

Lobley Hill Primary School

Attendance Policy and Procedures



Policy Author:	R. Hocking. Headteacher
Date of Policy:	September 2024
Date approved by Governors:	Pending Governor ratification – Autumn Term 2024
Next annual review date:	July 2025

Key Contacts

School Attendance Lead Name: Mrs L. Wood-Williams

Telephone number: 0191 4334080

Email: lobleyhillprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk

Family Support Worker: Miss K Jobling

Telephone number: 0191 4334080

Email: lobleyhillprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs R. Hocking

Telephone number: 0191 4334080

Email: lobleyhillprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk

SENDCo: Mrs L. Wood-Williams

Telephone number: 0191 4334080

Email: lobleyhillprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk

Governor for attendance: Councillor Catherine Donovan

Telephone number 0191 4334080

Email: lobleyhillprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk

CONTENTS

Key Contacts:	2
Lobley Hill Primary School.....	1
Attendance Policy and Procedures	1
Part 1 - Policy	4
1. Introduction	4
Aims and ethos.....	4
2. Why is Attending School Regularly So Important?	7
3. Safeguarding and Attendance	7
4. Legislation and Guidance	8
5. Using data to support improvements in attendance	8
6. Understanding Barriers to Attendance	8
7. Staff Training on Attendance	9
Part 2 - What the Law Says and Our School Procedures	9
Contents of the Admissions Register	10
1. Contents of Attendance Register.....	11
2. Present at School (and Lateness)	11
2.1 Effects of Late Arrival at School	12
3. Authorised Absence	13
3.1 Illness	13
3.2 Medical/Dental Appointments	14
3.3 Religious Observance	14
3.4 Traveller Absence	15
3.5 Suspensions	15
4. First Day of Absence Response	15
5. Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance	16
6. Leave of Absence Requests – ‘Exceptional Circumstances’	16
7. Unauthorised Absence	17
Persistently and Severely Absent pupils (PA and SA).....	17
8. Approved Educational Activity	18
9. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (as set out in DfE attendance guidance)	18
10. Support for Poor School Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave).....	18
11. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions.....	19
12. Children Missing Education (CME)	20
13. Following up Unexplained Absences.....	20
14. Reporting to Parents	20

15. Recording Information on Attendance and Reasons for Absence	20
16. Roles and Responsibilities	21
17. Policy Monitoring Arrangements	23
18. Links with other policies/procedures.....	23

Part 1 - Policy

1. Introduction

At Lobley Hill Primary School our ambition is for all students to strive for 100% attendance. We set expectations of excellent attendance for all pupils and expect pupils to be in school every session and every day that school is open. We consider this paramount to pupils achieving their full potential and enhancing lifelong outcomes.

Our Attendance Policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of pupils and is an integral part of our school ethos.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance we will work together with parents/carers, pupils and relevant partner agencies to remove any barriers and build strong and trusting relationships. Promoting and ensuring excellent attendance is everybody's business within our school and community.

Aims and ethos

Our school aims to meet its obligations regarding school attendance by ensuring every pupil has access to a full-time and efficient education to which they are entitled. Lobley Hill Primary School acts early to address any patterns of irregular attendance aiming to create a culture in which the importance of good school attendance is understood, valued, and supported by all.

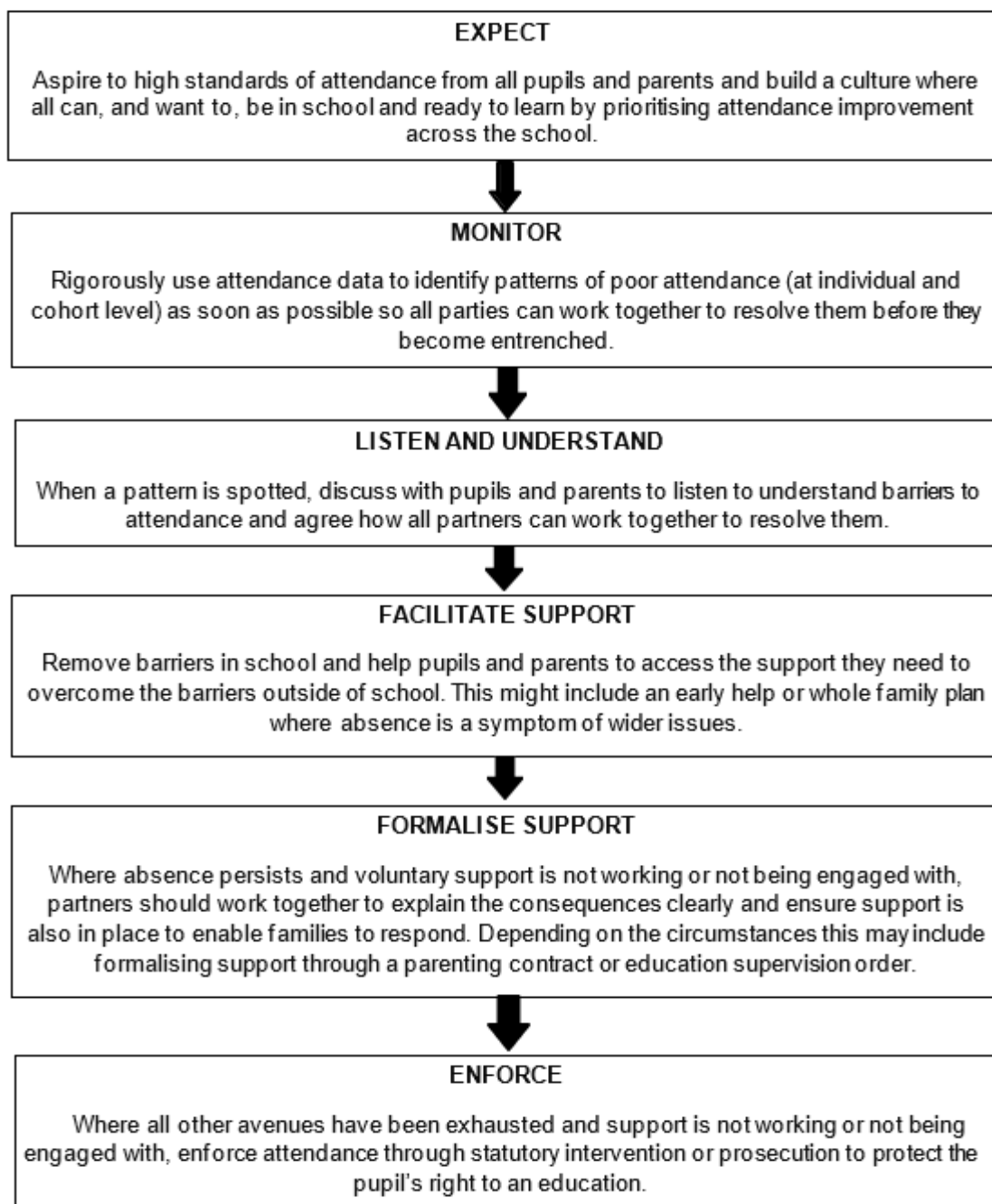
By providing a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn is the foundation of securing good attendance. Working together to put the right support in place at the right time, all school staff, parents/carers, pupils, and partners can work together to remove any barriers affecting attendance.

This policy sets out our school's position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents¹ must follow to report their child's absence from school and to remind them of their legal duty, to ensure their child attends school regularly.

¹ Education law defines parents as: all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and any person who has day to day care of a child or young person i.e., lives with and looks after the child. In this policy the term 'parent' includes parents and carers.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently, considering the individual needs of our pupils and their families who may have specific barriers to attendance. We have considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At Lobley Hill Primary School we follow the DfE Working together to Improve School Attendance Approach, which is statutory from August 19th, 2024:



[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age. Therefore, the school encourages parents of nursery and reception children who are not yet of compulsory school age to send their children to every session that is available to them. Every child enrolled at our school is expected to attend every day they are required to, on time, so that they can achieve their full potential. We monitor and manage attendance and punctuality across all year groups and expect parents to notify the school of any absence.

At Lobley Hill Primary School we will support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory² school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

We want our pupils to attend school every day unless they are not well enough to do so. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our pupils to enjoy school and grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults, who are able to realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential requirements in the workplace and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend, will be better prepared for the world.

In April 2017 the Supreme Court clarified the definition of regular attendance to be attendance “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”, therefore if an absence is not authorised by the school, the pupil’s attendance is deemed to be irregular.

We will do all we can to encourage our pupils to attend. We will also make available the best provision we can, for any pupil who may experience any barriers preventing regular attendance.

One of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and a sense of belonging. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved and as part of the wider school community.
- Raise pupils’ awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents, pupils and staff.
- Work in partnership with parents and carers, including regularly informing them about their child’s absence and attendance levels.
- Work with external agencies where required, such as health, the LA and local organisations to support our pupils, parents and school.

² A child becomes of ‘compulsory school age’ on the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday and ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of Year 11.

- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge learning gaps.
- Celebrate good and improved attendance and punctuality.

2. Why is Attending School Regularly So Important?

Evidence shows that pupils with excellent school attendance are more likely to reach higher standards of achievement and be at less risk of exposure to crime and other safeguarding risks.

Pupils who attend regularly are more likely to achieve better results than their peers that do not, both at Key Stage 2 tests in the Primary phase, and in GCSEs at Secondary.

Excellent attendance enables pupils to be part of the school community and develop a sense of belonging. This further supports each pupil's development socially, morally, and ethically, enhancing personal well-being.

If attendance over the school year is:	...a pupil will miss this many days:	...and this many lessons:
100%	0	0
95%	10	50
90%	19	95
85%	29	145
80%	39	195
75%	49	245
70%	58	290

3. Safeguarding and Attendance

Lobley Hill Primary School will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when the school has made all reasonable enquiries and cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare and safety. (Please see our Safeguarding Policy).

4. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the government guidance 2024 from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's 2015 statutory guidance on [School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures](#).

These documents are drawn from legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance including:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Children Act 1989
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Sentencing Act 2020
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

5. Using data to support improvements in attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason. For pupils who miss more than 50% of possible sessions they are defined as 'severely absent'.

The school will ensure that data is routinely monitored to identify emerging attendance issues and will seek to prevent any pupil becoming persistently or severely absent. This will include: identifying the individual needs of pupils; working closely with families and wider support services to remove barriers to attendance; and where a formalised approach in conjunction with the local authority is required in line with the DfE guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#).

6. Understanding Barriers to Attendance

In relation to understanding barriers to attendance, we will ensure all pupils and parents are treated with dignity and staff will model respectful relationships to build a positive understanding between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. In communicating with parents, we will highlight the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing to enhance understanding of what good attendance looks like. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance we will identify who is best placed to work with them to address issues.

We will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily.

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the school to work in conjunction with relevant partners.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. In working with parents to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers such pupils may face and will put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

In line with DfE expectations reduced timetables will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for a limited period, to support pupils to reintegrate back into education and access full time provision.

The school is committed to share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and external partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

7. Staff Training on Attendance

Improving attendance requires knowledge of guidance and regulations but also expertise in working with families to remove barriers to attendance and safeguard pupils. Just as those barriers are regularly evolving, so too is the training that school staff require to address them. Therefore, the school will facilitate training for all staff to understand:

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances,
- the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of pupil registers
- the school/trusts' strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance,
- processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support for pupils who need it.

For staff with specialist attendance responsibilities, they will receive training to include the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data and any additional training that would be beneficial to support pupils experiencing attendance challenges.

Part 2 - What the Law Says and Our School Procedures

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Procedures at Lobley Hill Primary School:

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes using electronic systems.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data through the use of SIMS and A Star Attendance.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time and seek legal intervention.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Attendance Service or appropriate agencies of any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the nominated person with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Attendance at Lobley Hill Primary School is managed by 'A Star Attendance Solutions' – a 4-stage monitoring process, which is intended to raise pupil attendance levels. This is the 4-stage monitoring process that is being used to indicate the level of your child's School attendance:

- Stage 1 – Pupils who have an attendance of 93% and below. A letter will be sent out reminding parents/carers of the importance of good attendance.
- Stage 2 – Pupils continue to have attendance of 93% or below and have made no improvement. A letter will be sent home with a parent survey requesting more information to be provided regarding the absences. It is also possible at this stage for parents to arrange to speak to School about any concerns they may have of their child's School attendance and ask for additional support.
- Stage 3 – Pupils continue to show little, or no improvement and attendance has not reached 93% or above. A letter will be sent home advising that the pupil is now on a 4-week monitoring period. During this period, 100% attendance is required unless medical evidence can be provided.
- Stage 4 – Pupils who have not passed the 4-week monitoring period will now be considered for a referral to the Local Authority. Our goal is for all pupils to meet a target of 97% – 100% attendance.

Contents of the Admissions Register

The admission register (sometimes referred to as the school roll) must contain specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended. The school will enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed with, or been notified by the parent, that the pupil will attend.

A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, applies.

It is vital that the admission register is kept up to date. Therefore, we encourage parents to inform the school of any changes whenever they occur and ensure the admission register is amended as soon as possible.

1. Contents of Attendance Register

In addition to the admissions register the law makes it clear that schools must take an attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second (afternoon) session. On each occasion the school must record whether each pupil is:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Attending an approved educational activity; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Effective and timely use and sharing of register data is critical to improve attendance and is supported by the use of our Management Information System to record attendance information.

2. Present at School (and Lateness)

Pupils are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration, they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

The Headteacher – Mrs R. Hocking will meet with parents of those children who are frequently late arriving at school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.

Nursery Pupils:

Morning sessions:

Our pupils must arrive by 8:30am on each school day.

Our morning register is taken at 8:30am

Afternoon sessions:

Our pupils must arrive by 12:30pm on each school day.

Our afternoon register is taken at 12:30pm

Children who access 30-hour provision, registration times will be as above. Please see early years admission policy for further information.

Reception, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two:

Our pupils must arrive by 8:55am on each school day.

Our morning register is taken at 8:55am and will be kept open until 9:25am.

Our afternoon register is taken at 12:30pm (reception); 12:45pm (Key Stage One) and 1:00pm (Key Stage Two).

Registration closes 30 minutes after the register has been taken.

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed (between 8.55am – 9.25am) will be marked as Late (L), which counts as present.

If a pupil arrives after the register has closed (see above) they will be marked with the unauthorised absence code “Late after registers close” (U) which is an unauthorised absence mark. However, if the pupil is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised and coded accordingly, as long as supporting evidence of the appointment is provided.

See DfE guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#).

Late collection

We expect all children to be picked up at 3.30pm. Collecting children late often causes unnecessary upset and stress to your child/ren. As staff are having to supervise your children this means they are unable to fulfil their teaching duties and attend relevant training which can have an impact on the whole school.

Where there have been persistent incidents of late collections parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

2.1 Effects of Late Arrival at School

When a pupil arrives late to school, they miss important events such as assembly, phonics, teacher instructions and introductions. Children can often feel embarrassed having to enter a classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others:

Minutes late per day...	Equates to days of teaching lost in one year...	Which means this number of lessons have been missed...
5 mins	3 Days	15 Lessons
10 mins	6 Days	30 Lessons
15 mins	9 Days	45 Lessons
20 mins	12 days	60 Lessons
30 mins	18 days	90 Lessons

3. Authorised Absence

‘Authorised absence’ means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away from the school or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

The following information outlines the main circumstances where absence may be authorised by the school:

3.1 Illness

The NHS has produced a helpful guide for parents regarding childhood illness and school: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by parents/carers following the school’s absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school follows Department for Education guidance ‘[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)’ 2024³ which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence.

Where possible, we will ask for medical evidence. In some exceptional circumstances, the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil’s GP directly to help support the needs of the individual pupil.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order best support the child or young person and to be able to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have **not** been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

In order to report a pupil absence, parents must contact the school office before 9:00am. The school number is 0191 4334080. From October 2024, an automated phone line for pupil absence will be available.

If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school on each day to provide an update on the child’s condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

³ Please ask the school for a printed copy of Working Together to Improve School Attendance if required

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our school supports pupil mental health and wellbeing following DfE guidance [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mental-health-issues-affecting-a-pupil's-attendance-guidance-for-schools)

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact our school's Family Support Worker – Miss Jobling - for further information on the support available.

Online Mental health support and advice can be accessed: <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/supporting-others/childrens-mental-health/>

Parents can also contact their GP or the NHS Helpline by telephoning 111 for advice if they are concerned. In case of emergency parents should dial 999.

Pupils taken ill during the school day

If a pupil needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the pupil must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult and signed out in the InVentry system which is located in the school office. This will be conducted by a member of school staff. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation

3.2 Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents should always try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are urgent or unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day of schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult, and signed out in the InVentry system which is located in the school office. This will be conducted by a member of school staff. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without an adult.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments and must be supported by providing the school with a copy of the appointment card or letter. This can be done in person where we will photocopy the appointment information, or via email by sending a screenshot, scan or photo of the appointment information to lobleyhillprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk – only then will the absence be authorised.

3.3 Religious Observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

3.4 Traveller Absence

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In such situations the child will be dual registered at that school and this school will remain their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as all other peers. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

3.5 Suspensions

If the school decides to send a pupil home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an Exclusion. The school will follow the current [DfE's statutory guidance on exclusions](#).

Any exclusion **must** be agreed by the headteacher.

The school will notify the parent of the exclusion in writing. If the pupil is a Child in Care, the school will notify the pupil's carer, Social Worker and the Virtual School. In other instances, where a pupil is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated Social Worker.

The pupil must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult, and signed out in the InVentry system which is located in the school office. This will be conducted by a member of school staff. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without an adult.

4. First Day of Absence Response

Upon a first day of absence, we would expect parents to make contact with the school. Where contact has not been made, school will call the main contact to ascertain the reason for school absence. A voice message will be left if we are unable to speak with the parent.

After a second day of absence, where no contact has been made, a welfare check will be made by two staff members. One of whom will be a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Where children have a Social Worker or are Looked After, appropriate agencies will also be contacted (Social Worker, Virtual School etc).

Parents will be asked to supply details of **at least two** people who can be contacted in an emergency, and these details will be reviewed on a yearly basis. It is parent's responsibility to ensure school has the most up to date details.

If the school is unable to contact any of the emergency numbers provided and is concerned for the welfare and safety of a pupil, we may request a welfare check from the Police.

5. Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance

- 100% Certificates termly
- Certificates for the Best Class Attendance weekly in Assembly
- Certificates for Most Improved Class Attendance weekly in Assembly
- Positive Postcards termly sent to the child's home for 100% Attendance and for Most Improved Attendance
- Parents to be placed in a draw for two £50 supermarket vouchers if their child has an attendance of 97% and above and for the most improved attendance. The draw will be termly.
- Children have an Attendance Stamp booklet and receive a stamp each week they have 100% attendance. At the end of each half term, they can exchange their stamps for a prize at the 'Stamp Swap Shop'. This is organised and run by the Family Support Worker. A weekly update of attendance is shared on the school website as a pop-up on the home page.

6. Leave of Absence Requests – 'Exceptional Circumstances'

The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.

In line with DfE expectations only very exceptional circumstances will warrant an authorised leave of absence. The school will review each application individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Attendance/Designated Safeguarding Lead/Governors/Family Support Worker. If any leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times. Work patterns, cheaper holidays are not classed as exceptional circumstances.

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available on the school website. [Request for school absence.](#)

The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least **four weeks** before the absence. **Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing.** Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage, we will follow the necessary protocols. (Please see our school's Safeguarding Policy for more information).

All term time absence for children in care should be discussed at the child's Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting, in advance where possible, to be considered alongside social care staff and the Virtual School. This permission should be gained before school is approached for approval. The school will contact social care/ the Virtual School in relation to any requests made for term time absence for a child in care.

7. Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school has not been given a reason or is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it remains the school's decision whether to authorise an absence or not.

Unauthorised absences may include:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Absences for shopping, birthdays, day trips
- Absences whereby parents are stating they are waiting at home for a washing machine to be mended, or a parcel to be delivered
- Long weekends and holidays in term time (unless very exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing, in advance by the school)
- In the case of term time leave - if a pupil is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

Unauthorised absences may result in legal sanctions, use of penalty notices or prosecution.

Persistently and Severely Absent pupils (PA and SA)

A pupil is classed a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

A pupil is classed as 'severely absent' if they miss 50% or more of their school across the school year for whatever reason.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any pupil that is seen to have reached the PA or SA thresholds or is at risk of moving towards that level, will be prioritised by school. Parents will be informed accordingly.

8. Approved Educational Activity

When pupils are attending educational activities off the school site, that have been approved by the school, the register will be marked to show this is the case.

If a pupil is attending an alternative education provider such as another school, or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all of their education, our school will arrange for the pupil to be dual registered at the other setting and mark our registers accordingly.

If a pupil is attending an alternative education provider, which is not a school or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all of their education, we will mark the sessions which the pupil attends the alternative setting as code B (off-site educational activity). We will liaise regularly with alternative providers to ensure we become aware of any attendance concerns as soon as possible and take follow up action as necessary. Attendance updates will be provided on a weekly basis, with the alternative setting.

Any attendance concerns will be followed up by us, in conjunction with the Alternative Provision.

9. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (as set out in DfE attendance guidance)

In accordance with DfE school attendance guidance, our school will record pupils as 'Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances' in the following circumstances (such circumstances are not recorded as absences):

- Our school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause
- The transport provided by our school or the Local Authority is not available and the pupil's home is not within statutory walking distance. (See the DfE's '[Home to school travel and transport](#)' guidance document, or ask the school for a printed copy.)
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.
- The pupil is in custody, but still on the school roll. (If the school has evidence that the pupil is attending educational activities, we can record those sessions as 'present at approved educational activity'.)

10. Support for Poor School Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave)

Sometimes pupils can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and pupils to be open and honest with us about the reason for the pupil's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way.

When we have concerns about the attendance of a pupil, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. Where there are no genuine reasons for the absences, parents may be asked to meet with the Family Support Worker to discuss the matter. In some cases, this may result in a formal attendance action plan or parenting contract being drawn up.

If our school is unable to work in partnership with parents to overcome any barriers preventing regular attendance we may refer a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions. We will show all the steps we have taken to support parents and pupils and that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school will take a holistic, early help approach to the issue and will involve other agencies if deemed necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies, or, fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a penalty notice or other legal sanction.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil who is absent, we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

11. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent but may have day to day care of the child.

Unauthorised absence from school can result in a number of different outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered individually.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter.

The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold for a penalty notice to the Local Authority for legal action unless there are reasonable grounds for not doing so. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a penalty notice or prosecution.

Penalty notices are intended as a sanction for low level offences and a tool to support improved school attendance, for example in circumstances associated with an unauthorised holiday taken during term time. They are an alternative to prosecution and may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to a pupil's irregular attendance.

See DfE's statutory guidance on [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) for more information.

Penalty notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent with responsibility for the child and are issued for each child with irregular attendance. For example, in the case of Penalty Notices, if two siblings had irregular school attendance, and there were two parents with responsibility for the children, four Penalty Notices would be issued. Penalty Notices cannot be paid in instalments.

12. Children Missing Education (CME)

Our school will add and delete pupils from roll in line with Regulation 8 Education law. The school will use the Gateshead Council services portal to report any children leaving our school, on part time timetables, attending irregularly, or joining the school outside of usual transition phases. If we have any CME related concerns, we will contact Gateshead Council.

13. Following up Unexplained Absences

Where no contact has been made with the school the school will contact parents by text, email, telephone or letter to try and establish the reason for a child's absence. When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence. If we are unable to establish the reason for absence within 5 school days, we will mark the absence as unauthorised, using the **O** code. If we are concerned about a pupil's absence and are unable to contact the parent/s, we may contact the pupil's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the pupil's whereabouts and safety.

14. Reporting to Parents

Attendance will be reported to parents three times a year. During autumn and spring parents' evenings and in the pupil's annual record of achievement.

15. Recording Information on Attendance and Reasons for Absence

At Lobley Hill Primary School, we follow a traffic light system, the purpose of colour coding helps staff, Parents and Pupils have a clear understanding of our expectations.

• Red Zone: Under 89.99%

Pupils in the red zone are more likely to underachieve, find making friendships difficult and misbehave. We will arrange a meeting with the Family Support Worker to discuss how school could support you further. Legal action may also be taken against Parents/Carers of Red Zone pupils if there is no or little improvement.

- **Amber Zone: 90% - 96.99%**

Pupils in this zone are still at risk of underachieving due to the absence level. Pupils who miss school regularly are more likely to suffer from school related stress. If your child is in the Amber Zone we will contact you to inform you that we are monitoring your child's attendance closely over a four week period to help avoid attendance falling into the Red Zone.

- **Green Zone: 97% - 100%**

We expect students to have green attendance throughout their education. Those in the Green Zone are more likely to do well in examinations, have better job opportunities and can develop strong friendships within school.

All absences will be recorded via SIMS.

16. Roles and Responsibilities

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Maintaining class registers and completing them electronically and submitting for start of AM/PM sessions.
- Informing Family Support Worker/Senior Leaders via CPOMS where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Where poor attendance re-occurs ensuring appropriate school staff are informed.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Ensuring appropriate school staff are informed of additional information provided by the child so it can be recorded in line with school policy.
- Discussing attendance issues at parental consultation evenings where necessary.
- Ensuring all messages from parent/carers are passed onto the Family Support Worker or Office staff.

The Family Support Worker and SLT are responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance (through SIMS and A Star Attendance).
- Identifying trends in authorised and unauthorised absence and addressing any relevant actions.
- Following the A Star Attendance staged approach to inform parents about their child's attendance at each stage.
- Monitoring individual attendance where attendance is 90% or below (persistent absentee) or 93% where persistent absenteeism may be a concern.

- Making referrals to the Attendance Service in line with the staged approach.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the nominated Senior Leader for attendance (Mrs Wood-Williams).
- Liaising with staff so they can demonstrate a familiarity with Lobley Hill's Attendance Policy and they are aware of all procedures regarding attendance.
- Making sure all parents/carers are familiar with Lobley Hill's Attendance Policy and they are aware of all procedures regarding attendance.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- To share attendance data with governors, staff, parent/carers and children. This can be through meetings, emails, assemblies and our website.
- To ensure incentives for attendance are promoted and celebrated

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Absence log is completed.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made in conjunction with Family Support Worker.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Family Support Worker.
- First Day Response: Contacting home if no reason for absence is received (phone call or email)
- If no reason has been received when the child returns to school, the office to contact parent/carers (phone call or email) to ask why their child was absent.
- Sharing attendance concerns with Family Support Worker.
- To be knowledgeable, on a need to know basis, about vulnerable families and children perceived to be persistent absentees.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist.
(Photograph of appointment card/letter via email)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised. All requests to be made to the Headteacher using the online form [Request for school absence](#).
- Talking to the Family Support Worker as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

The Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a half termly basis (6 times a year). They should also support the promotion of regular attendance and provide support and challenge holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and requests fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

17. Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher, or more frequently if there are changes to legislation and guidance. At every review, the policy will be ratified by the governing body.

18. Links with other policies/procedures

This policy is linked to our Anti-Bullying Policy, Behaviour Policy, Inclusion Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Early Help Offer, SEND Graduated response, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, Flexible Schooling Policy.