LOUDWATER COMBINED SCHOOL

Attendance for Learning Policy

"Loudwater Combined School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share in this commitment. Please refer to our Safeguarding Policy."

Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. If children are not in school, they are not learning.

For this reason the governors of Loudwater Combined School have taken the decision that they may charge the Education Welfare Service with issuing penalty notices against any parents who take their children out of school during term time when there are no exceptional circumstances to justify this. The governors have also decided to use the services of the Educational Welfare Services when a pupil's attendance is irregular and satisfactory reasons for these irregularities are not received and substantiated. This may involve the issuing of a penalty notice or court action.

The governors of Loudwater Combined School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Loudwater School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. However we will work with the Education Welfare Service to issue penalty notices for irregular attendance and where children are absent during term time and there are no exceptional circumstances for this absence; holidays taken during term time could be an example of this.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on Child Protection, Anti-Bullying, Behaviour & Discipline and Inclusion. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

Our school attendance target is 95%. This represents average attendance. In our drive towards continuous improvement, this is an area of school performance that will be targeted to bring about improvements. Please see Appendix 1 to demonstrate the impact of attendance, which falls below this figure.

We celebrate high levels or improvements in attendance to encourage children to have good attendance levels. This is done through weekly certificates for classes who achieve 100% punctuality or the highest level of attendance during a week. A mufti (non-uniform) day is awarded to the class with the highest percentage attendance in a month. Children with attendance between 97% and 100% each term receive a certificate. Full attendance for an academic year is rewarded by a badge and certificate. These achievements are recognised in achievement assemblies and on the weekly newsletter.

Legal Framework
Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Categorising absence
Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:
Illness: In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill, is acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.
Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.
Other Exceptional Authorised Circumstances:
Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced that the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation recommends an absence from school from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.

- Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above, the head teacher will consult with a member of the governing board prior to any authorisation being given to the parent.
- If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the head teacher and governors must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:
  - The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils)
  - Year six induction day (for pupils in year six)
  - Year six SATs week (for pupils in year six)
  - Assessment periods in other year groups (these will be communicated to parents by the school)
  - Induction days for year groups already at the school.

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will arrange for work to be sent home.
Late Arrival: Registration begins at 8.55am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9.25am. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. (Code M)

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry. (Code U)

Unauthorised absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:
- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

Leave of Absence and Extended Leave: Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before arrangements are made. This request should be made at least one month prior to the date of requested leave to ensure there is adequate time for the request to be considered by the governors. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

The Curriculum and Admissions Committee of the Governing Body will consider all requests for leave of absence, where timescales do not allow this to happen the head teacher will always consult with at least one governor from this Committee. Each request will be discussed individually and will consider the following factors:
- Length of the proposed leave

- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record in the previous 12 months
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil.
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

Please also see the checklist that will be used in appendix 2.

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request is granted, the letter will state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases, the school will refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice.

Religious Observance Loudwater School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R)

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are required to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Loudwater Combined School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at our school will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

We can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Loudwater Combined School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

Children in Entertainment

This is regulated under the Children Young Person Act 1933/63 and Children in Performance Regulations 1968.

By law, all children from birth to the time they cease to be of compulsory school age require a licence to perform. The production company is responsible for completing and submitting the licence application to Bucks County Council.

Performances, which require a licence, include:

- Theatre, panto
- Films, TV
- Commercials, video, internet for commercial purposes
- Member of a band/choir/dance show
- Modelling – all types, broadcast and non-broadcast
- Amateur dramatics
- Broadcast dance/singing competitions

A licence is not required for children performing in a school production.

In Buckinghamshire, if time off school is required, the school is contacted directly. We are asked to provide information about current levels of attendance and whether we object to the licence being granted. Depending on the current attendance levels and time of the school year, the governors do not generally object and the absence is authorised. However if the absence falls in key times of the year as outlined previously in this policy, then an objection may be made.

Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)

- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

Loudwater Combined School will follow Buckinghamshire County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

Roles and Responsibilities

We believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

All staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Parents should:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time.

Using Attendance Data

All pupils' attendance is monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Every week the Attendance Administrator will provide the head teacher with attendance data for the previous five weeks for each pupil whose attendance is 95% or less.

This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Loudwater Combined School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Support Systems

Loudwater Combined School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Legal Sanctions

Please see Appendix 3 for details of interventions.

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Loudwater Combined School will notify the Buckinghamshire Education Welfare Service of the irregular attendance.

The Education Welfare Service or school will invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.
The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.
The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A pupil is persistently late for school.

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/.carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date, the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

The Curriculum & Admission committee monitors this policy on a half-termly basis. Anonymised data will be made available to this committee including notifications made to County and the responses received.

September 2017

APPENDIX 1

WHAT DOES 90% ATTENDANCE MEAN FOR YOUR CHILD?

MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY	

90% ATTENDANCE MEANS MISSING ONE HALF DAY EVERY WEEK OF TERM TIME

SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR

90% ATTENDANCE MEANS MISSING THE EQUIVALENT OF FOUR WEEKS IN THE SCHOOL YEAR

	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY
Y2											
Y3											
Y4											
Y5											
Y6											

90% ATTENDANCE OVER FIVE YEARS MEANS MISSING ONE HALF OF A SCHOOL YEAR

IS YOUR CHILD'S ATTENDANCE AFFECTING THEIR ACHIEVEMENT?

WHAT WOULD YOUR EMPLOYER'S RESPONSE BE IF THIS WERE YOUR ATTENDANCE PROFILE?

Appendix 2

Checklist for authorising requests for absence during term time

Date request made:	Length of absence requested:
Name:	Year Group:
Attendance over last academic year:	Have any attendance concerns been notified to parents previously? (details)
Have there been any term time absence for reasons other than illness in the past 2 years?	
Are there any SEN needs? What level of support is provided?	Are there any welfare concerns (including social care involvement)?
Known health needs:	
Current attainment: Reading Writing Maths	Progress during the last 12 months: Reading Writing Maths

	Yes	No
Is this absence in the first half term of the academic year?		
Will the first week of a new term be missed?		
Will the pupil miss tests or need them to be rescheduled?		
Will the pupil miss secondary school induction days?		
Will the pupil miss key times during the run up to assessments: Y1 Phonics check (2nd week June) School assessments (1-15 July) Y2 end of KS 1 tests (summer term to end of June) Y3 & Y4 School assessments (1-15 July) Y5 School assessments (First half summer term) Y6 11+ test, (first full week in September or end of KS 2 tests (summer term to end of June)		
What are the reasons given for this period of leave		
Do the governors consider these to be exceptional circumstances? Reasons		

APPENDIX 3
Intervention Flow Chart

The head teacher will monitor attendance on a weekly basis to identify unacceptable, irregular attendance over a 5 week period.

School will notify parent of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve. 1a letter sent.

A letter will be sent informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should

- Speak with your child to see if there are any reasons why they are reluctant to attend
- Contact the school to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing.
- Ensure your child attends school regularly

If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the school will write to invite the parent into school to devise a parenting contract and provide information about further actions which could result.
If an improvement has been made this will be communicated to parents and attendance will continued to be monitored in line with school procedures. Should the improvement not be sustained parents will be invited to attend a meeting to devise a parenting contract. 1b letter sent.

Failure to attend a meeting to devise a parenting contract or to follow the parenting contract will result in the school making a referral to the Education Welfare Service who will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting or review and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.

A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the Local Authority aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.

Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular, the Education Welfare Service may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

If you are issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent/carer, per child this must be paid in full within 21 days otherwise the Penalty will increase to £120 per parent/carer, per child. If you fail to pay the Penalty by the 28th day, the Education Welfare Service may instigate legal proceedings against you.

If you are found guilty of this offence you can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.