



Liden Academy Attendance Policy

Date of Approval: April 2025
Approved by: Liden Academy Committee
Review Date: March 2026

Principal: **Jeff Mason**
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Registered in England; Company number 08146633
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Introduction

Liden Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all children and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all.

Liden Academy follows the guidance set out by the government in Working Together to Improve School Attendance Aug 2024. If a particular circumstance is not covered by this policy, the school will refer to this guidance for additional advice. The school may also seek advice from the Attendance and Inclusion team at Swindon Borough Council.

Why regular attendance is important?

For children to gain full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them, it is vital that they attend school regularly as the facts show below,

'Pupils who missed between 10% and 20% of school, only 35% manage to go on to achieve five good GCSEs. This compares with 73% of pupils with over 95% attendance.'

Department for Education statistics

Further we also recognise the clear links between attendance and safeguarding children. The school will follow safeguarding procedures to ensure children are safe and closely work with vulnerable families.

At Liden Academy we expect all pupils to have at least 95% attendance.

Roles and responsibilities

Staff:

All staff (teaching and support) at Liden Academy have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our children are eager to learn, feel valued and look forward to coming to school every day. All staff also have a responsibility to respond to training and set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

Academy Committee:

The Academy Committee (governors) of Liden Academy shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of Liden pupils.

Principal:

The Principal will oversee the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

Attendance Officer:

The Attendance Officer, Mrs Courtney Robinson, will ensure that the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This involves providing regular data reports and working closely with staff and parents to promote good attendance.

Inclusion Team:

Mrs Robison, our Pastoral Lead, and Miss Lawrence, our SENCO, are available each day to support families with attendance challenges. We can provide support with transport to school or working through more difficult challenges through a TAC (Team Around The Child) Plan. Please contact directly on 07597 491605 or email senco@liden.excalibur.org.uk.

Teaching Staff

Teaching staff are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

School Office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parents to the Attendance Officer **Courtney Robinson** or the Inclusion Team in order to provide them with more personalised support on attendance.

Parents/Carers

Parents are legally responsible to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full time basis; children reach statutory school age the term after their fifth birthday.

Children are required to attend school for 190/365 days per year.

Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law. This may result in prosecution.

Daily processes and routines

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Contact the school to report their child's absence before **8.50am**. Further absence needs to be reported on a daily basis to the Attendance Officer **Courtney Robinson** using the school's voicemail system.

Phone	01793 531025
Email	attendance@liden.excalibur.org.uk

- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspect of their child's school life that is affecting their attendance. We will endeavour to support parents to address any concerns.

School Opening times

The school gates (Barrington Close) are open from **8.30am**.

Primary age children must be in class by no later than **8.50am** when doors to the school and classrooms will be locked.

The gates to the school will be closed at **8.50am**.

Nursery age children need to arrive by **9.00am** for the morning session and **12.00pm** for the afternoon session.

Registration

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the school day and once at the start of the afternoon session.

Primary School	Register opens	Register closes
Am	8.55am	9.15am
Pm	1.00pm	1.15pm

Nursery	Register opens	Register closes
Am	9.20am	9.35am
Pm	12.05pm	12.20pm

Teaching staff are responsible for completing the attendance registers then administrative staff add prescribed codes for absence.

Lateness and punctuality

Children are expected to arrive at school, and be in their classroom for registration, on time every day. Arriving late into class is for some children unsettling and also disruptive to the learning of other children.

Children **arriving late** after **8.50am** will need to report to the school office.

After registration any pupil arriving after **9am** is considered as late (**L**). Arrivals after **9.15am** are recorded as an **unauthorised absence (U)** for the whole morning session.

The school will contact parents and carers when their child is persistently late. Initially this will be by letter or a meeting. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Unplanned Absence

- The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by **8.50 am** or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office. A voicemail can be left at any time on the dedicated absence line.
- We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.
- If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or if the pupil's attendance is already a concern, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence. Medical evidence could include a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or text, screenshot of calls to the GP/111. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call/text/email the pupil's parent/carer on the **morning** of the **first day** of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason for the 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 record the absence as unauthorised, using the **U** code.
- If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family, the school may carry out a home visit.
- The school will call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer.
- If we are not notified of the absence of a Child in Care, we will attempt to contact parents/carers by text, email or telephone to try and establish the reason for a pupil's absence and if we are still not able to confirm the reasons for absence, we will inform the pupil's social worker and Virtual School of the absence concern.
- If a child misses **10 consecutive days** of school, and there has been no contact at all from the parent/carer despite the best efforts of the school to make contact, the school will submit a Child Missing in Education form to the Local Authority.
- The Local Authority contact the school daily for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils with a social worker, and the Attendance Officer will share this information.

Approval for term-time absence/extended leave

The Principal will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request, as well as the school's policy and current Government guidelines.

Any request should be made as soon as possible by:

Email	attendance@liden.excalibur.org.uk
In person at the school office	Please ask to speak to Mrs Robinson, Attendance Officer, who will take the details of the request

Valid reasons for authorised absence

Medical and dental appointments

Parents are encouraged to make appointments out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards or send him/her to school beforehand).

Mobile children

Pupils travelling for occupational purposes – Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

Education activities

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities.

Exceptional circumstances (at the discretion of the Principal, who will make the final judgment):

- One-off sporting events/performing arts competitions, if the child is participating and is at county standard or above and a letter has been provided from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence. The pupil's overall attendance will be taken into account when deciding to authorise or not authorise.
- Religious observance for **1 day only** – where **the day** is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body or from the Local Authority to confirm whether the day is set apart. More than one day will not be authorised.
- Where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions.
- When a family needs to spend time together because of an immediate family member's bereavement, crisis or serious illness.
- Funeral of immediate family member.
- Children of service personnel about to go on deployment (permission would be considered as long as the request is accompanied by a letter from the Commanding Officer)
- One day of absence could be authorised for a wedding of an immediate family member and the invitation has been provided as evidence.

A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Reduced timetables

In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to place a pupil on a reduced timetable. This may be to support a pupil's transition into the school or to meet their individual health or SEND needs. The timetable would have to be written in agreement with the parents/carers.

The reduced timetable is a formal document that is stored centrally with the Local Authority and is subject to review by the Education Welfare team. In general, a reduced timetable should not last longer than six weeks, and the aim is to help a pupil to increase their attendance back to typical levels.

Flexible Schooling

Flexible schooling is the term for when a pupil is on roll but is not attending full-time, due to the individual circumstances of the family. For example, the child may have long-term health needs that mean full-time schooling is not a viable option. Decisions on flexible schooling are fully at the discretion of the Principal and are decided on a case-by-case basis. If the child has an EHCP, the SEND Service at the Local Authority may also need to be consulted.

Invalid reasons for absence

- **Holidays:** In line with the new government regulations that came into effect on 19th August 2024, there is no entitlement for parents to take their child on holiday during term time.
- Extended visits to family overseas
- A child's birthday
- To care for other family members
- To interpret for other family members
- No school uniform/shoes
- Friendship problems or issues with learning
- Head lice
- Family anniversaries
- Travel problems

There may be additional circumstances, such as Emotionally-Based School Avoidance, where the decision to authorise or not will be decided on a case-by-case basis, and the final decision will rest with the school.

In addition to the circumstances listed above, examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:

- No explanation has been given by the parent/carer
- School is not satisfied with the explanation
- The pupil is out in the community during school hours, with or without an adult, when they are supposedly off school ill (unless attending a medical appointment).

Definitions of absence

Persistent absence

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance falls below **90%** or have developed a pattern of persistent lateness - defined as **10** unauthorised absences due to lateness in any **10 week** period – are classed as a persistent absentee.

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. However, we also recognise that some reasons for absence will require a sensitive and supportive approach, which we will always endeavour to follow if the circumstances require it.

Missing 10% of the school year is the equivalent to missing at least half a day per week.

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

Severe absence

A child becomes severely absent when their attendance falls below 50%. These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance, and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners.

In cases where a child is severely absent, we will endeavour to work closely with the family, as well as any external partners or services, to support them to raise attendance. In cases where this absence is unauthorised, and the school does not consider the absences to have a valid reason, this poor attendance could constitute neglect. In these cases, the school will involve the Education Welfare Officer.

Illness

The question that parents often face is: whether their child can go to school or nursery if they are feeling unwell? The advice from the Royal College of Paediatric and Child health provide the following guidance to parents/carers:

Sickness and diarrhoea

- The school's position is that children can return to school **48 hours** after their last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea.

Headache earache and stomach ache

- Children with headache, earache or stomach ache can go to school - just let the staff know they have felt unwell.
- Give paracetamol and plenty of fluids to drink.

Coughs and colds

- Children and young people with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, who are otherwise well, can continue to attend their education setting.
- Children should be given paracetamol, plenty of fluids to drink and can be sent to school.

For further information on a range of other conditions that cause children to be unwell- please go to

<https://what0-18.nhs.uk/parents/carers/worried-your-child-unwell/child-unwell-ok-go-nurseryschool>

Staff Training

The school will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

Promoting Attendance

Attendance has a very high profile at Liden Academy. Below are the processes and procedures the school will use to promote good attendance:

Pupil rewards

We would like all children to surpass **95%** as we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe that our children can be amongst the best in Swindon. We will reward children with high attendance through a variety of means, such as certificates, celebration in newsletters/assemblies or special events.

However, we also recognise that children may have unavoidable reasons for missing school, such as long-term illness or disability. We will also endeavour to reward children who have made concerted efforts to improve their attendance over time, or who have shown great resilience in the face of adversity.

Graduated Response to attendance:

Liden Academy operates a graduated response to improving attendance. This graduated response is not a 'one size fits all' and may be adapted to suit individual circumstances, at the school's discretion. In general, the process may operate like this:

First-day calling

Liden Academy has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents/carers will be sent a text and if no response is received, they will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation, to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage, children who do not have a good reason for absence, or who may be absent without their parent's knowledge. Any reasons given for lateness will be entered into the BROMCOM database to help identify any trends that may occur.

Letter/Email from the Attendance Officer:

below 95% - letter to make parents/carers aware that their child's attendance is below expected. School will monitor attendance over the next term.

Individual contact from the Attendance Officer:

This may happen if a child's attendance drops close to 90%, or if the number of late marks or unauthorised absences are increasing. The Attendance Officer may phone or speak to parents/carers at the office.

Invite to informal meeting with the Attendance Officer, or another member of the Senior Leadership Team:

This would be a discussion to see if school can provide further support, and to understand the barriers to attendance. The child's attendance may be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer if it has dropped below 90%.

Attendance Plan/Contract (formal meeting):

Parents/carers may be invited to a formal meeting to set up an Attendance Plan/Contract for a child. The aim of the plan/contract would be to identify support strategies to improve attendance. It is not a legally binding document, but allows a more formal route to secure engagement where other options of early help have not worked. The document may be shared with the Education Welfare Officer and other external services who support the family. There would be regular reviews, usually at 4 week intervals. An attendance plan/contract may not be appropriate in every instance, and would be offered at the discretion of the school.

When parents/carers do not comply with the regulations set out in the Attendance Plan/Contract, the school will contact the family to seek an explanation and decide whether it is reasonable to continue. If the Plan/Contract is proving difficult to comply with through no fault of the parents/carers, a review meeting will be held to look at other supportive options. However, where no reasonable explanation is given, the school will issue a warning letter that the Plan/Contract may be terminated and another course of action pursued, which could include a

Notice to Improve:

If the Attendance Plan/Contract has not led to sufficient improvement in attendance, or there has been non-compliance with the document, the school may ask the Local Authority to issue a Notice to Improve. This formal letter is the last step before legal intervention.

Attendance Plan/Contract.

Legal Intervention

If the school decides to pursue a legal intervention, then the process is documented below. In circumstances where a child has been absent for a holiday, the school reserves the right to move straight to a legal intervention, skipping the steps above.

Fixed penalty notices

The school will issue a penalty notice in the following ways for incidences of unauthorised pupil absence over a 3-year period. Unauthorised absences include a 5-day holiday or any 10 unauthorised sessions in any 10-week period (5 days). A school day is 2 sessions: am and pm.

The 10-week period can be from any point in the year and can cross over holidays and academic years. The 10 sessions do not have to be altogether.

The 10 sessions of absence could consist of, for example:

- Holidays taken in term time without the agreement of the school.
- Unauthorised absence spanning over long weekends.
- Arriving late to school after the register has closed at 9:15am.
- Any absence marked in the register as unauthorised.

Example 1: A child takes a 'long weekend' holiday, missing Friday and the following Monday (4 sessions unauthorised absence). Three weeks later, the child arrives for school at 10:10am with no satisfactory explanation (1 morning session). Two weeks later, the child misses three days of school, with no contact from the parent (6 sessions). This constitutes 11 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period, and would result in a potential fixed penalty notice.

Example 2: A child is absent for a 5 day holiday (10 sessions). This would result in a fixed penalty notice.

The school is required to follow the following escalation process below:

	Fine cost	Rules
First Penalty notice	£80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days.	Fine increases to £160 if not paid from 22-28 days.
Second Penalty notice	£160 per parent per child.	No reduction offered for early payment. Penalty notices are capped at a maximum of 2 in a 3-year period.
Third time of unauthorised absence will be a referred to either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A magistrate court • Local authority investigating officer 	Prosecution could result in a criminal record and a fine up to £2500 per child.	
15 day+ unauthorised holiday	A fixed penalty will not be issued. Instead, a direct referral will be made to the Magistrate Court.	

Policy Links

This policy is linked to:

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (Aug 2024)
- Anti-Bullying policy
- SEND policy
- Intimate Care policy
- Behaviour and Discipline policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (EAT)
- Part 1 and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe In Education (Sept 24)
- The school's staff code of conduct (EAT)
- Children Missing Education statutory guidance Sept 16
- First Aid and Medical needs policy (EAT)
- Health and Safety policy (EAT)
- Looked after Children policy