

LCC Attendance Team Guidance for Parents and Carers

Working Together to Improve School Attendance

“Improving attendance is everyone’s business”

This guidance has been produced by the Leicestershire County Council’s Attendance Team it has been designed to help parents understand the expectations placed upon them in relation to educating their child/children and to understand the expectations placed on Schools and Local Authorities in relation to their children.

The Attendance Team’s aim is to provide schools and parents, throughout the county, with advice and guidance in relation to children who are struggling to attend school on a regular basis

On 6 May 2022 the Department for Education (DfE) published [Working together to improve school attendance](#).

This set out expectations for schools and Local Authorities, parts of which will be summarised in this guidance. There is an expectation that the guidance will be made statutory **no earlier than September 2023**.

Until the guidance is made statutory schools and the Local Authorities are expected to continue to implement the changes introduced through the attendance guidance.

If you have any concerns in relation to your child’s attendance and would like to discuss the matter please contact the team by e-mail to attendanceteam@leics.gov.uk or by telephone on 0116 3056743.

Leicestershire County Council’s vision for school attendance

At Leicestershire County Council we recognise that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school.

Therefore, to improve attendance at all stages of a child’s life, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance. This can be achieved by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

We recognise that school attendance is “everyone’s business”.

The overall objective for the Attendance Team at Leicestershire County Council is for **every child to be in school every day, and on time**.

However, we recognise that not every child is the same and that to reach this outcome we must support all children regardless of their background and taking into consideration their particular needs.

The Attendance Team will always recommend following a graduated approach in relation to pupils with low attendance, assessing why they are not attending regularly, creating a plan to support improvement in attendance, implementing the plan and reviewing regularly to see if improvements have been made.

By attending school regularly children and young people ensure they reach their maximum life chances and academic potential.

When attending school regularly, they are given access to new experiences, new opportunities to learn and develop new skills. These are not limited to academic skills, but social, emotional, and behavioural development too. Being in school with their peers will enhance their life skills in making friends, developing confidence and self-esteem, teamwork, inclusion and learning to be resilient. [DfE attendance statistics](#)

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As with all government guidance, Local Authorities and Schools are legally obliged to take the new school attendance guidance into account when exercising their functions.

The definition of Persistent Absence and Severe Absence

A pupil becomes a '**persistent absentee**' (**PA**) when their attendance **drops to 90%** or below for any reason whether the absences are authorised or not. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 school days; equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year). Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

A pupil becomes '**severely absent**' (**SA**) when their attendance **drops to 50%** or below for any reason, whether the absences are authorised or not.

As **persistent absence** is often a symptom of wider issues in a child's life, parents/carers, schools, local authorities, and their partners play a crucial role in overcoming barriers to attendance and ensuring all children can access the full-time education to which they are entitled.

Whilst the law states that it is the responsibility of the parent or carer to ensure their child attends school regularly, Leicestershire County Council recommends a collaborative approach between parents, schools, and other agencies to ensure that the appropriate support to resolve barriers to attendance is put in place.

It is the Local Authorities aim to identify and address the underlying needs of a pupil and to do the following: -

Support schools to identify and address barriers to attendance and ensuring that appropriate support and adjustments are in place in relation to: -

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Victims of bullying
- Unmet Health Needs
- Challenging Family Circumstances and previous Trauma
- Children at risk in their community

Target Cohorts at risk of reduced attendance

Focus on specific support for attendance of specific groups of children who are more at risk of not accessing a formal and full-time education including: -

- Children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans)
- Children at SEN Support
- Children with social workers including children looked after
- Specific ethnic groups
- Children who are also young carers

Roles and responsibilities

Everyone has a role to play in making sure that children can and do attend school full time. The following information details these roles and responsibilities.

The Local Authority

Leicestershire County Council has a statutory duty for school attendance, to:

- Track cases where pupils are regularly missing out on their education including: -
 - Children not on a school roll
 - Children Missing Education (CME)
 - Persistent absentees
 - Pupils attending alternative provision
 - Pupils on reduced timetables
 - Pupils receiving fixed term exclusions
 - Pupils transferring school (including fair access and managed move)

- Manage and track pupils whose parents have chosen to electively home educate
- Manage fixed penalty notice arrangements
- Manage fixed penalty notices for term time leave where a parent has knowingly allowed their child to be absent for the purposes of a holiday or to visit friends/relatives
- Pursue cases through the legal framework and ensure this brings about change if parent not engaging with school or the Local Authority.
- Issue child employment and performance licences
- Identify young carers and ensure they receive support at the earliest opportunity

Leicestershire County Council will support schools in improving pupil attendance.

The Attendance Team and Inclusion Service will work in the best interests of the child to ensure the child is able to return to full time education as soon as possible.

Staff across the Local Authority will: -

- Work with school-based attendance officers to understand attendance issues at whole school and individual level
- Advise around attendance policy and practice in school
- Support schools to identify and review children who are attendance concerns to create a plan for improved attendance
- Support schools in managing targeted cases through planning meetings and casework
- Provide Legal Intervention if required and circumstances deem that it is necessary.
- Progress School Attendance Orders
- Issue term time leave fines requested by the school
- Support schools to address individual needs that lead to a child not being offered a formal and full-time education

What children, families and partners can expect from the Local Authority

- Monitoring of pupils who are not attending regularly
- Attendance intervention from the earliest opportunity
- Consultation with keyworkers and caseworkers
- Monitoring of attendance for key priority groups
- Challenge to schools when a pupil is not receiving the full-time education that they are entitled to
- Early Help Support
- A zero-tolerance approach to holidays in term time
- Support at key transition phases to ensure continuation of education

- To liaise regularly with colleagues across education, health and care to ensure a multi-agency response
- Identify risk for children not attending school who may be engaged in other activities within the community to which they require support and guidance

Schools

School Leaders and Governors have a statutory responsibility for school attendance to: -

- Maintain an Admissions register
- Maintain an Attendance Register with marks recorded for each pupil at least twice a day (morning and afternoon minimum)
- Notify the Local Authority of any pupil who is:
 - Missing from Education (CME)
 - Receiving support via a reduced timetable
 - At risk of permanent exclusion
 - Requiring 6th day provision - following a permanent exclusion
 - On an unauthorised term time leave that will last 5 days or more
 - Persistently absent from school
 - Persistently late for school

What children, families and partners should expect from the school: -

- A senior leader with responsibility for attendance
- A clear attendance policy that is reviewed regularly and available on the school website
- Offer of a broad and balanced curriculum to engage pupils in education
- A register that is maintained and taken twice a day (minimum)
- Closure of the register after registration, with persistent lateness challenged and addressed
- 'First day calls' to parents where a child is absent, and no contact has been made by parents
- Monitoring and challenge when attendance levels are not in line with expectations
- Meetings with school staff to assess why the child is not attending and plan for supporting the re-engagement with education
- Requesting support for families at the earliest opportunity
- Escalation to the Local Authority when attendance is not improving
- For term time leave requests to only be authorised in exceptional circumstances
- Liaise with other schools where children from the same family attend

Parent/Carer

Parents and carers have a responsibility to ensure:-

- Their child attends school, on time and ready to learn
- They contact school at the earliest opportunity if their child is too unwell to attend
- They are open and honest with school staff, providing the reason for the absence
- They work with the school to seek appropriate support
- We expect parents and carers to:
 - Speak to school if their child is feeling slightly unwell, and be assured school will contact you if the child is feeling worse
 - Ensure if one child is unwell, their siblings continue to attend school
 - Book non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours
 - Not book holidays in Term Time
 - Not request term time leave unless for an exceptional circumstance (for example a funeral or bereavement)
 - Have good morning routines to ensure their child arrives at school on time
 - Have good evening routines and promote good sleep hygiene for their children
- Ask for support at the earliest opportunity
- To talk to school about concerns they have about their child's needs and work with the school to address them
- Build resilience to allow their child to attend
- Bring the child's medicine into school to ensure the child can continue to attend
- Where a school move has been agreed, ensure their child continues to attend their current school until they start their new school.
- To work in partnership with the school to promote good attendance if their child is struggling to attend or wants a 'day off' rather than agree absence

Children

We expect children and young people to:

- Go to bed on time to ensure a good night's sleep
- Have a good morning routine that allows you to leave the house on time
- Have all your equipment and books for the day, including your planner
- Arrive to school on time
- Engage in lessons
- Be polite and courteous to staff and other pupils
- Speak to school staff if something prevents you from attending regularly
- Let your parent/carer or school staff know if you are being bullied
- Let your parent/carer or school staff know if you are feeling anxious about something

- Not to ask your parent/carer for a day off
- If you are moving schools, continue to attend your current school until you start at your new school

If you require help or further support with regard to your child's attendance, please contact us at attendanceteam@leics.gov.uk