

Lavington Park Federation Policy

Attendance and Punctuality



This policy has been amended with the Department of Education advice on attending school during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020. The comments directly relating to this pandemic and the impact on attendance, are written in red on this policy.

Reviewed by Helen Martin
 September 2020

Signed

Approved by Teaching & Learning Committee, October 2020

Next Review January 2021

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Both attendance and punctuality are matters of serious concern for our two schools within the Lavington Park Federation, as they are factors which have a significant impact on children and their ability to learn effectively. The Federation's belief that regular, punctual attendance is vital is stressed to parents at every opportunity.

In September 2013 a letter to parents was prepared by the Governing Body of the Lavington Park Federation; this was updated by the GB Chair In May 2015 and sent to all parents of children in the Federation, setting out the principles of LPF's Attendance Policy and the limited circumstances in which time off might be authorised by the Head Teacher.

It is now our policy that the Head Teacher will write a letter to parents in all cases where a child's attendance or punctuality is causing concern.

Our Parents' Information booklet, updated and issued to all parents every year, includes this comment :

<p>Can I take my child out of school during term time?</p>	<p><u>Attendance and punctuality are vital matters for us</u> : term-time absences have a significant, detrimental impact on children's learning - and if we do not meet the attendance targets set by government, our school's reputation is damaged.</p> <p>It is now firm government and county policy that <u>taking holiday in term time is not permitted</u>, and Mrs Martin is only allowed to authorise term time absence in the most exceptional of circumstances. If you consider it absolutely unavoidable that your child is away from school during term time, you must make an appointment to talk to Mrs Martin, well in advance, and you will be asked to complete a 'Withdrawal From Learning' form.</p> <p>Please also note that in order to address an increasing problem with early afternoon pick-ups the official time of afternoon registration is now 3.00pm : an unauthorised absence will be recorded for any child not present in school at this time, for reasons other than medical appointments.</p> <p>In common with other schools in West Sussex and across the country, we are obliged to operate by the County's Fixed Penalty scheme, whereby unauthorised absences over ten sessions in any one term (a school session is a morning or afternoon – there are two sessions every day) are likely to generate Fixed Penalty fines for parents.</p> <p>Do please note that the scheme is NOT administered by the school and no money paid in fines ever reaches the school. Once a referral has been made the matter is entirely out of our hands; everything is dealt with solely at County level.</p>
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Our information pack distributed to all new parents joining the school in September or part way through the year includes this comment :

Attendance

Parents have a statutory obligation to ensure their child attends school. In line with the Department for Education's guidelines, our Head Teacher is only permitted to grant permission for term-time absence in very exceptional circumstances - which will not include family holidays. Requests for time off can only be authorised by the Head Teacher, and in the unlikely event that absence is authorised she will decide the length of time that it is appropriate for a child to be away from school.

Parents who feel they need to consider taking their child out of school during term time must speak directly to Mrs Martin, well in advance. A 'Withdrawal From Learning' form will need to be completed.

You should be aware that we are bound to adhere to the West Sussex County Council 'fixed penalty' policy for unauthorised absence. In effect this means that should your child miss 10 or more sessions of school for unauthorised reasons in any one term (a session is a morning or an

afternoon) WSCC's policy is to consider issuing a fixed penalty fine - which applies to every adult who has responsibility for the child. Note that WSCC administers this penalty system, and our Federation does not benefit in any way from any fines imposed.

Absence due to illness

Sickness absence is normally authorised. We do expect parents to telephone the school office before or around 9am to report that their child will be absent that day and explain why; we also expect parents to do this on each day that the child is absent, unless they can advise a specific number of days' absence based on the advice of a medical professional, or in line with any 'exclusion' period the school requires based on the information published by Public Health England (for example, we strictly enforce 48 hours absence after an episode of vomiting or diarrhoea).

Where there is cause for concern (eg frequent or extended sickness absence) our schools will work alongside external agencies to ensure children's health needs are being met. Once attendance at school starts to cause concern, we will make a referral to the school nursing team requesting a health assessment.

Our schools keep records of children's specific health needs so that they and their parents can be properly supported - and where necessary, we consult with parents to agree an Individual Health Care Plan.

Absence due to Coronavirus

(taken from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year> on 6.9.20)

"Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

To make sure schools record this accurately and consistently, we have made changes to the regulations² governing school attendance registers to add a new category of non-attendance - 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'.

This category must only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)³
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend a given session, this new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes."

Therefore, parents will not bring their children to school if

- they display any symptoms of Covid-19 and while they are being tested
- while they are waiting for the result of a test for Covid-19
- if they are self-isolating if a member of their family or close contact has tested positive
- if they are quarantining from a country where the the quarantine rules apply, from the latest Government guidance
- if the parent is unsure of their symptoms and decides to be tested.
- They are adhering to any other self-isolation rules brought on by the Government
- If there is a local lockdown in the area
- If there is a lockdown decided by Public Health England, following a positive result within their school bubble.

In the case of absence caused by Covid-19, but the child is not unwell at all, and their parents are able to support home learning (that they are not unwell), the child will be supported in their academic education by lessons provided by Class Dojo.

Term time absence requests

Time off in term time can only be authorised at the discretion of the Head Teacher, although this is unlikely to happen in any other than the most exceptional of circumstances.

Parents who feel they must ask for authorisation of term-time absence must speak directly to the Head Teacher, well in advance, when they will be asked to complete a 'Withdrawal from Learning' request (see Appendix). Subsequently, the Head teacher will write to the parents, informing them of her decision regarding the requested absence. Written confirmation of any dates of absence will always be required from the parent, to log in the class register.

In 2015 the Governing Body agreed that, effective from June 2015, the West Sussex County Council 'Fixed Penalty' scheme for unauthorised absence would be followed. If a child misses ten or more sessions of school time within a term, the school sends an FPN referral form to the Pupil Entitlement team at WSCC. (When such a referral is made, the parent(s) concerned are informed in writing, in a letter from the Head Teacher.)

It must be noted that this policy is based on guidance issued by the Department of Education.

Punctuality

Following difficulties with persistent late arrivals, all parents are also encouraged to bring their children to school in good time. Under usual circumstances, a Breakfast Club - open to both Graffham and Duncton children - runs at Graffham school from 7.45am every morning. Duncton children attending Breakfast Club are escorted to the minibus to travel to Duncton at 8.40am; at both sites, playground and/or classroom supervision is provided from 8.45am. After 9.00am playground entrances are locked, and subsequent arrivals must enter through the front door of the school and be signed in on the 'late' sheet at the office before going to their classrooms. **Under the circumstances for Covid-19, we are only running Breakfast club on 3 days a week at Graffham Infant School, and a morning support for early drop off at Duncton Junior School, and there is no minibus running between schools.**

Children not present when the class teacher takes the morning register but who subsequently arrive are marked 'Late' in the register. **The registers now close at 9.30 am due to the staggered start to the school day due to social distancing measures.**

It should be noted that each morning, office staff look through the registers : if any child is not present and we have not received any information to explain this, it is our policy to telephone parents by 9.30am.

Parents are also telephoned if they have given insufficient information about the reason for their child's absence in an email or answerphone message.

APPENDIX - Withdrawal From Learning Form



Withdrawal from Learning

Pupils are only in school for 190 days each year

This leaves 175 other days for holidays and other activities

90% attendance is the same as a day off every fortnight and is designated "persistent absence" by the authorities

Absence for holiday - barring exceptional circumstances - will never be authorised



Parent name and address		Please note :	
		Head teachers are not able to grant absence for holidays during term time	
		If a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in any one term (the same as 5 full days), then a referral will be made for West Sussex County Council to consider issuing a Fixed Penalty.	
		Use this form for all absence other than sickness and essential medical appointments	
		Return this form to school <u>at least one week before</u> the requested absence	
		Use a separate form for each child and each absence	
Parent to complete this section			
Name of child		Class	
Is this the first request for absence this term?		YES / NO	
Is this the first request for absence this academic year?		YES / NO	
Dates requested FROM TO		Number of school days absence	
Reason for absence			
Parent signature		Date	
This section for school office use only			
Current attendance % year to date			
Number of days authorised sickness absence year to date			
Number of sessions authorised medical absence year to date			
Colour code : Green / Red			
Green = 90% attendance or more - Satisfactory			
Red = less than 90% attendance - Unsatisfactory			
Head Teacher to complete this section on behalf of the Governing Body			
Your request is approved and the absence detailed above is authorised			
Your request is not approved			
If the pupil is absent as proposed above it will be recorded as unauthorised for the following reason :			
Head Teacher's signature		Date	