

Policy: Attendance, truancy and missing without authority

Reviewed: May 2026

Next review: May 2027

Mid-year updates:

Policy Monitoring

Libra Policies are reviewed when the need arises in line with legislation updates, guidance, and useful information we receive to improve and enhance our provision. Additionally, Policies are updated annually by relevant members of staff and the Senior Leadership Team.

Equality Statement

We believe that this policy is in line with the Equality Act as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any child or member of staff, and it helps to promote equality at this school.

We all have a responsibility to ensure equality permeates into all aspects of school life and that everyone is treated equally irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We want everyone connected with this school to feel safe, secure, valued and of equal worth. We acknowledge the findings of the Race Disparity Audit that clearly shows how people of different ethnicities are treated across the public services of health, education, employment and the criminal justice system.

We wish to work closely with the School Council and to hear their views and opinions as we acknowledge and support Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that children should be encouraged to form and to express their views.

Introduction

This policy reflects the DfE statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities, August 2024. This policy should be read alongside the statutory guidance documents on children missing education, supporting pupils at school with medical conditions, suspensions and exclusions, alternative provision, and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Libra school recognises the clear link between the attendance and attainment of our children. The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding issues. It is important to see our children every day and provide an educationally safe and secure environment. To gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that our children attend regularly and on time. Any absence affects a child's education, and regular absence will seriously affect children's learning. We expect all children to aim for 100% attendance with we have the expectation that all children achieve regular attendance of at least 97%. To put this statistic into context, it is deemed acceptable that they might miss only 12 sessions (or 6 days) over the course of a full academic year. Once a child's attendance drops below 90% (this means they have been absent from school for 38 sessions, or 19 days in any one school year) they are considered a Persistent Absentee (or PA). For a child who misses 50% of their school education (160 sessions, or 80 days) they are considered a Severe Absentee (SA). Libra school believes staff, families, carers, children and all members of the school community have an important contribution in improving attendance and punctuality ensuring children attend to achieve.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children. We believe good attainment progress depends on good attendance. We expect all school staff to support and promote excellent school attendance by acting as role models and to work hard to provide a learning environment in which all children are eager to learn, feel valued and enjoy coming to school. The senior management team have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. Sometimes a child's absence or lateness may not be their fault and in these circumstances, it is our policy to be supportive of the child and not to make them feel guilty or inadequate. Also, at times we must give allowances for religious beliefs and individual family circumstances. We understand when a new pupil joins Libra, the first absence is of significant importance from a possible safeguarding perspective and should be explored in line

with our usual attendance follow-up procedures but bearing in mind whether this is genuine or whether this could indicate potential ongoing problems.

We believe it is essential to regularly remind families of the importance of good attendance and its link to their child's attainment. The Education Act clearly states that the prime responsibility of families is to ensure that their child attends school regularly. Truancy is a matter that we treat very seriously because we are aware that children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important that our school response to persistently absent children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent children, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems first emerge but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law and may result in legal action.

We are aware that leave of absence can only be granted to a child only in exceptional circumstances and in authorising a holiday in term time we will take into account the child's attendance record, their needs as stated within their EHCP, the child's age, the reason for the trip, the time in the academic year and the employment difficulties that families face by taking holidays in school holiday time. We will exercise a consistent approach and ensure equity for all students.

Aims and Objectives:

We aim to:

- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm.
- To demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school.
- To maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school.
- To have in place procedures to prevent truancy.
- Maximise the overall percentage of student attendance and punctuality at the Libra school
- Reduce the number of children who are persistently absent and raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community.
- Provide support advice and guidance for families, students and staff.
- Develop clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for children.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data.
- Ensure a whole school approach to ensure consistency of intervention strategies.
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with our Local Authority partners, Children's Services, Health and other partner agencies

Monitoring and evidence

- Admissions register
- Attendance register
- SMT minutes of meetings reviewing attendance
- Parent communication letters concerning attendance
- CPOM recorded parental communications concerning attendance

Working together

Attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide-ranging and can be complex, both within and beyond the school gates. They are often specific to individual children and families. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere children want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all children are keen and ready to learn. For more complex cases, the ethos of the working together to improve school attendance guidance is that children and families should receive holistic, whole-family support to help them overcome the barriers to attendance they are facing. For these more complex cases, a traditional linear or pathway process is unlikely to work. Instead, the guidance expects

the best placed service to lead a 'support first' approach with schools working together with local authorities and wider partners, including the voluntary and community sector where needed.

Libra – as the best placed service – should work to understand the reasons for absence and act as lead practitioner. Where barriers to attendance go beyond the school gates and cover multiple needs, schools should work with the local authority and other agencies to provide wider-holistic support. If the case meets the local thresholds for early help or family support, this may involve completing an early help assessment. In some of these cases a local authority team will be best placed to act as lead practitioner. If attendance is a single need or the case does not meet the local threshold, Libra will follow early help principles in our approach. Where a child or their family already have another lead practitioner working with them, Libra will work alongside their practitioner, to help make attendance a key element of their existing plan. This includes children with a social worker, early help practitioner, youth offender team worker or with an education, health and care plan.

Children at risk of becoming persistently absent

Parents and carers will:

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.

Libra will:

- Proactively use data to identify children at risk of persistent absence.
- Work with each identified child and their parents / carers to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance and act as lead practitioner if attendance is the only issue and/or the local threshold for formal early help is not met.
- If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. If a case meets the local threshold for formal early help/family support, this includes conducting the early help assessment and acting as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.
- Through SMT discussion ensure that the provision outlined in the child's EHCP is in place and review if this is being effective.

Persistently absent children:

Libra will:

- Continue support as for children at risk of becoming persistently absent and:
- Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.
- Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority 0-25 SEND team to review if the placement is meeting the child's needs. Persistent absence would indicate that it is not.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through a referral to statutory children's social care.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

Severely absent children:

Libra will:

- Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and:
- Agree a joint approach for any severely absent children with the local authority.

Support for pupils with a social worker:

Libra will:

- Know who the children who have, or who have had, a social worker are.

- Understand how the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced, can have an impact on attendance – whilst maintaining a culture of high aspiration for the cohort.
- Provide additional academic support and make reasonable adjustments to help them, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there can be a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.
- Work in partnership with the local authority at a strategic and individual level, sharing data on attendance including, at an individual level, informing the child's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be removed from the register.

Looked after and previously looked after children:

Libra will:

- Have high expectations for the cohort – with expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.
- Work in partnership with the local authority Virtual School Head to review high quality Personal Education Plans for looked after children that support good attendance.
- Work directly with parents / carers to develop good home-school links that support good attendance.

Pupils with Medical Conditions:

Libra will:

- Ensure that the same ambition for attendance is maintained and work with children and parents to maximise attendance.
- Ensure that pastoral support is available and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, ensuring the provision outlined in the child's EHCP is accessed.
- Ensure additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.
- regularly monitoring data for such children.
- Ensure children are not penalised if their absence from school is related to their medical condition such as attending hospital appointments.
- Ensure parents are aware that:
- They must obtain permission from school in advance of an appointment so that the absence can be treated as authorised.
- An absence can also be authorised if the child is too ill to attend school and the school is notified as soon as possible.
- If a child's absence is expected to be for more than 15 days, then the local authority is under a duty to ensure that the child receives as normal an education as possible by home teaching, a hospital school or teaching service while he/she is absent
- Libra will not encourage non-attendance by frequently sending home a child with medical conditions.

Attendance Registers

Libra's attendance register:

- is a digital record
- is taken twice daily, morning and afternoon
- provides effective attendance management
- provides evidence to the local authority of persistent attendance
- records all absences as authorised or unauthorised

The only time when a register will not be taken is when the school has been forced to close, for example in instance of severe weather, fire... etc.

Libra acknowledges its' duty to inform the local authority of any child who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority (or in default of such agreement, at intervals determined by the Secretary of State)

Daily attendance registers duties for any child with unauthorised attendance:

- Collect register data once registration has been completed.
- Monitor registers.
- Listen to absence calls and text messages.
- Read emails/messages from parents / carers
- Make a list of absence children without an explanation.
- Double check the list before calling parents/carers to establish the whereabouts of any absent children.
- Contact parents/carers if they have not reported their child's absence by 10.00am (at the very latest – usually as soon as possible when an absence has been identified).
- If unable to contact parents/carers then call everyone on the contact list.
- Leave voicemail and text messages in all cases.
- Use school intelligence to establish any information about the unexplained absence.
- If still no contact with the parents/carers then repeat the calls.
- Contact the key worker if a child is on the child protection register and no reason has been given for the child's absence.
- If still no contact, then send appropriate staff to the family home.
- If no contact has been made even after visiting the family home of an absent child, then inform children's services/the police.
- Continue to contact the parents/carers throughout the day until contact is made.
- Inform the Principal and the Designated Safeguarding Lead of the situation.
- Keep a log of all actions.

Misbehaviour and exclusions

Libra has a separate Relational policy that focuses on children's behaviour. Libra does not ask parents to collect children during the day if their behaviour has deteriorated and Libra does not exclude children for misbehaviour. However, if a child's behaviour is consistently dysregulated and requires regular physical intervention to keep everyone safe, that places both the child and staff at risk of injury, Libra will call an EHCP review to discuss with parents and the local authority if Libra is able to continue to meet the child's needs.

Missing without authority during the school day

If a child absconds from the supervision of their staff during the school day either at the main school site or from any of our offsite locations including on trips, staff are required to inform the school office immediately who in turn will immediately inform our Operation and Logistics Manager, who together with the office staff will:

- Arrange an initial search in the area the child went absent ensuring that all other children are appropriately supervised.
- Staff will remain in the area where the child was last seen.
- Contact the Principal, Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher to advise them that a child has gone missing without authority so that additional staff can be deployed to help with the search.
- Contact parents / carers and if appropriate the social worker of the child and advise them of where and when the child went missing and ask them if they are aware of any locations the child may have gone to in the area.
- Put together a description of the child including what clothing they are wearing.
- Call the Police if a local search has not located the child within 30 minutes to advise them that we have a child missing without authority from school. However, other factors will be taken into consideration such as the weather, the time of day and the area to determine the time scale as to when the police will be notified.
- Continue to liaise with parents and the police until a conclusion to the incident has been reached.
- Critically review the incident afterwards with all the staff involved, identify when alternative practices could have been used and amend risk assessments to reduce the risk of this happening again in future.
- Update the child's risk assessment to include that going missing without authority is a risk.

Return of a missing child

If the child returns to school after being reported missing our Operations and Logistics manager together with the office will:

- Inform the Police, social worker, or EDT and parents / carers that the child is no longer missing.
- Welcome back the child and show that they are very happy to see them. It is important to understand why children feel the need to be absent without permission and when it is appropriate their tutor and a member of the senior management team will talk with them about what they left the supervision of their staff. The Police may wish to have a conversation with the child.
- If it emerges that the child absented his or herself because of victimisation from bullying or abuse the appropriate safeguarding procedures will be followed in line with the Libra's Bullying policy and procedures.

Responsibilities

The senior management team will:

- work in conjunction with the Directors to ensure all school staff, children and parents are aware of and comply with this policy.
- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- have robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which children and cohorts to focus on.
- have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
- provide an environment that is safe, fun, stimulating and challenging to all children.
- promote an awareness of and respect for a diversity of cultures, values, beliefs and abilities.
- encourage parents to take an active role in policy development where appropriate.
- ensure all relevant risk assessments are in place to ensure a safe school environment.
- provide leadership and vision in respect of equality.
- provide guidance, support and training to all staff.
- consider providing remote learning to children in circumstances when in-person attendance is either not possible or contrary to government guidance in accordance with school risk assessments and safeguarding guidance. This might include occasions when:
 - we decide that it is not possible for the school to open safely, or that opening would contradict guidance from local or central government.
 - individual children, for a short period, are unable to physically attend school but are able to continue learning.
- monitor and evidence the effectiveness of this policy.

Teaching and learning support staff will:

- comply with all aspects of this policy.
- implement the school's equalities policy and schemes.
- report and deal with all incidents of discrimination.
- attend appropriate training sessions.
- report any concerns they have about any aspect of the school community.
- receive relevant training, periodically and ongoing as required, according to their role.
- have equal chances of training, career development and promotion.
- receive equal opportunities training on induction to improve their understanding of the current Equality Act and its implications.

Children will:

- be aware of and contribute to all appropriate policies through the school council.
- work with and support the school council on all agenda items.
- strive to take pride in their work and work to the highest standard that they are capable of.

- listen carefully to all instructions given by the teacher, ask for further help if they do not understand and participate fully in all lessons.
- participate in discussions concerning progress and attainment.
- treat others, their work and equipment with respect.
- support the school Code of Conduct and guidance necessary to ensure the smooth running of the school.
- talk to others without shouting and or using physical aggression and will use language which is neither abusive nor offensive.
- hand in homework properly completed and on time.
- wear correct uniform.

Parents and Carers will be encouraged to:

- be aware of and comply with all school policies including this one.
- ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- be encouraged to become involved in policy development by taking part in parent engagement opportunities and by maximising learning opportunities between home and school.
- Keep informed via termly newsletters of the children's curriculum.
- be encouraged to take an active role in the life of the school by attending parent-teacher consultations / Parent Open Days / fundraising and social events.
- ensure regular and punctual attendance of their child.
- notify school on the first day of child absence.
- have holidays out of term time and authorised by school.
- encourage effort and achievement.
- encourage completion of homework and return it to school on time.
- provide the right conditions for homework to take place.
- ensure correct school uniform is worn.
- support the school Code of Conduct and guidance necessary to ensure smooth running of the school.
- speak with children and staff respectfully and expect the same in return.

Linked Policies and documents:

Admissions register / Attendance register / Relational behaviour / Home School Agreement / Safeguarding

Further information and support, can be found in:

The department's statutory guidance on school attendance Working together to improve school attendance which sets out how schools must work with local authority children's services where school absence indicates safeguarding concerns.

Information regarding schools' duties regarding children missing education, including information schools must provide to the local authority when removing a child from the school roll at standard and non-standard transition points, can be found in the department's statutory guidance: Children Missing Education.

further information for colleges providing education for a child of compulsory school age can be found in: Full-time-Enrolment of 14 to 16 year olds in Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges.

general information and advice for schools and colleges can be found in the Government's Missing Children and Adults Strategy.

Policy Location

This policy can be found:

- on SharePoint within the staff and master's folder
- on the school website www.libraschool.co.uk
- available upon request from the office: admin@libraschool.co.uk / 01598 740044

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