

Ludlow Church of England School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved By	School Performance Committee
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Regular school attendance is essential for securing a successful education. Parents and carers, together with our school staff and Local Academy Board (LAB) members, all have a part to play in ensuring full and punctual attendance from our students.

Staff and LAB members believe that:

- There is a link between regular attendance and academic achievement
- Regular attendance encourages students to benefit from a whole range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities
- Full attendance promotes a sense of belonging, personal responsibility and a good work ethic

The law states:

“The parent of every child of statutory school age is compelled by law to ensure such a child attends school unless there is a reasonable excuse for non- attendance. Failure to do so may result in legal action being taken against you.”

Parents/carers of registered students have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence is an offence and may be reported to the Education Access Service of Shropshire Council (EAS).

Every half-day absence from school is classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (i.e. illness or unavoidable cause).

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. This includes keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy and absences which have not been properly explained.

This is why it is important to **contact the school on the first day, and each successive day, of your child’s absence**, and to **send a written explanation for the period of the absence on the day of return**.

It is important that parents/carers contact the school at an early stage if there are problems relating to attendance. Your child’s tutor, or Curriculum Learning Tutor, will work with you to resolve issues swiftly and so ensure regular attendance. Students who are regularly absent will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. Outside agencies may be involved and legal action may be taken, resulting in fines and prosecution.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

1. *Illness and other legitimate reasons*

If a student is unfit for school, parents/carers are asked to contact the school on each day of absence before 9am. A call will be made by the school if we do not receive a message from parents/carers. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school as they arise. A written note will not necessarily be accepted as providing a valid reason for absence. It is not appropriate for the school to authorise shopping trips, days out, taking care of siblings, family birthdays. Routine dental appointments should be made out of term time, wherever possible. An absence may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for specialist medical appointments for part of a school day.

When a student returns, they must bring a written note signed by the parent/carer, explaining the absence. This must be handed to the child's tutor or directly to Reception. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence of a student's illness, such as a doctor's note, may be requested.

2. *Absence without explanation*

An absence without an explanation may result in the Attendance Officer contacting home. In some cases, this will also trigger a home visit from the Education Welfare Officer.

3. *Request for Leave of Absence*

As of 1 September 2013, there has been a change in the School Attendance Regulations. Where there used to be the option for Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during the term time in 'special circumstances' of up to ten days in a year, this has been removed.

Leave of absence may only be granted when an application has been made in advance and it is felt to be for an exceptional circumstance; the annual family holiday would not be deemed an exceptional circumstance. It remains a discretionary power of the Headteacher to authorise leave of absence. Leave will only be granted where proper procedures have been followed and the permission given by an authorised person within the school. Leave of absence will not be granted retrospectively.

Leave of absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- For the first term of Year 7
- For Year 11 students
- During examination periods

Each request for leave of absence will be considered individually and factors to be taken into consideration should include:

1. The child's previous attendance history. Children with less than 90% attendance are deemed as a persistent absentee, and are of concern to the EAS.
2. The child's stage of education.
3. The nature of the exceptional circumstances

Procedure

Parents/carers complete a request for leave of absence form (Ht1) and return it to the school for consideration. Parents/carers will be informed of the school's decision within 5 working days.

This form contains a "Formal Warning", informing the parent/carer that if the leave is not authorised, details will be passed to Shropshire's Education Access Service. The Council may, in following circumstances, issue a Formal Warning, serve a Fixed Penalty Notice (PN), or take court action in respect of non-school attendance for this and any further unauthorised absence:

- Parents/carers have not sought permission from the Headteacher before taking their child out of school for a holiday in term time
- The Headteacher has refused the request, but the absence occurs anyway; or
- A student has not returned to school by the agreed date, with no satisfactory explanation

4. *Lateness*

Students must arrive in school and go to their tutor rooms by 8.50am. Registration is taken at 9am. Parents/carers are expected to ensure that students arrive on time for registration.

Students arriving after this time will be marked as absent/late after registration has closed, and students will receive a lunchtime detention. Repeated lateness will result in after-school detentions. Parents/carers will be given 24 hours notice in writing of the after-school detention. The Education Welfare Officer may also issue a formal warning for persistent lateness, which could result in a fixed penalty fine issued by Shropshire Council.

5. *Truancy*

Truancy from school is treated as a serious issue and will always be communicated to parents/carers and, if appropriate, to the local Police.

6. *Attendance Monitoring*

The Attendance Officer works with the Assistant Head and Curriculum Learning Tutors to monitor students' attendance, and may contact parents/carers if attendance falls below 95%. Parents/carers are required to keep the school informed of the reasons for their child's absence. Failure to provide a reason for absence will be followed up by the Attendance Officer, who will write to request a reason for absence.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) monitors attendance on a weekly basis and identifies particular causes for concern. Where a student's attendance becomes patchy or drops below our school target (96%), the EWO will contact the parent/carer. If non-attendance continues, Shropshire Council may prosecute or issue a fixed penalty fine.

Guidance for schools

On September 2013, there was a change in the School Attendance Regulations. Where there used to be the option for Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during the term time in 'special circumstances' of up to ten days in a year, this has been removed.

Headteachers are now only allowed to authorise any leave of absence when an application has been made in advance, and it is felt to be for an exceptional circumstance; the annual family holiday would not be deemed an exceptional circumstance.

- It remains a discretionary power of the Headteacher to authorise leave of absence.
- Leave will only be granted where proper procedures have been followed and the permission given by an authorised person within the school.
- Leave of absence will not be granted retrospectively.
- Leave of absence can only be authorised by the school that the child is attending.

Leave of absence can never be authorised in the following circumstances:

- For the first term of reception, year 3 and year 7 (i.e. transition periods)
- For year 11 students
- During examination periods

- Each request for leave of absence will be considered individually and factors to be taken into consideration should include:
 1. The child's previous attendance history. Children with less than 90% attendance are deemed as of concern by the EAS.
 2. The child's stage of education.
 3. The nature of the exceptional circumstances.

Procedure

- Parents/carers complete a request for leave of absence form (HT1) and return it to the school for consideration.
- Parents/carers are informed of the school's decision (within 5 working days).
- If the absence is not to be authorised, the ***EWO must receive a copy of this communication with the parents/carers at the same time*** - in such cases a formal Warning may be served.
- If a Warning has been served and the absence is taken and the conditions are in line with the Code of Conduct, a Fixed Penalty Notice (PN) will be served.
- If the PN is not paid, the Council will prosecute for the absence under the Code of Conduct Regulations.