

Lemington Riverside Primary School

Attendance Policy



Approved by:	The Governing Body
Approved Date:	September 2026
Review frequency:	Annually
Next Review Date:	September 2027

Contents

1. Policy Statement
2. Aims
3. Legal Framework
4. Roles and Responsibilities
5. Promoting Good Attendance
6. Attendance Expectations
7. Recording Attendance and Registration
8. Reporting Absence
9. Medical Appointments and Illness
10. First Day Response
11. Persistent and Severe Absence
12. Supporting Pupils with Additional Needs
13. Working with Parents and External Agencies
14. Leave of Absence During Term Time
15. Legal Intervention
16. Children Missing Education
17. Alternative Provision and Part-Time Timetables
18. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

1. Policy Statement

At Lemington Riverside Primary School we believe that excellent attendance is fundamental to every child's educational achievement, wellbeing, safeguarding and future life chances.

Every day in school matters.

Children who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve well academically, develop positive friendships, enjoy learning, participate fully in school life and successfully prepare for the next stage of their education.

We recognise that attendance is not simply an administrative process but a shared responsibility between school, parents, pupils, governors, the Local Authority and partner agencies. We are committed to developing a whole-school culture where attendance is valued, expected and celebrated whilst ensuring that families experiencing genuine barriers receive timely, compassionate and effective support.

Our approach is built upon strong relationships with families. We seek first to understand the reasons behind absence before working collaboratively with parents and external agencies to remove barriers wherever possible. However, where support is not successful, not engaged with or is inappropriate, we will fulfil our statutory responsibilities to ensure every child receives their entitlement to a full-time education.

At Lemington Riverside Primary School we aspire for every pupil to achieve attendance of at least 96%. Whilst we celebrate excellent attendance, we also recognise and reward significant improvements for individual pupils.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote a culture where excellent attendance is valued by everyone.
- Ensure every pupil has access to a full-time education.
- Maximise educational achievement and progress through regular attendance.
- Promote pupils' wellbeing, safety and sense of belonging.
- Identify attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- Work positively with families to understand and remove barriers to attendance.
- Reduce persistent absence and severe absence.
- Ensure statutory attendance registers are completed accurately and consistently.
- Meet all legal responsibilities relating to attendance.
- Ensure attendance forms an integral part of safeguarding practice.
- Provide a clear framework for staff, governors, parents and pupils regarding attendance expectations.

3. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (Department for Education, July 2026)
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions
- Children Missing Education Guidance

This policy should also be read alongside the school's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Child Protection Procedures
- Equality Policy

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

The Governing Body recognises that excellent attendance is fundamental to raising standards, promoting wellbeing and safeguarding children.

Governors will:

- promote a culture which values excellent attendance;
- ensure statutory attendance duties are fulfilled;
- receive regular attendance reports;
- challenge and support school leaders regarding attendance trends;
- ensure adequate resources are available to improve attendance;
- monitor the effectiveness of this policy;
- review attendance outcomes alongside other key school improvement priorities.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy is implemented effectively across the school.

The Headteacher will:

- provide strategic leadership for attendance;
- ensure attendance remains a whole-school priority;
- promote a positive culture where every pupil is expected and supported to attend;
- ensure attendance systems comply with statutory guidance;
- allocate sufficient staffing and resources;
- monitor attendance trends and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions;
- work closely with governors and the Local Authority;
- ensure safeguarding procedures are followed whenever attendance concerns arise.

Senior Attendance Champion

In accordance with statutory guidance, the school has a designated Senior Attendance Champion responsible for championing attendance improvement across the school. The Senior Attendance Champion at Lemington Riverside is the headteacher.

The Senior Attendance Champion can be contacted through the school office:

Telephone: 0191 267 4315

Email: admin@lemingtonriverside.newcastle.sch.uk

The Senior Attendance Champion will:

- lead the strategic approach to attendance;
- analyse attendance data;
- identify emerging patterns;
- coordinate interventions;
- work alongside pastoral staff and external agencies;
- support families experiencing barriers;
- evaluate the effectiveness of attendance strategies;
- ensure attendance remains high profile throughout the school.

Attendance Team

The Attendance Team will:

- monitor attendance daily;
- complete first-day absence procedures;
- maintain accurate attendance records;
- identify emerging concerns quickly;
- communicate with parents regarding attendance;
- arrange attendance meetings where appropriate;
- liaise with the Local Authority Attendance Support Team;
- maintain appropriate records of attendance interventions.

Class Teachers

Class teachers play a vital role in promoting attendance through positive relationships with pupils and families.

Teachers will:

- create welcoming classrooms where pupils feel safe and valued;
- act as 'attendance champions' – being aware of the children in their classes who may need extra support with their attendance.
- complete attendance registers accurately and on time;
- encourage excellent attendance;
- identify pupils whose attendance may be causing concern;
- communicate concerns promptly to senior leaders;
- support pupils returning following absence.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child receives a suitable full-time education.

Parents are expected to:

- ensure their child attends school every day unless a statutory reason for absence applies;
- notify school as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- maintain regular communication during extended absences;
- provide accurate emergency contact details;
- book routine appointments outside school hours wherever possible;

- work positively with school to overcome attendance barriers;
- avoid requesting leave during term time unless exceptional circumstances exist;
- ensure children arrive punctually (on time) every day.

Pupils

We expect every pupil to:

- attend school every day unless they are genuinely unable to do so;
- arrive punctually;
- participate positively in learning;
- speak to a trusted adult if anything is making attendance difficult;
- work with school staff to overcome attendance barriers.

5. Our Attendance Culture

At Lemington Riverside Primary School, attendance is everyone's responsibility.

We are proud of the caring and inclusive culture recognised during our recent Ofsted inspection. Inspectors found that leaders prioritise attendance, identify concerns quickly, work effectively with other professionals and provide timely support, leading to improving attendance and reducing persistent absence over time.

We recognise that absence is often a symptom of wider challenges rather than the problem itself. Consequently, our first priority is always to understand the barriers affecting a child or family. This may include health needs, special educational needs and disabilities, anxiety, bereavement, housing difficulties, transport issues or wider family circumstances.

Our response follows the principles set out in the Department for Education's support first approach:

- Expect high attendance.
- Monitor attendance carefully.
- Listen to and understand barriers.
- Facilitate support.
- Formalise support where necessary.
- Use legal intervention only when appropriate and proportionate.

6. Attendance Expectations

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential if pupils are to achieve their full potential and benefit from the wide range of learning opportunities available at Lemington Riverside Primary School.

We expect every pupil to attend school every day that the school is open unless there is a genuine and unavoidable reason preventing them from doing so.

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education through regular attendance at school.

At Lemington Riverside Primary School we aim for every pupil to achieve attendance of 96% or above. However, we recognise that every family is different and that some children may experience barriers to attendance beyond their control. Our priority is always to work alongside families to understand these barriers and provide appropriate support at the earliest opportunity.

We firmly believe that every day in school matters. Regular attendance enables pupils to:

- achieve their academic potential;
- build positive friendships;
- develop confidence and resilience;
- benefit from the school's broad curriculum and enrichment opportunities;
- establish positive routines that support lifelong success;
- feel safe, valued and connected to the school community.

Excellent attendance is promoted as part of the school's wider culture of high expectations, inclusion and belonging.

7. School Opening Hours and Registration

The school day for pupils in Nursery to Year 6 begins when classroom doors open at **8:45am**.

Registers are taken promptly at **9:00am**.

The school day finishes for Nursery at **3:15pm**. The school day finishes at **3:20pm** for children in year 1, year 2 and year 3. The school day finishes at **3:30pm** for pupils in Reception. Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6.

Attendance registers are completed electronically and are legal documents. Morning and afternoon registers are completed using the statutory attendance codes prescribed by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

8. Breakfast Club and Attendance

As part of our commitment to removing barriers to education, Lemington Riverside Primary School offers a free universal Breakfast Club for all pupils in Reception to Year 6 through the Government's Breakfast Club Programme.

The Breakfast Club operates each school day **from 8:15am**.

Children attending Breakfast Club should:

- arrive between 8:15am and 8:20am;
- enter through the double blue doors on the Rokeby Street side of the Main Building;
- be signed into Breakfast Club by a member of staff.

At 8:45am, Breakfast Club staff escort pupils safely to their classrooms for the start of the school day.

The school recognises that Breakfast Club provides much more than simply breakfast. It supports:

- improved punctuality;
- better attendance;
- positive wellbeing;
- social interaction;
- readiness to learn;
- improved concentration throughout the morning.

Where families experience difficulties with punctuality or attendance, the school may discuss Breakfast Club as one of several supportive early interventions.

9. Punctuality (Being on time)

Good punctuality is an important life skill and plays a significant role in successful learning.

Children are expected to be in their classroom **by 9:00am**, ready for registration and the start of learning.

Arriving late means pupils miss valuable learning time, important daily routines and opportunities to settle into the classroom alongside their peers.

Pupils arriving after 9:00am should enter through the main school entrance where they will be signed in and the reason for their lateness recorded.

Where lateness becomes frequent, the school will work with parents to understand the reasons and provide appropriate support to improve punctuality.

Where pupils arrive after registers have closed and no statutory reason applies, the appropriate attendance code will be recorded in accordance with Department for Education guidance.

Persistent lateness is monitored in the same way as attendance and may result in further intervention where appropriate.

10. Reporting an Absence

Parents and carers should notify the school as soon as possible on the first day of any unexpected absence, ideally before 8:30am.

Absences may be reported by:

- Telephone: 0191 267 4315
- Email: admin@lemingtonriverside.newcastle.sch.uk
- Via the 'Greenhouse Schools' app.

Parents should provide:

- the child's full name;
- class;
- the reason for absence;
- the anticipated date of return where known.

Where an absence continues beyond one day, parents should maintain regular contact with the school to provide updates.

The school may request additional information or appropriate medical evidence where there are concerns regarding the frequency or pattern of absence.

11. Illness

We understand that children will occasionally be too unwell to attend school.

Parents should only keep children at home when they are genuinely too ill to attend.

Minor illnesses such as coughs, colds, mild sore throats or tiredness will not usually prevent attendance.

The school follows current UK Health Security Agency guidance regarding infectious illnesses and exclusion periods.

If a child becomes unwell during the school day, parents or emergency contacts will be contacted so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Where parents are unsure whether their child is well enough to attend school, they are encouraged to contact the school before deciding to keep them at home.

Medical evidence is not routinely required for short periods of illness. However, where absence becomes frequent, prolonged or follows a concerning pattern, the school may request appropriate evidence to support the authorised recording of absence.

12. Medical and Dental Appointments

Routine medical, dental and optical appointments should be arranged outside school hours wherever possible.

Where this is unavoidable, parents are expected to:

- notify the school in advance;
- provide evidence of the appointment where possible;
- ensure their child attends school before and after the appointment whenever it is practical to do so.

Evidence may include:

- NHS appointment confirmations;
- hospital letters;
- clinic appointment notifications;
- appointment cards.

The school will record attendance in accordance with statutory guidance.

13. First Day Response

Ensuring that every child is safe is one of the school's highest priorities.

If a pupil is absent and no reason has been provided, the school will begin first-day contact procedures promptly.

This may include:

- telephone calls;
- text messages;
- emails;
- contacting emergency contacts;
- home visits;
- liaison with the Local Authority or other agencies where safeguarding concerns exist.

The school will continue to make reasonable enquiries until it is satisfied that the pupil is safe.

Where concerns remain regarding a child's whereabouts or welfare, safeguarding procedures will be followed without delay, including referrals to Children's Social Care, the Police or the Local Authority where appropriate.

14. Persistent Absence and Severe Absence

At Lemington Riverside Primary School we monitor attendance carefully for every pupil and take prompt action where attendance begins to decline.

We recognise that attendance problems rarely develop overnight. By identifying concerns early and working collaboratively with families, we aim to prevent patterns of absence from becoming entrenched.

Persistent Absence

A pupil is considered to be **persistently absent** where they miss **10% or more** of their possible sessions across the academic year, regardless of whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Persistent absence can have a significant impact on educational attainment, wellbeing, friendships and future outcomes. Even where absences are authorised, frequent absence may interrupt learning and affect a child's progress.

The school reviews attendance data regularly and identifies pupils approaching persistent absence before the threshold is reached. Early support may include:

- conversations with parents and carers;
- attendance contract meetings;
- pastoral support;
- referral for external family support;
- signposting to external agencies;
- reasonable adjustments where appropriate;

Severe Absence

A pupil is considered to be **severely absent** where they attend school for **50% or less** of the time.

Severe absence represents a significant safeguarding concern and often indicates that wider issues may be affecting a child or family.

Where severe absence is identified, the school will:

- prioritise immediate contact with the family;
- seek to understand the underlying barriers;
- involve relevant safeguarding professionals where appropriate;
- develop an individual attendance support plan;
- work closely with the Local Authority and partner agencies;
- review progress regularly through multi-agency meetings where necessary.

The school recognises that children experiencing severe absence often require intensive, coordinated support involving education, health and social care professionals.

15. Understanding Barriers to Attendance

We recognise that poor attendance is often a symptom of wider difficulties rather than a cause.

Our first priority is always to understand why a pupil is finding attendance difficult.

Possible barriers may include:

- physical health needs;
- emotional wellbeing;
- anxiety;
- special educational needs and disabilities;
- caring responsibilities;
- bereavement;
- housing difficulties;
- family circumstances;
- transport difficulties;
- financial hardship;
- friendship or relationship issues;
- bullying;
- concerns about learning.

Every family's circumstances are unique. Consequently, attendance support will always be tailored to individual need rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.

16. Working in Partnership with Families

Positive relationships with parents and carers are central to our approach to improving attendance.

We believe that parents want the very best for their children and that attendance concerns are most successfully resolved through open, honest and respectful communication.

Where attendance begins to decline, the school will seek to:

- listen carefully to parents' views;
- understand the reasons for absence;
- identify practical barriers;
- agree achievable next steps;
- provide appropriate support;
- review progress together.

Support may include:

- regular attendance meetings;
- pastoral support;
- referrals to external services;
- support from the Local Authority Attendance Team;
- Early Help assessment;
- safeguarding support where appropriate;
- flexible pastoral arrangements during reintegration.

We ask parents to engage positively with attendance support so that together we can secure the best possible outcomes for every child.

17. Attendance Support Pathway

Lemington Riverside Primary School follows the graduated attendance support model set out within **Working Together to Improve School Attendance**.

Stage 1 – Universal Promotion

All pupils benefit from:

- high expectations;
- positive attendance culture;
- attendance rewards and recognition;
- universal breakfast provision;
- strong relationships;
- effective safeguarding.

Stage 2 – Early Identification

Where attendance begins to decline the school will:

- review attendance data;
- contact parents;
- identify emerging concerns;
- offer support;
- monitor improvement.

Early intervention is intended to prevent attendance concerns escalating.

Stage 3 – Targeted Support

Where attendance continues to decline, support may include:

- attendance meetings;
- Attendance contracts and support plans;

- pastoral interventions;
- SEND review where appropriate;
- Early Help;
- referrals to external professionals;
- involvement of the Local Authority Attendance Team.

Support plans and attendance contracts will identify:

- barriers;
- agreed actions;
- responsibilities;
- review dates;
- expected improvements.

Stage 4 – Formal Intervention

Where attendance does not improve despite appropriate support, the school may:

- issue formal attendance warning letters;
- request involvement from the Local Authority;
- consider legal intervention;
- request consideration of a Penalty Notice where statutory criteria are met.

Legal intervention is always viewed as a last resort after support has been offered wherever appropriate.

18. Pupils with SEND and Additional Needs

The school recognises that some pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities may experience additional barriers to regular attendance.

We remain ambitious for all pupils whilst recognising that support may need to be adapted to meet individual needs.

Where attendance concerns involve a pupil with SEND, the school will consider whether:

- needs are being appropriately identified;
- reasonable adjustments remain effective;
- additional assessments are required;
- external professionals should become involved;
- provision requires review.

Attendance concerns will be considered alongside the pupil's SEND provision rather than in isolation.

Where appropriate, attendance targets and support strategies will form part of wider SEND planning, including My Support Plans and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

19. Medical Needs

Some pupils experience long-term or recurring medical conditions which affect attendance.

The school will work closely with:

- parents;
- healthcare professionals;
- specialist nurses;
- hospital education services;
- the Local Authority;

to ensure pupils continue accessing education wherever possible.

Support may include:

- Individual Healthcare Plans;
- reintegration meetings;
- adapted timetables following medical advice;
- support with catching up learning;
- reasonable adjustments.

The school will not routinely authorise absence simply because a child has a medical condition. Decisions will always be based upon appropriate medical advice and individual circumstances.

20. Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

The school recognises that some pupils may experience emotionally based school avoidance, where anxiety or emotional distress significantly affects attendance.

In these circumstances, attendance concerns require understanding, patience and carefully planned intervention.

Support may include:

- pastoral support;
- trusted adult check-ins;
- graduated reintegration plans;
- SEND assessment where appropriate;
- Mental Health Support Team involvement;
- Educational Psychology advice;

- Early Help;
- Referrals to Local Authority Panels, such as the Locality Inclusion Panel (LIP) for further support or guidance;
- reasonable adjustments.

The school will work closely with families and professionals to develop an individual plan that supports the pupil to return to full-time education as quickly as is appropriate.

The school does not support prolonged absence as a long-term solution to emotionally based school avoidance unless supported by appropriate professional advice.

APPENDIX 1: Information for Parent/Carers – Common Questions

- Q. Kids get loads of holidays, plus there are bank holidays and teacher strikes. Why do we get fined for keeping them off?
- A. The most obvious reason is that bank holidays and strikes are permitted in law, whereas absence from school is not. However, the most important reason is that if your child is absent while the rest of their class is at school, your child will be behind when they return. No young person likes being in this situation. It can knock their confidence. School staff will help your child catch up, but this takes time and takes staff away from other pupils who need them.
- Q. I understand why it's important for older kids to attend, but why is it so important when they're younger?
- A. It's really important that children make a good start as early as possible in their school life. If they are absent a lot they will fall behind academically and socially, and this will make the move into secondary school much more difficult. If children get into the habit of thinking that it is OK to miss school, it will definitely get worse as they get older. Most parents faced with a teenager who refuses to go to school wish they had been firmer about attendance when their child was younger.
- Q. My child cries when I take her to school. What can I do?
- A. It's not uncommon for young people to feel anxious about going to school, and it is often tough for parents to take a firm line. However, it is really important for children to get into the habit of going to school right from the start. It's very rare for a young person to continue to be distressed after they have arrived in school and settled in, so don't sit worrying all day. School staff are experts at helping young people who are anxious, so if it is happening regularly, talk about it with staff.
- Q. My child always says they feel ill. How do I know it's OK to send them to school?
- A. Unless they have an obvious medical condition, it is usually worth sending your child to school. Once young people are at school, they are usually too busy to feel anxious. If your child becomes ill at school, we will get in touch.
- Q. Sometimes my child is really tired. Surely, it's better to let them sleep rather than send them in to school?
- A. The problem with doing this is that they get into a different sleep pattern, and it makes the problem worse. Many young people are tempted to play games or be on their phones late at night. It's important to help them take responsibility for being ready for school the next day. If they are tired, they will sleep better the following evening.
- Q. I'm stressed about other things. If my kid won't get out of bed there's nothing I can do, is there?

- A. It is extremely stressful if your child refuses to come to school, especially if you have other pressures in your life. However, don't be tempted to accept it. Please come and speak with staff at school. Together we may be able to find a solution. If your child isn't attending and you don't contact us, our only recourse is legal action.
- Q. My child is being bullied and doesn't want to go to school.
- A. We need to work together if you think your child is being bullied. Please read our anti-bullying policy and get in touch with us.

Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is below 96%. This may make it easier to understand:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks

90% equates to a day off every two weeks

85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks

80% equates to one whole day off every week

A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the guidance [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE),

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

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Additional Information

Attendance Contracts – guide for parents

What is an attendance contract?

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent or carer and the school. An attendance contract may be offered if your child has failed to attend school regularly.

An attendance contract is meant to support you and the school to identify and address the issues surrounding your child's irregular attendance at school and encourage a positive working relationship to improve attendance. The attendance contract is not intended to be a punishment as it is to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution.

What does it involve?

Everyone signed up to the contract will agree to take certain actions which are realistic and which address the issues of non-attendance for a specified period of time. You might agree to do things like getting your child up on time, signing a daily report card and reporting any difficulties to school as soon as possible. School might agree to inform you if your child does not arrive at school, deal quickly with any problems and involve other agencies that might be able to offer you additional support. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

Do I have to enter into an attendance contract?

Entry into an attendance contract is voluntary but it does provide you with an opportunity to address any underlying issues and to get support to improve your child's attendance at school. If you do take up the offer of an attendance contract and try to comply with it, this may assist your case if the local authority decides to take legal action against you for your child's irregular attendance. If you refuse the offer or don't comply without good reason this may also be presented as evidence.

If you decide not to enter into a contract, you will need to try to find other ways of improving your child's attendance and it may be worth discussing how you intend to do this with the school.

How is an attendance contract arranged?

You will be invited to a meeting in school with a school representative. Depending on their age and understanding, your child can attend part or all of the meeting.

At the meeting you will be asked your views on your child's attendance and whether there are any underlying issues. Try to think about the reasons behind your child's absences, any particular difficulties you are experiencing at the moment and what would help you to improve your child's attendance. Also think about what you can do to improve attendance.

School will explain what support they can offer and whether any other agency might also be able to help you and your child. You will be able to discuss what is expected of both you and the school and then agree the actions that will support improved attendance. If you choose to accept the offer, the final contract will be signed by you and the school representative.

Working together to improve attendance

All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.