Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Policy Owner:	Richard Rose Jasmin Kaur Castlefort Academy
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LIGHTHOUSE
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Document Version Control Log

Version	Modification Date	Synopsis of Changes
1.0	September 2025	
2.0	September 2026	



Attendance Contacts and Reminders

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Ceri Porter	Safeguarding and Attendance Link Governor	01543 452158	cporterbould@castlefort.lhmat.com

Gates open from 8.30am-8.45am

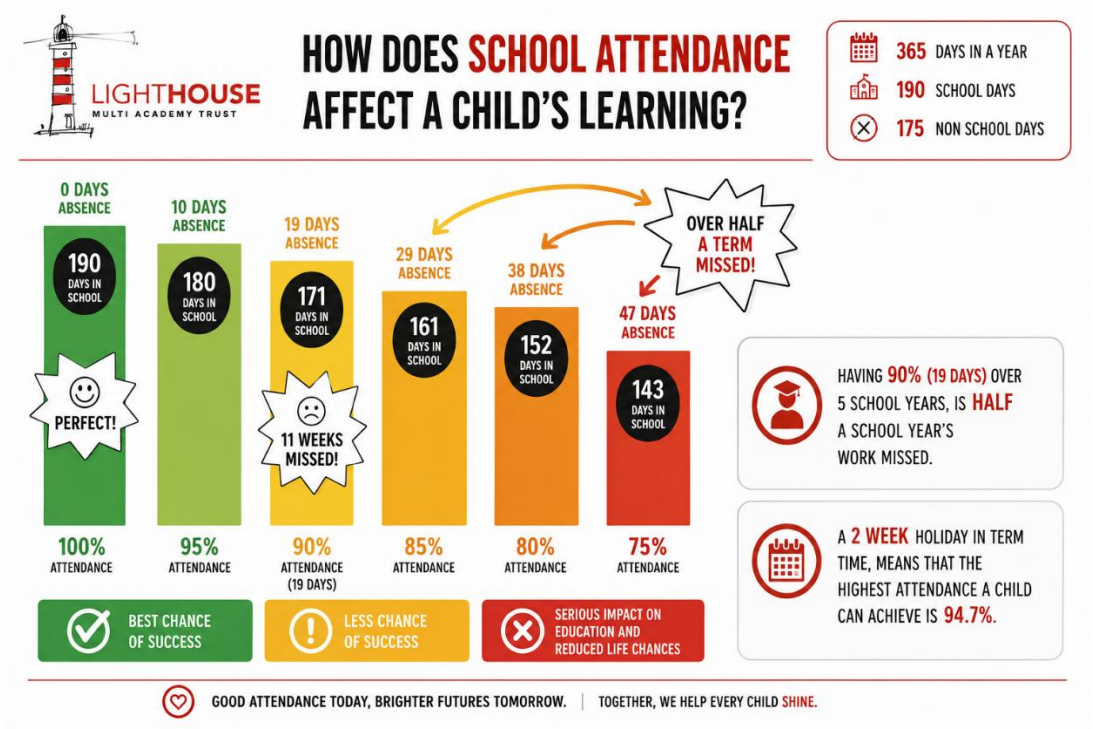
The academy day starts from 8.40am and the doors will close at 8.45am

Registers will be taken at 8.45am each morning and kept open for 30 minutes. Children who arrive between 8.45am-9.15am will be recorded as late (L) on the register. Pupils who arrive after 9.15am will be recorded as 'U', which is late after the registers close and will mean they lose their morning mark.

The academy day ends at 3.10pm (KS1) & 3.15pm (KS2)

All children should be in academy every day and on time (by 8.45am)

All absences must be reported to the academy on a daily basis by 9.15am at the latest.



1. Vision and Values

At Castlefort Academy and the Lighthouse Trust, our vision as a Trust is our collective commitment to equipping our young people with the skills and mindset to thrive and then take on the world.

The Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust is built on the shared firm foundations of delivering excellence in education and leadership.

Working collaboratively, we seize all opportunities to enhance and impact on the life chances of everyone within the federation family.

We will evolve and adapt our support as the need arises to ensure that we empower and encourage our children to be the best.

Together, we believe that education is the passport to the future, and the Lighthouse Trust is preparing our learners for the challenges of tomorrow.

Alongside our commitment to educational excellence, Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust is committed to an Inclusive Attendance approach, recognising that attendance is everyone's responsibility.

We believe children attend best when they feel safe, valued, included and experience a strong sense of belonging. We work collaboratively with children, families and partner agencies to understand and remove barriers to attendance, ensuring every child has the right support at the right time.

Our Graduated Attendance Approach

Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust and its academies adopt a graduated approach to attendance through a three-tier model of support. This ensures every child receives the right support at the right time. Universal strategies promote excellent attendance for all pupils, targeted interventions provide additional support where attendance begins to decline, and specialist multi-agency support is provided where barriers are more complex or attendance is persistently or severely affected. This graduated approach reflects both the Inclusive Attendance framework and the Department for Ed

Graduated Attendance Support

Tier 1 – Universal Support

All pupils benefit from a welcoming, inclusive school culture where good attendance is promoted through positive relationships, high expectations, effective communication with families and high-quality teaching and learning. Attendance is monitored routinely, and attendance is recognised and celebrated across the academy.

Tier 2 – Targeted Support

Where attendance begins to decline or concerns emerge, pupils and families are offered additional support to identify and address barriers. This may include Golden Hour and Silver Hour interventions, attendance meetings, pastoral support, mentoring, reasonable adjustments, attendance support plans, home visits or referrals to Early Help and other appropriate services.

Tier 3 – Intensive Support

Where attendance continues to decline despite targeted support, or where absence is persistent or severe, the academy will work closely with the Lighthouse Trust Attendance Officer, Local Authority and other relevant agencies to provide intensive support. This may include multi-agency working, attendance contracts, statutory interventions and other legal processes where appropriate, whilst continuing to work in partnership with families to secure sustained improvements in attendance.

This approach underpins all attendance decision making across Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust and its academies, ensuring support is proportionate, child-centred and responsive to individual n

Golden Hour and Silver Hour Approach

As part of our commitment to inclusive attendance, Academy Name adopts a proactive **Golden Hour** and **Silver Hour** approach to support pupils whose attendance is causing concern.

Golden Hour takes place during the first hour of the school day. Attendance staff prioritise contact with families of pupils whose attendance is a concern, who are persistently absent, vulnerable or who have not arrived at school without explanation. The purpose is to establish the reason for absence, provide support where barriers have arisen, reinforce the importance of attendance and, where appropriate, work with families to secure the pupil's attendance that day.

Where appropriate, this may include offering practical support, discussing barriers to attendance, signposting families to additional services or arranging a home visit where there are safeguarding concerns.

Silver Hour provides a further opportunity to re-engage pupils who have not attended the morning session. Where it is appropriate and safe to do so, the academy will work with families to support pupils into school before the start of the afternoon session, enabling them to access learning, reconnect with staff and peers and receive their afternoon attendance mark. We recognise that attending part of the school day is preferable to missing the whole day and can help prevent patterns of absence becoming entrenched.

The Golden Hour and Silver Hour form part of our graduated attendance response and reflect our commitment to removing barriers, supporting families and maximising every opportunity for pupils to attend school.

2. Legal Framework

This policy outlines The Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust expectations of our employees in relation to supporting pupil attendance.

We are committed to equality and value diversity.

As such we are committed to fulfilling our Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Duty) obligations and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

This policy should also be applied in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (July 2026) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contentsThe Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/757/regulation/2/madeIt also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education

Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy September 2026
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- The Lighthouse Trust Children Missing in Education Policy
- Home Visit Procedures

3. The Lighthouse Trust and Castlefort Academy Aims:

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to academy attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve academy attendance (applies from July 2026), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend academy
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons
- Identifying barriers early and responding with support
- Using evidence-informed attendance practice
- Promoting belonging, engagement and participation
- Reducing persistent and severe absence through early intervention
- Ensuring support is proportionate before legal intervention
- Developing an inclusive attendance culture where every child feels welcomed, valued and has a strong sense of belonging.
- Recognising and celebrating positive attendance, improved attendance and punctuality, whilst ensuring support is provided to remove barriers where attendance is a concern.
- Working in partnership with pupils, parents, carers and external agencies to identify and overcome barriers to attendance through early intervention and supportive practice.

4. Our Attendance Targets

- To keep whole academy attendance in line or above national
- To ensure our pupils attend every day and on time

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Governing Body and Trustees at the Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust

- Ensure an effective whole academy culture of high attendance is underpinned by clear expectations, procedures, and responsibilities.
- Oversight of the Inclusive Attendance strategy, monitoring attendance culture, and ensuring sufficient resources and professional development.
- Offer a clear vision for high attendance, underpinned by high expectations and core values, which are communicated to and understood by staff, pupils, and families
- Have a clear, written attendance policy based on the expectations set out in this policy.
- Regularly review and understand attendance data, discussing and challenging trends, and helping academy leaders to focus improvement efforts on individual pupils and cohorts who need it the most

- Ensure academy leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties outlined in Working Together to Improve School Attendance, July 2026
- Make sure staff, pupils, and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe
- Expect good attendance and punctuality from all members of the academy community and make sure that pupils understand its importance
- Convey clear messages about how absences affect attainment, wellbeing, and wider outcomes. Empower staff to take responsibility for attendance
- Recognise attendance as an important area of academy improvement. Make sure it is resourced appropriately (including the effective use of pupil premium funding) to create, build, and maintain systems and performance
- Have a designated Attendance Champion in the Senior Leadership Team with clearly assigned responsibilities, which are identified within the attendance policy, escalation of procedures, and the school improvement plan
- Make sure staff receive training/professional development and support to deploy attendance systems effectively
- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across academies within The Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust

5.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Having a clear, written academy attendance policy based on the expectations set out in this policy and insuring the implementation of this policy - ensuring compliance with Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2026
- Ensuring that every member of staff knows and understands their responsibilities for attendance, including how safeguarding links with poor attendance. We will ensure that there's compliance with Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Improve School Attendance
- Create a culture of belonging, removing barriers to attendance, and ensuring attendance is integrated with safeguarding, SEND, behaviour and wellbeing.
- Developing good support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND).
- Ensuring every member of staff knows and understands their responsibilities for attendance.
- Ensuring accurate completion of admissions and attendance registers
- Ensuring staff are actively working to maximise attendance rates, both in relation to individual pupils and to groups of pupils across our academy
- Have clear processes in place to address persistent and severe absence - pupils who are severely absent may be at risk of contextual safeguarding issues, and we will ensure that this is our top priority for action and support. We will be potentially cautious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the academy, Children's Services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Often, severely absent pupils have additional needs, and therefore our academy must ensure that appropriate services are

informed and aware of pupils' absence so suitable support can be considered, and education provided/accessed

- Ensuring that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and punctuality.
- Monitoring and analysing data and trends
- Reporting to the Governing Body and The Lighthouse Trust, the attendance figures and progress in achieving the set targets.
- Reminding parents of their commitment to this policy
- Building and modelling respectful relationships with staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders to secure their trust and engagement. Making sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the academy
- Open and honest communication with staff, pupils, parents, and families about their expectations of academy life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them
- Liaising with other agencies, the Local Authority Attendance Advisor to work with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example when a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable
- Sharing attendance information/date and working collaboratively with The Lighthouse Trust, the Local Authority and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming severe or persistent.
- Ensuring that the attendance policy is applied fairly and consistently and recognises the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. The academy will consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.
- Ensuring all staff members:
    - ❖ Treat pupils with dignity
    - ❖ Build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
    - ❖ Take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the way in which this might contribute to absence, handling confidential information sensitively
    - ❖ Understand the importance of education as a place safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils, particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity
    - ❖ Communicate effectively with families regarding pupils' attendance and wellbeing
    - ❖ Deliver clear messages about expectations for attendance and punctuality and academy performance through regular channels of communication with staff, pupils and parents
    - ❖ Establish and monitor implementation of rewards for attendance and punctuality and sanctions for absence and lateness
- Monitoring implementation of policy and practice, for example, through walking into learning, attendance drop-ins, late gates, persistent absentee notifications, staff attendance drop-in sessions, and through regular termly meetings with the Local Authority Attendance Advisor
- Monitoring of whole academy data regularly to identify reasons for absence, patterns, attendance of particular groups, and the impact of interventions

- Establishing and ensuring implementation and robust monitoring of arrangements to identify, report, and support Children Missing from Education (CME) or at risk of becoming CME
- Engaging pupils in consultation on attendance policy, practice, rewards, and intervention

5.3The Role of the Senior Attendance Champion (SLT)

The Academy Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- Implementing the policy alongside the Headteacher at Castlefort Academy
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Championing and improving attendance
- Ensuring practice is in place to address persistent and severe absence in robust
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Oversight of data analysis –
- ❖ Monitoring and analysing attendance data regularly to allow early identification and early intervention to address issues. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children's social care and early help services which are working with families
- ❖ leadership of the whole-school attendance strategy, analysis of attendance data, multi-agency working, and evaluating the impact of interventions.
- ❖ Robust academy systems which provide useful data at cohort, group and individual pupil level to give an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns amongst groups such as: children who have a social worker including Children and Young People in Care (CYPiC), young carers, children who are eligible for free school meals, children who speak English as a second language and/or children who have special educational needs and disabilities
- ❖ Keeping the Headteacher and all academy staff informed of attendance figures and trends by providing regular reports to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures
- ❖ Compiling attendance data for the Headteacher, Governing Body, and the Local Authority Attendance Advisor
- Ensuring a positive relationship with the Local Authority Attendance Advisor is fostered, including attending Attendance Targeted Support Meetings
- Communicating messages to pupils and parents
- Academy attendance, safeguarding and pastoral support policies which should clearly outline:
- ❖ The key principles
- ❖ Rules pupils need to follow
- ❖ Routines
- ❖ Consequence systems
- If required, holding regular meetings with the parents of pupils within the academy to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Undertaking home visits in line with the academy's safeguarding responsibilities to engage families and ensure children are safe.

- Identifying pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
- Making sure escalation procedures to address absence are initiated proactively, understood by pupils and families, implemented consistently and their impact is regularly.
- The escalation of procedures to address absence needs to be:
❖ Understood by pupils, parents, and carers
❖ Implemented consistently
❖ Reviewed regularly
- Ensuring that the Local Authority is notified of any pupil who fails to attend the school regularly
- Keep parents informed regularly of their child's attendance and absence record (this should be communicated to parents in an easy-to-understand format and number of days)
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils considered to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at the academy
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.

The Senior Attendance Champion responsible for attendance in our academy is Jennie Platt and can be contacted via jplatt@castlefort.lhmat.com.

5.4 Castlefort Academy Office Staff/ Attendance staff

Our office staff will be expected:

- To ensure the recording of attendance and absence data is accurate
- To ensure robust day-to-day processes are in place
- Continue first-day response and attendance monitoring but add early identification of barriers and timely communication with families.
- To track and follow up absence and poor punctuality. Gates close at 8:45am. Parents should make contact with the academy office if they're going to be arriving late. Parents must bring their child/ren into the academy office and sign in using the E-Reception system
- Provide appropriate support and challenge to establish good registration practice
- Carry out robust first day calling procedures including, priority routines for vulnerable children including children with a social worker, children walking to and from school alone
- If absence continues without explanation, further contact should be made to ensure safeguarding
- Identify any absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents to understand why and when the pupil will return
- Where absences are recorded as unexplained in the attendance register the correct code should be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 working days after the session
- Liaising with the Headteacher regarding Leave of Absences
- To work with the Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust Attendance Officer
- Where reasonably possible, ensure schools hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil

5.5 The Role of Teaching Staff and Support Staff at Castlefort Academy

Teaching and Support Staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring the effective whole academy culture of high attendance is underpinned by setting an example of punctuality and good attendance.
- Implementing the policy and ensuring it is applied fairly and consistently
- Ensuring that the registers are taken at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon and are accurate and up to date
- Reviewing class and individual attendance patterns and speaking to parents to identify patterns early
- Informing the Academy Attendance Champion/Senior Leader of any attendance and/or punctuality concerns
- Emphasising with pupils the importance of punctuality and good attendance
- Reminding parents of their commitment to this policy
- Building respectful relationships with staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Making sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the academy
- Communicating openly and honestly with staff, pupils, and their families about expectations of attendance at Castlefort Academy. This will be clear to show what is expected and what is expected from them.
- Holding regular meetings with parents of pupils who the academy (and/or the Local Authority) considers to be vulnerable or are persistent or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement
- Liaising with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.
- Modelling respectful relationships and appropriate communication for staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture. All staff members should:

❖ Treat pupils with dignity
❖ Build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
❖ Take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence handling confidential information sensitively.
❖ Understand the importance of the academy as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils, particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity
❖ Communicate effectively with families regarding pupils' attendance and well-being

All staff will be expected to:

- Rehearse and reinforce attendance and punctuality expectations continually
- Emphasise the importance of attendance and its impact on attainment
- Promote rewards and celebrate progress but continue to outline sanctions
- Apply rewards and sanctions consistently
- Be a point of contact for parents to discuss early concerns about attendance and punctuality

- Build positive relationships, recognising early signs of attendance concerns, and promoting a sense of belonging in the classroom. View attendance information provided by the Attendance Champion and SLT

5.6 Expectation of Parents

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school every day school is open.

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance
- Instilling in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending the academy regularly
- Informing the academy on each day of absence by **9.15am** at the latest
- Providing the academy with an expectation for each day of absence
- Informing the academy of any changes to their contact details
- Taking an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour, and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- Working in partnership with the academy to resolve issues and help the academy understand their child's barriers to attendance
- Proactively engage with the support offered by the academy to prevent the need for more formal support
- If formal support is required, proactively engage with this support to prevent the need for any legal intervention
- Booking any medical appointments out of school hours where possible
- Only requesting leave of absences in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance
- Completing the Leave of Absence Requests via the academy office and returning prior to taking the exceptional circumstance Leave (Appendix)
- Treating staff with respect
- Actively supporting the work of the academy
- Calling academy staff for help when you need it
- Communicating as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence or require support

5.6 Expectation of Pupils

We expect the following from all our pupils at Castlefort Academy.

- To attend the academy regularly
- To arrive on time
- To talk to a member of staff about any problems or reasons that may prevent them from attending the academy and contribute to discussions about attendance and share any barriers they may be experiencing.

6. Attendance Registers

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. We will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment
- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8:40am (Reception/ KS1) or 8:45am (Nursery/ KS2) and ends at 3:10pm (Reception/ KS1) or 3:15pm (Nursery/ KS2).

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm and will be kept open until 1.45pm

7. Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the academy of the reason for the absence on each day of absence by the start of the academy day or as soon as practically possible, by calling the academy admin office staff, who can be contacted via 01543 452158 or support@castlefort.lhmat.com.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

When your child has been absent for 3 days. The academy may consider a home visit in line with our safeguarding and attendance processes.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the academy will ask for medical evidence. **Please note we will also request medical evidence for absences for attendance below 90% or being monitored by the academy or the Lighthouse Attendance Officer**. Medical evidence that can be submitted:

- An appointment card or text message confirming attendance
- Medical/orthopaedic/hospital appointment letter
- Copy of prescription showing name and date
- Prescribed medication with pharmacist label; showing name and date
- Hospital discharge letter
- Written parental permission to the academy to contact the GP for advice
- We understand that GPs are more frequently refusing to see patients with diarrhoea and vomiting, colds and common ailments, therefore should absence patterns show recurrent bouts of the same illness we will invite you into school to discuss the issue. During the informal meeting we will ask you to contact your GP to discuss the problem, explaining the effect it is having on your child's attendance and will provide you with a school form to be signed by your GP.

If the academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

8. Planned Absences for Medical Appointments

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the academy in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of academy hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of academy for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

9. Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- Where lateness is persistent parents will be asked to meet with the Senior Leader for attendance so that academy can support them with any issues they have in getting children to academy on time

10. Following up an unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the academy cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the

academy may carry out a home visit and if they still are not able to make contact, they may call the Multi Agency safeguarding Hub at the Local Authority

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the academy will consider involving The Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust Attendance Officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: the academy may issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or take other legal action

11. Reporting to Parents

The academy will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels through telephone, letters and face to face conversations. The academy will regularly inform parents of attendance levels below 94%.

12. Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the academy site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as

- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.

- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states ''on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which [their] parent belongs''
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there WILL be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations, the Headteacher may use their discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, considering the overall welfare of the child.
- Children of service personnel about to go on deployment (permission would be considered if the request is accompanied by a letter from the Commanding Officer).
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the academy, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
- Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above, the Headteacher agrees to consult with the Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust prior to any authorisation being given to the parent.

Each academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 15 days before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the academy office. The Headteacher will require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents therefore need to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence. In considering a request, the academy will take account of the following factors which may help to reach a decision:

- the exceptional circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
- time of the academic year when the leave has been requested
- duration of the absence – number of academy days being missed
- the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
- the child's current attendance and punctuality rate and overall attendance pattern
- exceptional term time leave requested/taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose
- whether the parent/carer made the request in advance
- pupils due to take any statutory testing arrangements (KS2 SATS, Y1 Phonics and year 4 MTC) will not normally be granted leave of absence.
- whether parent/carers have considered limiting the amount of time the child would be absent from academy e.g. wrapping around academy holiday
- have alternative care arrangements been considered by the parent/carer to limit the time away from school
- impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family e.g. family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN
- the impact that the absence will have on the child.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least four weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the academy office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the academy will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the academy, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made

Other reasons the academy may allow a pupil to be absent from the academy site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the academy
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the academy premises are closed

Examples of any circumstances that are **NOT exceptional** are as follows:

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, except where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence will be requested.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.
- To care for other family members
- Birthdays
- To interpret for other family members
- Friendship problems
- Head lice
- Weddings abroad – regardless of whether it is for immediate family members*
- Family Anniversaries

- School refusal

*(*The immediate family is a defined group of relations, used in rules or laws to determine which members of a person's family are affected by those rules. It normally includes a person's parents, spouses, siblings and children. It can contain others connected by birth, adoption, marriage, civil partnership, or cohabitation, such as grandparents, grandchildren, siblings-in-law, half-siblings, adopted children and step-parents/step-children, and cohabiting partners)*

13. Clarification of government expectations around school using the T code for traveller pupils

Absence may only be authorised using a T code, only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school. Pupils from these groups whose parent(s) do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to attend school as normal and this code should not be used for general absences or holidays. These pupils are subject to the same rules as other pupils in terms of the requirements to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

Where a pupil has no fixed abode because their parent(s) is engaged in a business or trade that requires them to travel, there is an expectation that the pupil attends at least 200 sessions per year. The pupil must attend school as regularly as the business permits and therefore, if the business or trade permits the pupil to attend more than 200 sessions per year, they should do so.

To help ensure continuity of education for pupils when their parent(s) is/are travelling for occupational purposes, it is expected that the pupil should attend school elsewhere and be dual registered at that school and their main school.

In order to ensure schools follow their due diligence, schools are expected to request detail of where the family are travelling to. If it is for paid work, which school have notifications of (pamphlet, leaflet, advertisement to include location of said work), school can authorise using the T code however, they should try and find suitable schooling for the child within the area that the parents are travelling to as we do not expect the child to be working but in education. School may use the code T up to 200 sessions or 100 days.

Further information can be found following the link:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance

14. Sanctions

Our academy will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

14.1. Penalty notices

The Headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from academy, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the academy issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the academy will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.
A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

14.2 Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the academy may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

15. Recognition and Engagement

Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust promotes attendance through recognition, relationships and encouragement rather than attendance being viewed solely through compliance. Attendance is celebrated through academy recognition systems, whilst ensuring children experiencing attendance barriers receive support rather than judgement.

At Castlefort Academy, we hold a weekly award for the class with the highest attendance for the week. The class who wins the award, then get to choose the songs that are played when the children enter the school the following morning. The class are also given a choice of a reward on the following Monday to encourage good attendance the following week.

At the end of each half term, the children with 100% attendance also get entered into a prize draw where they can win an Amazon tablet.

16. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

16.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Where pupils are experiencing more complex barriers to attending school or Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSNA), additional support will be planned on an individual basis to support the child's needs.

We expect parents/carers to engage with school staff to support the child's best interests and reintegration to education as soon as it is possible.

16.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

When a pupil has a physical or mental health need, school will discuss this with families to ensure the child is supported appropriately and attends school as much as possible. School will seek to understand the needs of the child and discuss any reasonable adjustments that can be made to support the child in accessing their education.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will have attendance monitored in line with school expectations. Where attendance falls or the school

becomes aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

In very exceptional circumstances, a temporary reduction in timetable may be considered if required to meet the needs of the pupil. This will be discussed at length with the pupil and family and will be reviewed at least every 6 weeks. Details of this will be shared with the local authority

16.3 Pupils returning to academy after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

For pupils returning after a period of absence, the pupils needs will be discussed and re-integration plan put into place. In exceptional circumstances a reintegration plan may be considered where time in school is increased gradually until the pupil is able to attend full time. This will be discussed at length with the pupil and family, reviewed at least 6 weeks and details shared with the local authority.

17. Attendance Monitoring

17.1 Monitoring of attendance

Our academy will monitor attendance and absence rates (including punctuality) on a daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and annual basis across the school, at individual pupil, year group and cohort levels. Where appropriate, individual pupil attendance may be monitored more frequently to enable early identification of concerns and timely intervention.

Attendance data is used proactively to identify patterns, understand barriers to attendance and ensure pupils receive the right support at the right time. It is regularly analysed to evaluate the impact of attendance strategies and interventions and to inform future planning.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely. Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistical releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort levels against local, regional and national averages to identify strengths, emerging trends and areas for improvement. Attendance information is regularly shared with the Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust, Governors and Trustees to support strategic oversight and continuous improvement.

Our academy will also use the DfE attendance data and bandings to support the monitoring and evaluation of pupil attendance.

Alongside whole-school analysis, we monitor the attendance of key groups of pupils, including those who are persistently absent (below 90%), severely absent (below 50%), pupils with SEND or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), disadvantaged pupils, children in care, previously looked after children, pupils with a social worker, young carers and those experiencing medical or mental health needs. This enables us to identify emerging patterns and ensure appropriate support is provided at the earliest opportunity.

We evaluate all pupil attendance that is a cause for concern and correlate attendance data with safeguarding, pastoral, behaviour, SEND and healthcare information to develop a holistic understanding of each child's circumstances. School staff work collaboratively with children,

families and external agencies to identify and remove barriers to attendance, particularly where attendance is declining or pupils are at risk of becoming persistently absent.

Where attendance falls close to or below 92%, families can expect a higher level of engagement from the academy to monitor and support improved attendance. Support may include regular telephone contact, attendance meetings, home visits, attendance support plans, signposting to external services, Early Help or multi-agency working where appropriate. Our approach is based on working in partnership with families to understand barriers and provide support before considering formal attendance procedures.

The Lighthouse Trust Attendance Officer will work closely with the academy to monitor attendance, provide advice and challenge, and support targeted interventions. The Local Authority also has a statutory duty to monitor attendance and will work collaboratively with the academy and families where additional support or formal intervention is required.

18. Analysing attendance

All our academies will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts early that need additional support where their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half termly, termly and full year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

19. Using data to improve attendance

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has been identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to their pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families
- Provide regular attendance reports to the teachers to facilitate discussion with pupils and families, and school leaders (including SENCo's, DSLs and Pupil Premium leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other academies in the Trust, area and local authority and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

20. Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the Lighthouse Trust and school strategy for improving attendance.

The academies will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and tends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or The Lighthouse Trust or Local Authority) considers to be vulnerable at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
  - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
  - Listen and understand barriers to attendance
  - Explain the help that is available
  - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
  - Review ant existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the Lighthouse Trust and the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils, in doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absences
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Further Resources

• Working together to improve academy attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

• School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

• Is my child too ill for school?- NHS (www.nhs.uk)

• Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools- GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

• Letter to school leaders on mild illness and school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

• Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

• Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

• Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

• How to improve your child's school attendance and where to get support - The Education Hub (blog.gov.uk)

• Mental health resources for children, students, parents, carers and school/college staff- The Education Hub (blog.gov.uk)

Helping Parents to Understand the Changes to Fines for Term Time Holidays

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued for unauthorised holidays recorded by all schools after **19th August 2024**.

National Threshold

There will be a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

For example: a 5 day holiday would meet the national threshold.

The 10 school week period can span different terms or school years.

Who may be fined?

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent who allows their child to be absent from school.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent who allowed the holiday receiving 3 separate fines.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for an unauthorised term time holiday the fine amount will be:

£80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Increasing to £160 if paid between days 22-28.

Second Offence (Within 3 Years)

The second time a penalty notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

£160 per parent (who allowed the holiday), per child, payable within 28 days.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (Within 3 Years)

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and local authorities will need to consider other available measures to address the absence concerns. This may mean that cases are presented before a magistrate's court. Prosecution can result in criminal records and fines of up to £2,500.

Cases found guilty in the Magistrates Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

LIGHTHOUSE
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

WHEN SHOULD I KEEP MY CHILD OFF SCHOOL?

Guidance based on UK Health Security Agency recommendations.

This guidance helps prevent the spread of infections and keeps our school community healthy.

RETURN TO SCHOOL
No exclusion needed or when well enough

KEEP OFF FOR A SPECIFIED PERIOD
Return after the stated time

SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE
If symptoms worsen or you are concerned

Chickenpox

Until all spots have crusted over

Conjunctivitis

No need to stay off (inform school)

Diarrhoea & Vomiting

48 hours after the last episode

Glandular Fever

Usually no exclusion required

Hand, Foot & Mouth

Usually no exclusion required if otherwise well

Impetigo

Until lesions are crusted/healed or 48 hours after antibiotics

Measles

4 days from onset of rash

Mumps

5 days from onset of swelling

Scabies

Until after first treatment

Scarlet Fever

24 hours after starting antibiotics

Slapped Cheek

Usually no exclusion required

Whooping Cough

48 hours after starting antibiotics

Flu

Until recovered

Head Lice

No exclusion required; begin treatment

Threadworms

No exclusion required; begin treatment

Tonsillitis

No exclusion required unless too unwell to attend

CHILDREN WHO ARE WELL ENOUGH TO LEARN SHOULD ATTEND SCHOOL.
If you're unsure whether your child should attend, please contact the school office for advice.

Guidance is based on current UK Health Security Agency recommendations and may be updated periodically.

Exceptional Circumstances: Leave of Absence Request

I request permission for the below named pupils to be granted leave during the school term

Pupil Name:	D.O.B:	Class:
Pupil Name:	D.O.B	Class:
Pupil Name:	D.O.B	Class:

Reason for exceptional circumstances Leave of Absence Request Leave:

Detail of Absence:

From:	To:	Number of Days:
Location during absence:		

Parent Carer Name:	Parent Carer Name:
Address:	Address:
Telephone Number:	Telephone Number:
Email Address:	Email Address:

Parent/Carer Signature:	Date:

I/We understand that:

- I/We will supply the name and phone number of a contact person whilst away/abroad
- I/We are aware that I/we may be issued with a penalty notice if the holiday request is not authorised as exceptional circumstance. If I do not pay the fine, the case may be referred to the court and an increase in the penalty may be issued
- In exceptional circumstances penalty notices may be issued and cases may be taken straight to court
- For further information I/we can view the attendance policy on the academy website

OFFICE ONLY

Date Request Received:	
Request Approved	Request Declined
Signed Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher: Date:	