

# Attendance Policy

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Lime Trust 2024



## **Policy: Attendance Policy**

**Date of Policy: September 2023**

**Date of Renewal: September 2024**

## **LIME Trust Vision & Values**

*Putting Learners First* is our Trust vision.

We aim to create a nurturing and supportive learning environment for all, encouraging our learners to achieve academic excellence and reach their full potential. We set high expectations and build capacity-rich schools through facilitating school-to-school collaboration. The high challenge we put forward is met with equally high support from our team of education experts, so we continue to improve our children's lives and futures – especially for disadvantaged pupils.

Our values are based on R.E.S.P.E.C.T. which means we believe that:

**R**espect is built on unconditional positive regard for all learners, all employees, and our wider communities.

**E**quity enables everyone to be treated as individuals. It removes barriers, provides opportunity and celebrates difference.

**S**elf-worth creates a culture where all learners, all employees and our wider community have pride in their contributions and feel confident and valued.

**P**artnership is working together for the common good, ensuring that our learners are at the heart of all that we do.

**E**njoyment is feeling happy, safe and motivated to make a positive contribution.

**C**ommunication provides a voice for all, creating a shared understanding through dialogue.

**T**rust is a partnership which requires us to act with integrity. Be brave, honest and kind.



## Purpose

Lime Trust is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our learners. We recognise that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance. We seek to ensure that all our pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to achieve their full potential. The school strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each pupil feels cared for, secure and respected. We expect all our pupils to attend school on time every day unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

The schools within the Lime trust liaise closely with the Local Authority and other agencies to support to remove any barriers that are preventing regular attendance from occurring.

## The law relating to attendance and the right to a full-time education.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that the parent or carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs, they may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

It is the legal responsibility of every parent or carer to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents or carers decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Isle of Wight Council v Platt case (2017) considered by the Supreme Court makes it clear that regular attendance shall mean in accordance with the school rules. Therefore, any non-attendance which is not in accordance with the school rules will be deemed unauthorised. The school rules are determined by the school and are the days and hours that they are open for pupils to attend. Under this judgment all children registered at a school should attend 100% of the time unless there are exceptional circumstances that prevent this.

## Roles and responsibilities of good attendance

Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. Our schools give high priority to working with pupils and parents to ensure we are doing our best to support the needs of our pupils. We recognise that good communication and strong home-school links are effective ways of solving any attendance issues and barriers that may impact on pupils' achievement. We have high expectations that where possible pupils should have a minimum of 96% attendance, although we are aware some of our pupils have complex medical needs that may result in prolonged or frequent periods of absence. We encourage parents to send their children to school when they are fit to attend, and we offer support at home if a pupil is absent for extended periods due to their medical needs.

## The role of the family support worker

Each school has a Family Support Worker who works closely with parents/ carers to provide information and advice about issues such as:

- Personal independent payment/DLA forms
- Information about benefits
- Referrals to short breaks
- Referrals to Child and Family Consultation Services (CAMHS).
- Referrals to specialist children's health services



- School attendance
- Free school meals
- Transitions and next steps in education
- General family support
- Liaise with external services.
- Educational Health and Care Plans
- Specialist workshops for parents

### The role of the Educational Welfare Officer

The Educational Welfare Officer (EWOL) supports parents/carers and pupils to achieve good attendance and help them to break down any barriers to their attendance. This is an essential part of working with children and young people to become successful learners and to give them the best possible start in life.

The EWOL roles are:

- To contribute to raising achievement by improving school attendance
- To assist the school in meeting their obligations and targets in relation to school attendance, especially persistent absence
- To make unsupervised contact with parents/carers to assess the reasons impacting on attendance of individual students and facilitating their return to education.
- To initiate appropriate legal action to ensure the school is carrying out its statutory responsibility. This will involve preparing statements, attending and presenting evidence.

The EWOL also works closely with the Education Welfare Officer for the LA to monitor absence and punctuality and to support families overcome any barriers. We take unauthorised absence and persistent lateness seriously and while we will work to resolve the issue if the problem persists formal letters will be sent out and if appropriate fines may be issued.

Pupils and families will not be sanctioned for any lateness caused by Local Authority (LA) Transport. Parents hold the responsibility for pupils that arrive late to school who do not use the LA transport.

### Registers

Class registers are legal documents. DfE guidance states registers must be taken twice a day, first thing in the morning and straight after lunch. Registers must be taken by the Class Teacher, or the member of staff leading the class and must be done in the presence of the pupils. Each school has a 30-minute registration period each morning. The times vary slightly in each school.

On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present.
- Attending an approved educational activity.
- Absent; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

\*(Our teachers record present or absent with office staff recording the reason)

The school will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.



**Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm** (Present in school during registration.)  
**Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed.**

A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

### Absence procedure

If your child is going to be absent from school, you must contact the school on the first day and subsequent days of absence and inform the school the reason for the absence (unless it is a diagnosed medical condition and evidence is on file). You can do this several ways:

- Telephone school, option 1 and leave a message on the absence line.
- Using Arbor and sending an in-app message
- Calling into the school and speaking to a member of the office team
- Sending the school office an email

We have a robust and effective First Day Calling procedure in place to ensure that any unplanned student absences are identified promptly, with welfare calls (and visits where necessary) made immediately after the school's register has closed.

Arbor is used to generate a report identifying all uncoded/unplanned absences. Initial checks are made with the relevant class teacher to establish whether they are aware of the reason for the absence, or whether a message has been conveyed via the home/schoolbook which has not been passed to the school admin team.

If the reason for the child's absence is still unknown the family support worker will call parents to ascertain why the child is unable to attend school and the register will be coded accordingly. In the event that it is not possible to make contact with parents, calls will subsequently be made to other contacts recorded on the school's system, in order of priority. This process all happens as soon as registers have closed.

If after calling all the numbers contact still cannot be made, a home visit will be carried out by the school Family Support Worker/member of the safeguarding team to ensure that the child and their family are safe and well. If this is unsuccessful support from children's services/MASH/Police will be sought to establish the whereabouts and safety of the child.

Any unplanned and unexpected absence for a child subject to a Child Protection Plan will be advised to the allocated social worker immediately.

### Authorised absence

Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:

**Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school** Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

**Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made** If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using.



Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made, they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments) Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code S: Study leave Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups. To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

### Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher. If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow



schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided. Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation. If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed. Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

### Administrative codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

Code X: Not required to be in school. This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school, or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities, then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: Pupil not on admission register. This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure. This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

### Special leave requests in term time

We understand and encourage participation in external school activities and pursuits. This can sometimes lead to pupils requiring special leave from school to attend additional training, competitions and other events.



Any parent or carer requesting special leave for their child must complete a leave of absence form for the headteacher to review. Parents and carers are encouraged to provide additional evidence as to why they consider this to be an exceptional event. This could be a letter detailing why, an official invite from the organisers/ providers of the event. The criteria that a school will apply to determine 'exceptional' is a circumstance that has a unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the learner which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another, each individual request will be considered on its merits. Any absence due to sickness prior to or after the requested date will be marked as an unauthorised absence, unless medical evidence is provided.

The headteacher will consider all special leave requests and will make the final decision as to whether they are authorised or unauthorised absences. This is a final decision. Only leave of absence requests submitted prior to the event will be considered, any requests after the event will be marked as an unauthorised absence and may result in a penalty notice.

If the headteacher agrees that the request is exceptional, any further days of absence will be regarded as unauthorised.

If the pupil is subject to child protection plan, social services will be immediately notified when a request is made. Leave will not be authorised at times when children are scheduled to take public examinations. Parents/carers will be notified as soon as these dates are known.

**Child Performance License** – if your child is modelling / performing for film / TV / publications etc. legislation sets out that in addition to the above guidance the parents must obtain a Local Authority License. The Local Authority Child Performance Policy details all the by laws relating to this area.

### Sanctions for an unauthorised absence without permission

If individual pupil's unauthorised absence rises above 12 sessions in any term, a parent can receive a Penalty Notice or prosecution under the Education Act 1996 Section 444.

### Fixed penalty notices

Under Section 23 of the Anti-Social behaviour Act 2003, Local Authorities are required to issue Fixed Penalty Notices may be issued to parents and carers in specific circumstances. These include:

- A period of leave taken without the agreement of the school
- A leave of absence that was different to the dates of exceptional leave which was previously agreed.
- Absence due to non-school attendance (irregular/ persistent absenteeism)

### Non school attendance/ persistent absenteeism

The school reserves the right to request a penalty notice for non-school attendance. A penalty notice can be issued if one of the following criteria can be met:

- Level of unauthorised absence leads to an unauthorised absence of 10% or more, with a minimum period of any 8 school weeks (A maximum of 2 penalty notices for ongoing attendance concerns can be used in one academic year)
- A single unauthorised absence event of at least 2 consecutive school days or 4 consecutive sessions
- Persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed contribute to a level of unauthorised absence at 10% or above.
- Lack of adherence to the dates agreed for any authorised leave of absence without reasonable justification.
- Pupils identified in a public place whilst excluded from school (during the first five days of the exclusion period) without reasonable justification.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised leave of absence by the Local Authority following discussions with the school. The local authority can give each parent or carer a fine of £60 each, per pupil, which rises to £120 per





parent carer, per pupil if it is not paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid after 28 days parents and carers may be prosecuted for the learner's absence from school.

### Court proceedings

If the penalty notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28 days, the Local Authority may prosecute for the offence. This prosecution is for the offence of failing to secure attendance at school. Prosecutions are brought under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The Local Authority can also use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the pupil. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment.

### Rewarding good attendance

We are aware absence is unavoidable for some of our pupils. When considering the use of rewards, we therefore make sure we do not discriminate against people who are absent due to medical or other unavoidable reasons.

Different schools operate different systems to reward attendance appropriate to the needs and understanding of their cohort. Our time for Lime campaign celebrates the learner attendance achievement with postcards home to celebrate the success. This incorporates celebrating the little successes.

### Data and monitoring

We monitor our learner's attendance through daily contact and weekly reports on Arbor. We look at absence reports on a weekly basis to track concerns which may arise due to absence. This regular review ensures that interventions are timely and appropriate. In addition to the weekly reporting, the trust supports school to monitor attendance every month, half term, term and annual basis to review the actions in place ensuring that there is support for families.

We analyse all patterns of absence and try to ensure that parents and carers are informed of any child's attendance that fails below the national average to prevent learners from becoming a persistent absentee. The Department for Education (DfE) states that if a learner misses more than 10% of schooling within an agreed period for whatever reason then they fall into this category.

Our interventions may include, but is not limited to:

- Writing to parents or carers if a learners attendance becomes a concern.
- Offering support from the family support worker to support with removing barriers for attendance.
- Request that they provide evidence to support learner absences.
- Requesting that parents and carers attend a school attendance meeting.
- Making an early help referral
- Referring to the local authority for support

As part of our data analysis and monitoring process we regularly assess the outcomes of support or interventions to measure the impact they are having on the learner and their attendance. As part of the process, we will continue to support families to find out and resolve any barriers to regular attendance through family support, including signposting or referring to other agencies.

We will work with the local authority to ensure that the school is providing appropriate support/ referrals as legal action for out school is a last resort, but sometimes cannot be avoided.

The Board of Trustees have a responsibility for attendance at the school. Governors regularly monitor the effectiveness of the attendance management strategies and attendance policy. The School Business Manager provides regular updates in regard to both attendance and punctuality to the Headteacher and Governors.

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