



Larkfields Infant and Junior School

Attendance Policy

Autumn 2023

Attendance Policy

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Attendance Policy

The aim of this policy is to promote regular school attendance of Larkfields Infant and Junior School pupils. We are committed to working with and supporting parents and our pupils to ensure that every child achieves the highest level of attendance at school.

This policy seeks to ensure that all pupils receive a quality full-time education which maximises opportunities for every pupil to reach their full potential. Consistent attendance at school allows children to experience continuity in their learning, enables them to make good levels of progress and allows children to develop stable friendship groups within school.

Legal Requirements

Absence from school is a legal matter. It is the duty of those with parental responsibility of a child of school age to ensure they receive the appropriate full-time education. Parents whose children are on the school register have a duty to ensure their children attend regularly and on time. If parents fail to do so, they can be taken to court for not fulfilling their legal responsibilities and this may result in a fine.

The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the Head teacher. However, it is the role of the local authority to encourage and enforce the law on school attendance. Therefore, the local authority can instigate legal action.

Responsibilities

Parents

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually.

Parents will:

- Keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum.
- Provide a specific reason for their child's absence before or on the first day of their child's absence (before 8.45am).
- Ensure their child arrives at school on time.
- Provide a reason for any lateness.
- Work closely with the Head Teacher to resolve any problems that may prevent their child from attending school regularly.
- Take family holidays during school holiday periods.

Governing Body

The Governing Body will:

- Delegate powers to the Head Teacher to ensure all stakeholders are aware and comply with the policy.

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- Nominate a link governor to liaise with the Head Teacher regularly and to report back to the Governing Body.
- Ensure the attendance policy is followed.
- Take responsibility for ensuring this policy is maintained and updated regularly.

School

Larkfields Infant and Junior School have a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils for both morning and afternoon sessions.

Larkfields Infant and Junior School will:

- Provide a safe and stimulating environment for their pupils.
- Promote good attendance.
- Meet the legal requirements as set out by the Government and Local Authority.
- Give a high priority to attendance and punctuality.
- Develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence through effective monitoring and intervention.
- Consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidelines of the law.
- Develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long-term absenteeism.
- Establish and encourage open communication between home and school.
- Establish and develop procedures to support the reintegration of long-term absentees.
- Develop procedures for formal referrals to Early Help and other outside agencies.
- To provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of the resources available.

Attendance

Each school day is split into two sessions. The register is a legal document and schools are not permitted to mark a pupil as absent if they are not in school when the register is taken. As part of our safeguarding procedures, attendance is monitored daily with phone calls made to understand unreported absences.

To achieve 100% attendance your child must be present, at register time, for all sessions. There are two types of absence: authorised and unauthorised. All absences will affect a pupil's attendance.

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is one that the school has approved.

Acceptable reasons for absence include:

- Genuine illness

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- Specialist medical appointments that are not able to be arranged outside of school hours
- Days set aside for religious observance
- Emergency medical appointments
- Other exceptional circumstances (this is at the discretion of the Head Teacher and Governing Body and is based on the facts of each individual case. The Head teacher will also determine the length of absence to be authorised.)

At all times we will act in a fair and consistent manner, adhering to the principles within Nottinghamshire's Code of Conduct: <https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/education/school-discipline-and-exclusions/attendance-absence-truancy>

Please be aware that the following reasons for absence are not acceptable:

- Tired
- 'Under the weather'
- 'Poorly'
- 'Not themselves'
- 'Covid symptoms' (*please explain clearly what symptoms of illness the child has*)
- Heatstroke (*unless diagnosed by a doctor and evidence submitted to the school*)
- Birthdays

Unauthorised Absence

An unauthorised absence is one where the school has not approved the absence or where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

The following reasons for absence will not be authorised:

- Family Holidays
- Availability of cheap holidays or travel arrangements
- Birthdays
- Standard dental or optician check ups (without evidence of the appointment)
- Where illness is regular and there is no proof available from a doctor.

Illness

Parents are expected to notify the **school office** to offer a reason for a period of absence on the first day of the absence before the start of school. Parents can contact the school via

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phone, email and messaging on the school app. If the reason for absence is not known this will be recorded in the register as unauthorised until a reason is established.

Parents are expected to regularly update the school about the child's welfare/illness in the case of an absence exceeding two days unless otherwise agreed by the school.

If we feel it is appropriate, we have an obligation to suggest when a child should really be at school rather than being kept at home. We refer parents to this NHS guide to support their decision-making: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Each pupil's annual report will show the total possible sessions the pupil could have attended in the year and how many authorised and unauthorised absences the pupil has in this period.

Lates

Larkfields Infants and Junior School promotes punctuality. It is important that pupils arrive on time in order not to miss teaching time and disrupt lessons by arriving late.

Children are expected to be in school between 8.45am (8:40am for the Junior school) and 8.50am. The morning register is taken at 8:50am at both schools. Pupils arriving after this time will be recorded as 'late' (L).

If a child arrives at school after 9:15am without an acceptable prior explanation, this may be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Any child arriving late needs to enter the building via the relevant school office so that they can be signed in to school.

Absent circumstances beyond parental control

We understand that there are circumstances out of our control that may cause a child to be late or absent from school (such as poor weather conditions, bad traffic or a car breaking down) however we expect parents to exhaust all means available to them before keeping their child off school.

If no reasonable attempts have been made to ensure the child goes to school, the absence will be unauthorised.

Monitoring Attendance

The school will review the attendance of all pupils on a regular basis (*see appendix 1*).

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Monitoring

The school monitors attendance each half term and children identified as having attendance less than 90% will be sent a letter and attendance monitored. This will be reviewed each half term for improvements.

Where the school identifies that attendance has become a problem or has not improved after a monitoring period parents will be invited to attend a meeting with the Head teacher or SENDCO.

An action plan will be developed with parents and school to support improved attendance. If the parent does not attend the meeting or after such a meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve, further involvement from outside agencies may be made including Family Service, Early Help or other outside agencies depending on the reasons for absence.

Honesty

Above all please be truthful about the reason why your child is absent from school. There are an increasing number of instances where a child's absence is reported as illness when in fact, a holiday is being taken. It is important that there is honesty and respect between home and school and that your child is not put in a difficult position with trusted adults and friends. The school will also monitor sibling attendance closely where similar absences are being recorded.

As previously mentioned, If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and this may lead to a penalty notice.

Applying for a Leave of Absence

Parents must notify the school in advance if they need to take a pupil out of class. For unavoidable medical appointments parents must provide evidence of the appointment, a copy of which is held on the pupil's record.

If parents intend to take pupils out of school for any other reason a 'leave of Absence' form must be completed at least four weeks prior to the event if possible. The application will be considered by the Head teacher and a response will be given within five working days. If at this point, parents wish to appeal against the decision, they should put their case in writing within 10 working days to be addressed to the Chair of Governors of the school. This appeal will be considered by a designated governor on behalf of the Chair. A final response will be issued after a further 10 working days.

Fines

The Governing Body has agreed that it may be necessary to issue a fixed term penalty notice (fine) in some cases of unauthorised absence. A fixed term penalty notice may be issued when a child has had more than 6 unauthorised absences (3 days) or has been late (i.e. 15 minutes after the official start of the school day) 10 times in any rolling

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6 week period.

The penalty is set at £120 and should be paid within 28 days of the date on which the notice starts. If the penalty is paid within 21 days of the date on which the notice starts the sum is reduced to £60. The penalty will be issued per child, per parent (including any person who has daily responsibility for the child,) once within any rolling 6-week period. The notice is payable to the Local Authority. **Once a penalty notice has been issued there is no right of appeal.**

Parents should complete an absence request form at least 4 weeks prior to the absence. It is during this time that parents can also submit any evidence to the school that they believe explains the absence as 'exceptional'. This is reviewed by the Head teacher when making their decision to authorise or unauthorise an absence.

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

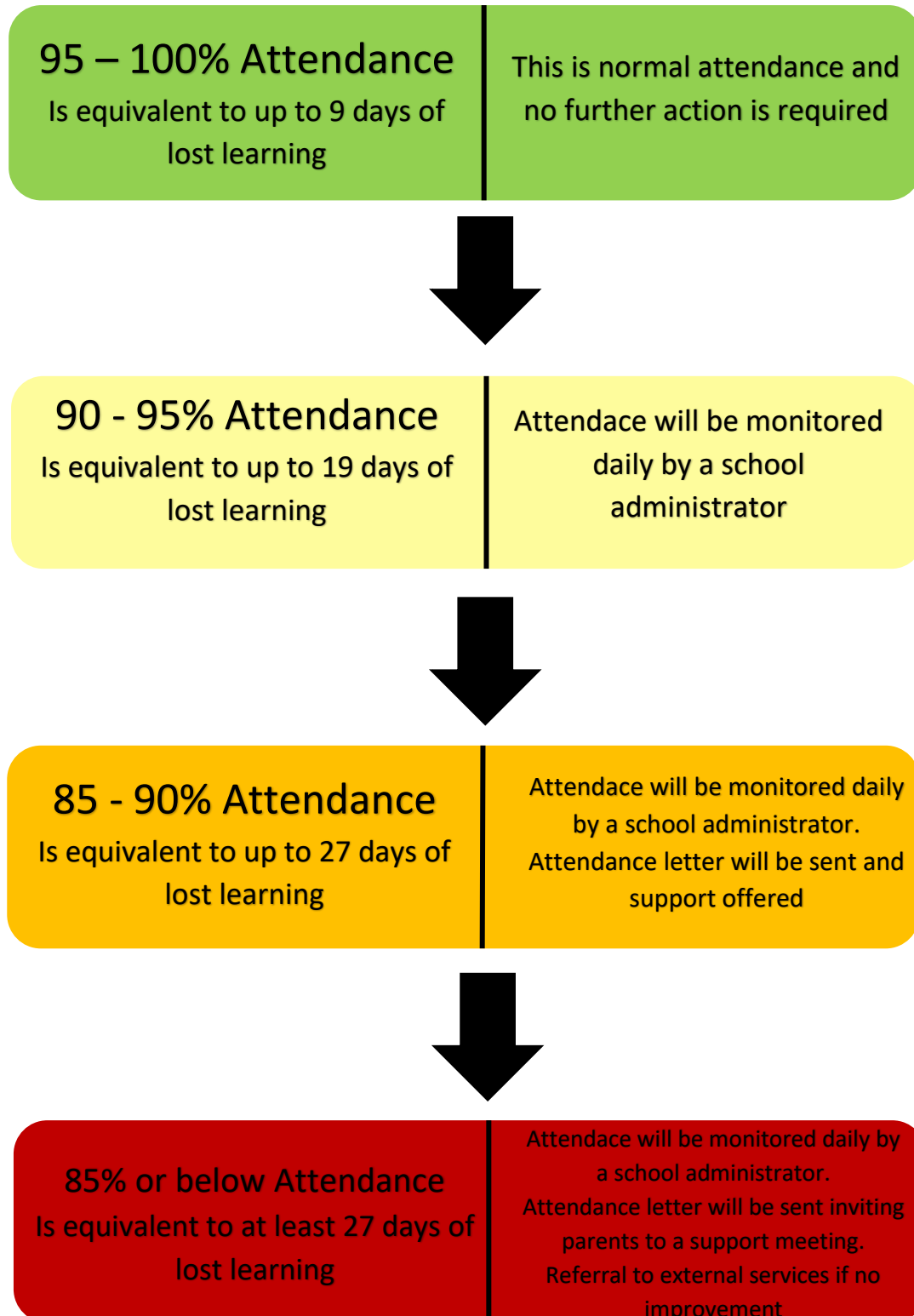
Linked Policy and procedures

Children Missing from Home and Care Joint Procedures

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Appendix 1

Attendance monitoring procedures



Appendix 2

The standard Late Letter



Larkfields Infant and Junior Schools

Coronation Road, Nuthall, NG16 1EP
Tel: 0115 913 7730 (Infant) / 0115 919 4343 (Junior)
Email: office@larkfields-inf.notts.sch.uk / office@larkfields-jun.notts.sch.uk



DATE

PARENTS NAME AND ADDRESS

Monitoring Punctuality and Attendance

We have noticed from our records that *CHILDS NAME* has been late for school on X occasions this half term since XXX until today, XXX. As a result, we will be monitoring his/her punctuality, her attendance is xx.

The school day starts at 8.45am and we ask that children arrive on the school grounds from 8.40am onwards so that they are ready to enter the building on time. Educational input at the start of the school day is a very important element of your child's education. Arriving late can not only unsettle your child, but also disrupt the rest of the class. We request that you ensure your child is on time for school every day so that they benefit fully from their time in school.

If a rapid improvement is not seen in the next xxx weeks (DATE) there will be a fixed penalty notice from the Enforcement Team sent to you and this will be £120.

A copy of this letter will be placed on *CHILDS NAME* record and will transfer when he/she leaves the school and moves on to the Juniors.

Yours sincerely

Mrs N. Irwin
Head Teacher

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Appendix 3

The standard Monitoring Absence Letter



Larkfields Infant and Junior Schools

Coronation Road, Nuthall, NG16 1EP
Tel: 0115 913 7730 (Infant) / 0115 919 4343 (Junior)
Email: office@larkfields-inf.notts.sch.uk / office@larkfields-jun.notts.sch.uk



DATE

NAME AND ADDRESS

Dear NAME,

Monitoring Attendance for *CHILD'S NAME*

As you will be aware, attendance at school is important for every child's attainment and rate of progress. *CHILD'S NAME* attendance this year to date is XX%. If this continues it means that he/she will be missing up to 6 weeks of school a year and it will be very difficult for *CHILD'S NAME* to keep up with the work his/her class are doing. Pupils with an attendance rate of less than 90% are classified as persistent absentees.

In view of this, please be aware that the school will be monitoring *CHILD'S NAME* attendance over the next few weeks. If there is no improvement, school may feel it necessary to refer the case to Nottinghamshire County Council Early Help.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

N. Irwin
Head Teacher

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Appendix 4

The standard Authorised Absence Letter



Larkfields Infant and Junior Schools

Coronation Road, Nuthall, NG16 1EP

Tel: 0115 913 7730 (Infant) / 0115 919 4343 (Junior)

Email: office@larkfieldsinfant.org / office@larkfields-jun.notts.sch.uk



Date

RE: REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM-TIME

Dear Parents of XXXX,

I acknowledge receipt of your request for leave of absence for *Child's name* for *x* day to *Reason*. *Date*.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 make clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are *exceptional circumstances*.

On this occasion, I will ~~authorise~~ the request, and it will be authorised in the register.

Yours sincerely

Mrs N. Irwin
Head Teacher

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Appendix 5

The standard Unauthorised Absence Letter



Larkfields Infant and Junior Schools

Coronation Road, Nuthall, NG16 1EP
Tel: 0115 913 7730 (Infant) / 0115 919 4343 (Junior)
Email: office@larkfieldsinfant.org or office@larkfields-jun.notts.sch.uk



ADDRESS

DATE

RE: REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM-TIME

Dear xxx,

I acknowledge receipt of a request for leave of absence for **CHILDS NAME** for **X** day **DATE**.

I have to advise you that I am unable to authorise the holiday as the details of your absence do not meet the threshold for "exceptional circumstances".

If an absence is not authorised by the school, the pupil's attendance is deemed to be irregular. Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, his/her parent/carer(s) are guilty of an offence. Please also note that if you have more than one child, each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter.

The Local Authority may take formal action against you for failure to comply with the law. Penalty notices are issued as an alternative to prosecution, but may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to the attendance issues.

Therefore, your child's irregular attendance could result in one of the following actions:

1. A Penalty Notice being issued. Each penalty notice is £60 if paid within the first 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22-28 days. Failure to pay will result in prosecution.
2. Prosecution. This could lead to fines of up to £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

The Supreme Court in April 2017 clarified the definition of regular attendance to be 'attendance in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'.

Therefore, if an absence is not authorised by the school, the pupil's attendance is deemed to be irregular.

There will be circumstances where it is considered that a Penalty Notice is not appropriate. This may be due to a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to:

- (a) Repeated offences indicating that Penalty Notices are not bringing about a change in behaviour, for example, repeated unauthorised term time leave.
- (b) The high level of unauthorised absence, including extended unauthorised term time leave cases.
- (c) The complex or long-standing nature of the particular case. In such cases, the Local Authority may consider instigating a prosecution under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 as an alternative to a Penalty Notice.

For further information, please read the schools' joint 'Attendance Policy' on our website www.larkfields-inf.notts.sch.uk or www.larkfields-jun.notts.sch.uk

Yours sincerely

Mrs. N. Irwin
Head Teacher
On behalf of Governing Body



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Appendix 6

The standard Penalty Notice Letter



Larkfields Infant and Junior Schools

Coronation Road, Nuthall, NG16 1EP

Tel: 0115 913 7730 (Infant) / 0115 919 4343 (Junior)

Email office@larkfieldsinfant.org / office@larkfields-jun.notts.sch.uk



Date

Address

Dear *Name*

Holiday Absence in Term Time – Penalty Notice

On *Date* we wrote to you to explain that Larkfields Infant School would not ~~authorise~~ *X* day's request for a holiday. We also informed you that this could lead to a Penalty Notice being issued to you.

I am now writing to advise you that a request has been made to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice for failing to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

Yours sincerely

Mrs N. Irwin
Head Teacher

On behalf of Governing Body