

- keeping to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- seeking support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

Each school creates an attendance register, and places all pupils onto this register.
Teaching staff take the attendance register at the start of the morning and after lunch. It records whether each pupil is:

- present
- attending an approved off-site educational activity
- absent
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register includes:

- the original entry
- the amended entry
- the reason for the amendment
- the date on which the amendment was made
- the name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- for pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- the nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- the nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Each school has agreed start times for the morning and afternoon sessions in addition to a time that registers open and a time that registers close.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent or carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by calling the school office before 9am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7 on attendance monitoring).

We mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents or carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

We encourage parents or carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil is out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Attending a medical or dental appointment is counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent or carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents show evidence of appointments to admin staff.

The pupil's parent or carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Children arriving at school late enter through the main office, where they are marked as late and the reason for their lateness is noted.

If a pattern is identified or there are ongoing issues, parents are contacted by the family support worker to offer support. If lateness persists then a meeting is held with parents and a written warning letter is issued to the parents regarding lateness. If no improvement is made then a referral is made to the LA for a Financial Penalty Notice (FPN).

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- follow up on their absence with their parent or carer to ascertain the reason, by calling the parent or carer or making a home visit
- ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- identify whether the absence is approved or not
- identify the correct attendance code to use
- where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve

attendance

- identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners and make the necessary referrals
- where support is unsuccessful, or not engaged with, refer to the LA for a fixed penalty notice (see section 5.4)

4.6 Reporting to parents

Teachers notify parents of their child's attendance in parent-teacher meetings in Autumn and Spring. Annual attendance and punctuality is included in the end of year report. Whole school and class attendance is also reported in the newsletter for parents.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

Research has shown that absence from school for sustained periods of time has a detrimental effect on children's progress. For this reason, the school will not normally approve term-time absence. Parents wishing to take children out of school during term time will need to apply in writing to the Headteacher, who will notify them of their decision. Forms for this are available through the school office.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.
Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- pupils whose parents travel for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers

Holidays in term-time

Families taking their children out of school for extended leave or holidays in term time risk being fined by the Local Authority. The schools' Attendance Welfare Advisor (AWA) will take action to remove from the school role any child that has not returned to school from extended leave.

5.2 Procedures for addressing unauthorised absence

School procedures for targeting unauthorised absence are as follows:

- an informal letter is sent to parents informing them of their child's attendance percentage
- attendance for that child is monitored over the next six weeks
- if there has been insufficient improvement, the family support worker and a senior leader meet with parents
- a warning letter is sent to the parents
- an Early Help Assessment (EHA) is completed
- referral to the LA for a fixed penalty notice (see section 5.4)

5.3 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the trust's strategy for improving attendance.

Our schools use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence. We consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Staff hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:

- listen, and understand barriers to attendance
- explain the help that is available
- explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
- review any existing actions or interventions
- provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.4)

5.4 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

Penalty notices are issued by a local authority officer or the police. For further information about penalty notices in Tower Hamlets see: LBTH Penalty Notice Scheme Protocol August

2024

5.4. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

Sometimes pupils are absent due to complex barriers to attendance which can include mental or physical ill-health. At LETTA, school staff work with families to, where possible, remove any in-school barriers and put reasonable adjustments in place to enable pupils to participate in school life. Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, the school will inform the local authority.

Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence will have planned support to help them catch up and reintegrate back into school life.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

There are a number of ways attendance is rewarded. These may include:

- weekly attendance presentations celebrate good attendance and promote competition with class league tables
- whole school attendance updates in weekly newsletters
- awards - e.g. if every class has 100% attendance on any given day, all children will be given a treat
- half termly class reward for the class with the highest attendance
- end of term award and certificate for all the children who have achieved 100%, this might include being invited to watch a film or prizes - eg an Ipad, bike or scooter
- at the end of the academic year, if a child has achieved 100% attendance, they could be entered into a prize draw
- a positive letter of improvement is sent to parents if attendance has improved after monitoring
- targeted children will be rewarded for 100% attendance for short periods of time
- an 'Attendance Week' might be organised for parents, staff and children to take part in

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance leader at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis. A pupil's parent or carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2). If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days, the school may ask for medical evidence.

We involve an education welfare officer If attendance falls below 90% as the persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal

to 10%, the pupil is classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school compares attendance data to the national average and to other LETTA schools and shares this with the CEO and the Local Governing Board.

Leaders and teachers keep track of attendance information for their pupils. This information is discussed in pupil progress meetings and in weekly 1-1s. Where there are concerns, leaders and teachers work together with the inclusion team to support the pupil and their family and ensure attendance improves.

8. Children missing education

Please refer to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for the process to follow if a child is missing education.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the DfE is updated. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trust Board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Inclusion Policy

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours,

	regulated employment abroad	approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		

Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: · In police detention · Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or · Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		

G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays