

Attendance and Punctuality



Policy
2015

The key principles which underpin La Houquette's procedures for managing attendance are that:

- Parents and carers have a duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually in order to get the most benefit from their education
- Regular and punctual attendance at school is key to the academic and social development that will improve the life chances of learners
- Learners who attend school regularly and punctually are less likely to be at risk, both in terms of engaging in anti-social behaviour and in terms of their own health, safety and welfare.

Why Attendance is Important?

Learners who do not attend school regularly are at risk from a whole range of factors that may lead to poor outcomes including low attainment and social exclusion. It is essential that all of the learners registered for education attend regularly and on time and that they access all of the opportunities that education offers. The school seeks to provide high standards and high expectations for all to enable learners to realise their full potential and pursue a happy and fulfilling life.

The Legal Framework

Section 17 of the Education [Guernsey] Law 1970 (hereinafter referred to as the "1970 Law") places a legal duty on parents of every child of compulsory school age to ensure that they are receiving efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by attendance at school or otherwise.

The word "otherwise" refers to educational provision that does not take the form of attendance at school. The majority of these cases will apply to learners who are being home educated or receiving home tuition or having an individualized learning programme as prescribed by a Determination of Needs

Compulsory school age is defined by Section 16 of the 1970 Law, as amended by The Education (Guernsey) (Amendment) Law, 2009 and the Education (Compulsory School Age) (Guernsey) (No2) Ordinance 2008. Compulsory School age is defined as the start of the term commencing on or after the child's fifth birthday, until the last Friday of June in the school year in which they reach 16 years of age.

Parents who fail to secure their children's regular attendance at school shall be guilty of an offence against this section and the Education Department has the duty to take appropriate action by serving a School Attendance Order on the parent(s).

Areas of Responsibility for the SLT Attendance Leader (Headteacher)

- Establishing whole school policy, including staged, escalating systems and procedures for the management of attendance
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this policy in the cycle of improvement
- Liaising with administration staff regarding communication from parents regarding absence and procedures for the use of Group Call
- Collating and analysing data for the purpose of intervention and forward planning
- Liaising with, Class Teachers and SENCO regarding systems, procedures and interventions
- Monitoring the accuracy of registers on a regular basis
- Issuing letters to parents as a follow up to non attendance and where there are concern about levels of absence
- Arranging school attendance meetings with parents as part of the school's staged escalation procedure for the management of attendance
- Meeting regularly with the designated Schools Attendance Officer for the school to discuss whole school and individual cases including any new referrals
- Attendance at Education Department Attendance InterviSAS, when required.
- Preparation of written reports and statements for legal purposes and representing the school in the Magistrates Court or the Child Youth Community Tribunal

Attendance Registers

Schools are legally required to maintain accurate registers of attendance. The Education Department has a statutory responsibility to carry out register checks and the SAS is authorised by the Director of Education to inspect attendance registers.

Registers should indicate whether the learner is present or absent and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a learner to be absent or has accepted an explanation afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence.

Only schools (not parents or carers) can authorise absence and schools must adhere to the Education Department's guidance on Absence and Attendance Codes relating to authorisation.

Schools must record separately if learners are on an approved educational activity using the correct code. This will count as a present mark but for health and safety reasons it is recorded separately. Such activities might include work experience, field trips, sporting activities, Year 6 learners attending "taster days" at their secondary school.

Attendance Codes

CODE	DESCRIPTION	STATISTICAL MEANING
/	Present (for morning session)	Present
\	Present(for afternoon session)	Present
B	Educated off site	Approved Educational Activity (counts as present)
C	Other Authorised Circumstances	Authorised absence
D	Time Out or Internal Exclusion	Approved Educational Activity (counts as present)
E	Excluded	Authorised absence
G	Special Circumstances	Authorised absence
H	Holiday during term time	Authorised absence for a maximum of 10 days per school year including for Post 16 learners
I	Interview	Authorised absence
L	Late during registration	Present
M	Illness or Dental treatment	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised circumstances	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Educational activity (counts as present)
S	Study Leave (Y11 only)	Approved Educational Activity (counts as present)
T	Late after registration closed	Present
V	Educational visit	Approved educational activity (counts as present)
W	Work experience	Approved educational activity (counts as present)
X	No attendance required	Attendance not required—not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to all learners	Attendance not required—not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced school closure	Attendance not required—not counted in possible attendances

Recording Absence

Schools need to give careful consideration to authorisation of absence for some learners

Holidays Within School Time: (This applies to any length of absence)

Although Guernsey law does not preclude term-time holidays the Education Department and schools can express concern and disapproval of term-time holidays but neither have the power to refuse requests from parents.

All requests for Leave of Absence for a family holiday have to be made on the official form available on our website or the school office. La Houquette School has taken the position that, whilst it accepts parents have reasons for taking family holidays in school time, it does not feel that it can routinely authorise this. The school feels that to authorise some and not others is inconsistent and therefore has decided that all holidays will be coded as a "0" unauthorised absence. The school will not routinely reply to this but will record that this leave has been taken.

Medical Absence:

When a learner is absent from school, parents are required to contact the school on the first day of any absence with an explanation for their child's absence. Parents will be routinely asked when the child is expected to return.

If parents do not make contact the school may chase this up via text or phone call.

If this medical condition leads to several absences or a child's absence becomes a concern we may request that any medical condition is confirmed by a GP.

For long term medical conditions the school will follow the Educational Departments staged process for managing medical absence, contained within this policy.

Other Absences:

There are other reasons why a child may be absent from school: In these situations a written request must be made using the Leave of Absence form. Parents will be informed by email of receipt and whether this is an authorised or unauthorised absence.

Medical and dental appointments. Parents and carers should be encouraged to make appointments out of school hours and ensure that their child returns to school as soon as possible following the appointment. Authorisation will be given unless you are notified otherwise.

Interviews for a place at another school including exam entry for that school.

Authorisation will be given unless you are notified otherwise.

Representational/Cultural- Occasionally absence is requested either to represent the **Island** or to take part in an Island wide cultural event such as Eisteddfod activities. Providing that your child's absence for any reason does not exceed 10 days in any year this will usually be authorised. Please note travel on Friday or Monday for attendance on a weekend event will not be routinely authorised. Other cultural or sporting events will be considered individually.

Poor Attendance

If there is poor attendance for any reason then a staged procedure must be followed by the school. This is included in the policy on the website, but will involve letters and then meetings with the school and other agencies.

Punctuality

The school day starts at 8.45 a.m with a timed bell and restarts in the afternoon at 12.40. Registers will be taken in class at the start of these sessions. Registers will stay open in class until 8.55. After this time children will be late after the register has closed. If a child is late for school they should report to the school office. If a child is late persistently then a letter will be sent home. If punctuality does not improve then such lateness may be dealt with as an attendance issue.

Children coming in and out of school during the school day (including lunchtimes)

There are a variety of reasons why children leave the school during the school day and the school needs to keep a record of who is in school. A fire register is kept in each room and children leaving for appointments should be signed out and back in on this register. Older children should be made responsible for signing themselves in and out.

Lunchtimes- Children who go home for lunch should notify their teacher during registration. The teacher will keep a record of who is staying for lunch and who is going home.

Other Reasons- Children should be collected from the office. **NO CHILD WILL BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE PREMISES UNACCOMPANIED.**

Medical absence

When a learner is absent from school, parents are required to contact the school on the first day of any absence with an explanation for their child's absence. If there has been no contact by parents, the school will endeavour to contact the parent on the same day. Reasons for lack of attendance will be recorded in SIMs where practical.

If parents do not make contact with the school then the absence should be recorded as "N" (no reason yet provided). As this is a temporary code it should be substituted after 3 school days at the latest with either an "O" (unauthorised circumstances) or "M" (authorised medical absence) if the absence extends to 3 days. **If the code "M" is recorded then legally this represents that the school has accepted the parent's explanation for the absence due to illness or dental treatment.**

Where the school does not accept the reason for medical absence as being valid then contact must be made with parents to discuss the reason for absence and inform them if the decision is to not authorise that absence. If the school has concerns about the frequency or duration of a medical absence then this can be discussed initially with the school nurse who may be able to offer advice or a drop in appointment for the learner and/or parent.

When parents make contact with the school they should be asked to give some indication as to when they anticipate that their child will be fit to return to school. Clearly, there are illnesses/medical reasons where the absence is likely to extend beyond 5 school days and this should be recorded as "M" authorised medical absence. The school must make the decision on the use of appropriate coding taking into account factors such as previous attendance history and previous pattern of attendance. Parents are expected to keep the school informed of the reason for the ongoing absence from day 1 – day 5 in order for the school to continue to record the absence as "M", authorised medical absence.

When a learner has been absent for 3 days without explanation, and there has been no response from parents then the school should send a standard letter home. If there is no contact from parents following the third day of absence due to illness then continuing absence must be recorded as “O” (unauthorised). Schools should also consider discussing these illness absences with the school nurse in order to offer support to the learner and family.

Where an absence persists beyond 5 days and there is no reason provided then the school should contact the parents to discuss any difficulties which may be preventing the learner from attending, good practice would be to invite parents into school to meet and discuss these difficulties. A record of this conversation/meeting between school staff and parents should be kept on the learner’s individual file and may be requested at a later date in the case of any future referral to SAS, the Law Officers or Child and Youth Community Tribunal.

Where the illness absence extends beyond 6 days or where there are repeated medical absences which reach the threshold (4 separate illness absences during a single half term period regardless of the length of each) then it is reasonable for schools to request that parents provide medical evidence in support of their child’s future medical absences from school. Evidence can take the form of medical certificates, medical notes, letters from medical practitioners, or appointment notifications. Whilst parents are not legally obliged to provide schools with such documentation, they need to be aware that the absence of evidence could lead to future legal action being brought against them for failing to secure their child’s regular attendance at school (**providing that the school has not recorded all absences as “M”, authorised medical**). In any such proceedings one of the defences available to parents is that their child’s absences from school are due to genuine ill health. Proof of historical ill health can only be in the form of documents described above and without this evidence parents will not have a statutory defence. Schools may also choose to discuss these health issues with the School Nurse and request that contact be made with the GP regarding these regular absences.

If there are regular short term illness absences which reach the cumulative threshold of 4 separate illness absences within a half term that are not supported by medical evidence then the school should arrange a meeting with parents to address the reasons for these absences. The most effective method of dealing with such school attendance meetings is to schedule them once every half term as a discrete group within the Stage 2 School Attendance Meetings and to involve the school nurse in the meeting .

If a learner is known to have a medical /dental appointment at the commencement of a morning or afternoon session then this should be recorded as “M”. If the appointment is during a session then the learner should be marked present at the start of the session and should use the school’s signing out system to record when they have left school.

Referral Process

Schools have responsibility to promote, manage and monitor attendance and to respond appropriately to non attendance.

The Education Department expects that the school will have implemented a variety of strategies and interventions in a staged and escalating process to attempt to improve the attendance of a learner including meetings with parents and they will have made a written record of these interventions before a referral is made to SAS.

Schools should consider carefully any use of exclusion in individual cases where regular and punctual attendance is an issue, as this may exacerbate and appear to condone reward of non attendance.

Appendix 2 outlines the staged and escalating Attendance Management Process, including the criteria, processes, actions and responsibilities for schools, Schools Attendance Service and the Education Department in ensuring that the Education [Guernsey] Law 1970 is

effectively discharged. The threshold for referral to SAS will be 85% attendance over a half term and referrals will only be accepted by the Service when schools have completed the required stages of school level intervention. All referrals must be accompanied by documentation which provides a record of planning and review meetings with parents. Specific details of processes for referral and consultation with the Schools Attendance Service are outlined in the Schools Attendance Service booklet .

Appendix 2: Staged Approach to Attendance Management

When Learners Do Not Attend

- Administration Staff who answer parents' phone calls have a structured conversation
- School Staff who record attendance respond as per school procedures: Group Call, staged letters (Appendix 3)

STAGE 1 Attendance Meeting and Reviews

- Held by school with parents and learner
- Possibly with school nurse if medical
- Key points and agreed action recorded by school

Purpose:

- Raise concern
- Problem solve
- Agree action

Agree review date

STAGE 2 Attendance Meeting and Review

- Held by school with parents
- Possibly with learner if appropriate
- EWO as advisor (not casework)
- School Nurse if appropriate
- Other agencies if appropriate

Purpose:

- Note continued non-attendance
- Note seriousness of non-attendance
- Agree action

Set review date

STAGE 2 Attendance Meeting Review

- School with parents and learner
- School Nurse if illness involved
- EWO
- Referral to CYCT/Convenor

Purpose:

- Have improvements been made
- Possible outcomes and actions

STAGE 3 Attendance Meeting

- Held by Education Department with parent and learner if appropriate
- EWO

Purpose:

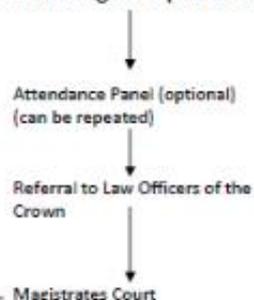
- Confirm all appropriate school and EWO actions taken
- Decide on referral to CYCT or prosecution based on EWO report (see next page)

Grounds for referral to Children's Convenor:

- i. Requirement for compulsory Intervention [Sect 35(1)(a)], and
- ii. Sect 35(2)(g)

Referral to Children's Convenor

Grounds for action against parents:



Application for Leave of Absence La Houquette Primary



EDUCATION

A STATES OF GUERNSEY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

Application for Leave of Absence

As a parent or carer, you should fill in this form if you want to take your child out of school during term for a family holiday or any reason not covered by the schools policy. The policy covers medical, interviews and representational situations .

After completing the form, please return it to the Headteacher of your child's school no less than 2 weeks before the date when you want the period of absence to start. Allowances will be made for unforeseen circumstances.

Family Holiday

The Headteacher may decide whether or not to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Parents or carers should not expect such leave to be authorised as of right. **The school's standard approach is that such leave will be unauthorized leave .**

Leave will not be authorised if it is applied for after the absence has taken place.

I request that (name of child):
be granted leave of absence from LA HOUGUETTE PRIMARY SCHOOL

from (date):
to (date):
in order to –

Signature of parent/carers:

Date:

