

POLICY TITLE: Student Attendance

STATUS: Non-Statutory

DATE of REVIEW: July 2021



Introduction

The Latimer Arts College aims to encourage every student to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance in order to take full advantage of the learning experiences available to them. The College adopts the Government definition of good attendance as being 96% or above.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that our expectations are clear: that students arrive on time and attend regularly. We will actively promote these expectations and encourage our students to achieve them. Where these expectations are not met we will aim to identify and address the barriers that prevent this.

This policy applies to all staff, governors, students and parents/carers of the College. We will ensure that all parents/carers and other working partners are aware of our attendance policy by highlighting it in our annual Information for Parents and Carers booklet, on our College website, through various College communications and by raising awareness at meetings with parents/carers. Students will also be made aware of the policy during transition to the College, through tutor time sessions, assemblies and workshops.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a student is required to attend regularly at the school where they are a registered pupil. The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the College is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter / message will the absence be authorised.

Guidance Informing the Policy

- Education Act 1996 which states if any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent/carer is guilty of an offence
- Pupil Regulations 2006 amended September 2016
- Parental Responsibility Measures – Penalty Notices (fines)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education DFE September 2021
- Educating Children with Health Needs DFE 2013
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions August 2017
- School Attendance DFE July 2021
- Parental Responsibility Measures March 2020
- Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) local Code of Conduct with regards to issuing of Penalty Notice

Responsibilities

Maintaining high standards of attendance at The Latimer Arts College is the responsibility of everyone in the College community: students, parent/carers, and all staff/governors.

College Staff and Governors

The College has a legal responsibility for maintaining registers and taking the register twice a day. The College also has a responsibility for reporting absence to the Local Authority as part of our safeguarding procedures.

Attendance is the responsibility of all College staff. Staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. The College will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents/carers.

The College will celebrate and reward students who achieve our expectations of regular, good attendance and those who have shown sustained improvement.

Form Tutors will share attendance information with students during the designated tutor period focusing on the link between attendance and achievement.

Achievement Leaders will promote high attendance and punctuality through assemblies, individual meetings with students and groups of students, always reinforcing the link between attendance and achievement.

The College has an Attendance Team which monitors students closely and will communicate attendance matters to parents/carers via text, telephone, email, letter and through the College website.

Students

Students are encouraged to become independent young people taking responsibility for their attendance and punctuality. All students are expected to attend College and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. Students who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their Form Tutor, and if the need should arise, from their Achievement Leader.

Parents/Carers

The Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that registered students of school age attend school regularly and punctually and that they receive an education suitable for their aptitude and ability. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends College regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.

If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents/carers are requested to notify the College on the first day of absence. A student's absence from College will be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received from the parent/carer. Parent/carers will be informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parent/carers whose child's attendance is a cause for congratulation or concern will be contacted.

Definition of Absence

Absence will be recorded using the codes outlined by the Department for Education Guidance on School Attendance. There are only two categories of absence from school: Authorised (approved) and Unauthorised (not approved).

By law, only the Principal (or their delegate) can approve an absence from school.

Authorised Absence

'Authorised absence' means that the College has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to not be present, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence i.e. the student was ill or 'prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause'.

Possible types of authorised (approved) absence (this list is not exhaustive):

- Off-site educational activity
- Dual Registered – attending at another educational establishment
- At an interview with prospective employers or another educational establishment
- Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- Educational visit or trip
- Work experience
- Leave of absence – i.e. for bereavement, funeral
- Medical absence for appointments
- Illness – evidence should be provided where possible (e.g. appointment cards, copies of prescribed medication) particularly for frequent absences
- Religious observance
- Exclusion from school

Unauthorised Absence

If a student is not in College and an explanation is not forthcoming or the College is dissatisfied with the explanation, the student will have an "unauthorised absence" recorded in the register. Examples of unauthorised (not approved) absences are (this list is not exhaustive):

- Absence due to birthday, shopping for uniform, looking after family members
- Holiday in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed to by the Principal, in line with changes to the law implemented in 2013
- Late arrival to school after the register has closed has to be recorded as an unauthorised absence

All absence – authorised and unauthorised – will be analysed and subject to challenge to ensure that any concern regarding frequency, pattern or validity is acted upon swiftly.

The Policy in Practice

Punctuality

Students who arrive late to registration are recorded as L (late before registration closes). First registration takes place **at the start of Lesson 1 at 8.30am**. Students are expected to be on the College site by 8.25am to avoid them being late for registration. Staff will supervise the entrances to the College ("late gate") and record students who arrive late. Students who are late will receive a lunchtime detention on the day in line with the College Behaviour for Learning Policy and parent/carers will be notified. Persistent late arrival will be challenged by Form Tutors and could result in parents/carers and students being asked to attend an attendance meeting with the Attendance Team.

Students who arrive after 8.30am must sign in at Student Services Reception and will be challenged about their reason for their late arrival: this will be followed up with contact to parents/carers.

Students are expected to be punctual to all lessons, if they are late for a lesson they will receive a lunchtime detention on the day in line with the College Behaviour for Learning Policy and parent/carers will be notified.

Registration

Registers will be taken electronically promptly at 8.30am and at 1.00pm. Registers will close at 9.00am and at 1.30pm. If a student fails to arrive before the registers close, they will be marked as 'absent'. Students who arrive after registers have closed should report to Student Services Reception and sign in.

Medical Appointments

The College acknowledges that hospital and specialist clinic appointments, including orthodontic and on-going dental treatment may require a student having time out of College. Our expectation is that the minimum amount of learning should be lost. We will seek an explanation from students and parents/carers where a whole day is missed for this reason. Proof of unavoidable medical appointments in College time must be provided in advance of the appointment.

Routine, non-urgent appointments should be made after 3.00pm and during the College holidays where possible.

The College will monitor the amount of lessons missed due to medical appointments carefully.

Illness

Students are likely to experience bouts of illness from time to time. When a student is identified as having frequent absence for reasons of minor illness, a meeting will be arranged to discuss this with the Attendance Team.

Some students will be managing chronic or more serious medical conditions that impact on their attendance. We will support students in these circumstances to ensure they do not miss out on their education.

Holiday Absence in Term Time

Parent/carers do not have the right to take their child out of College for holidays. Such holidays will be counted as an unauthorised absence, other than in exceptional circumstances.

If a parent/carer feels there are exceptional circumstances that support a request for leave of absence in term time, they must put the request in writing to the Principal. Each case will be considered individually and the decision communicated to the parents/carers.

Where 5 consecutive days or more holiday are taken without the Principal's authorisation, cases will be referred to the Local Authority for the issuing of a Penalty Notice (fine).

If the Local Authority takes action, an initial fixed penalty notice of £60 is issued to each parent/carer for each child. The monies collected do not go to the College.

Children Missing from Education

The College has a duty to inform the Local Authority if any student who is on the College roll is not in attendance and their whereabouts cannot be established. This particularly applies to students who move to another authority or country but are not yet in education. If a parent/carer wishes to move their child to another school, they must let the College know to ensure the child is not recorded as missing from education.

Home Education

Parents/carers have a right to educate their children at home. If a parent/carer wishes to withdraw their child from school to pursue this option, this decision must be put in writing to the Principal stating 'a

decision to electively home educate'. The College will then inform the Local Authority and take the child off roll.

College Attendance Monitoring

Students may be subject to a formal attendance monitoring process for any of the following: where attendance falls **below 96%**, where there are a high number of frequent absences each term, where there are frequent minor medical absence or where a student is persistently late.

The following steps will be initiated:

Stage 1: Attendance Concern Letter

Parent/Carers will receive a Stage 1 Letter when a student's attendance falls below 96%. Parents/carers can contact the Student Support Co-ordinator for Attendance to discuss this and if a support plan is required it will be started.

Stage 2: Attendance Support Plan (ASP)

If there is no improvement following the Stage 1 letter, parent/carers will be requested to attend an Attendance Support Plan meeting with a member of the Attendance Team to discuss strategies to improve attendance and to set a target for improved attendance. Attendance will be monitored for a 5-week period.

Stage 3: Parent/Carer Contract Meetings (PCM)

If no improvement is recorded in spite of the ASP process, parent/carers will be requested to attend a Parent Contract Meeting with the Student Support Co-ordinator to discuss further strategies to improve attendance. An improvement target will be set and attendance will be monitored for a 5-week period.

Stage 4: Legal Proceedings

If attendance has not improved or there is a decrease in attendance, legal proceedings will be initiated in the form of a Penalty Notice or Referral to Local Authority for Prosecution.

If a parent/carers fails to attend the scheduled attendance monitoring meeting, the meeting will take place in their absence, with the student, to ensure a support plan is put in place and the monitoring period will commence. The Local Authority will take account of any lack of parental engagement if the process reaches the stage of legal proceedings.

APPENDIX 1
College Attendance Monitoring

For attendance concerns **below 95%**, high number of broken weeks, absence each term, frequent minor medical absence and persistent lates the following stages will be implemented:

