

LONGHILL HIGH SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Information Sheet B

Introduction:

This is a successful school and your son/daughter plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents/carers, students and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter
- Report to you at least termly on how your son/daughter is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events
- Run promotional events when parents/carers, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive late at school after the close of registration
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

If a student's attendance falls below 93%, parents/carers will receive a letter informing them that their son/daughter's attendance is below the expected level and that that the school will not be able to authorise any absence due to illness unless documentation from a health professional is received to verify this. This can be a doctor's note, hospital letter, appointment card, copy of prescription or packaging from prescribed medication.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or a Connexions worker, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us
- Provide documentation from a health professional as outlined above if your son/daughter's attendance is below 93% and you have received a letter informing you that their attendance is being tracked.

If your child is absent we will:

- Text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- We will also phone you if your child has an attendance of less than 93% to remind you that documentation will be required to authorise any absence due to illness
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Head of Year if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Student Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if attendance is a concern.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your son/daughter by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't, then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The Education Welfare Officer:

Our Education Welfare Officer is Ms Jackie Storey. Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to one of our Education Welfare Officers. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences or lateness persist, these Officers can request that the Local Authority use sanctions such as Fixed Penalty Notice fines or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They can be contacted on the school telephone number.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your son/daughter misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their Mentor getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.15am** and we expect your son/daughter to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked **at 8.20am** and your son/daughter will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your son/daughter arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head of Year to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your son/daughter to school on time.

Holidays in Term Time:

Our policy is **not to authorise any family holiday during term-time.**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your son/daughter's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to support us by not booking holidays during term time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for any other absence must be made in advance. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and will be referred to the Local Authority for the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice fine.

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your son/daughter has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your son/daughter's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the city.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Parent Guide and we ask for your full support.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parent/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parent/carers and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

By ticking the relevant box on the parent/student consent form, I agree to the above policy.