

Attendance is Everyone's Business

Dear Families

Lambeth Education Welfare Service (EWS) is dedicated to improving attendance for all our children and young people to ensure they achieve their full potential. In 2023, only 40% of children and young people that had attendance below 90% achieved an English and Maths GCSE at grade 4 or above in comparison to 75% of children and young people that had 95% - 100% attendance. The government recently launched some important government changes regarding school attendance and expectations on schools and parents. The Department for Education (DfE) has implemented these significant updates to school attendance guidance, [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1284222/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) aimed at enhancing student engagement and reducing absenteeism, the changes came into effect on 19th August 2024 and will be introduced across all Lambeth schools.

The changes underscore the DfE's commitment to improving school attendance and ensuring every child receives a quality education. Schools and Lambeth Council will work together on attendance strategies aimed at fostering a culture of consistent attendance and academic success.

Parental Responsibility

As a parent of a school aged child (a term after your child turns 5 and the last Friday in June for Year 11 pupil's), who is on a school roll it is your responsibility to ensure that your child is in school during the time and dates the school states it is open from. You have to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

Holidays in Term Time

Education Law states that it is not a parent's right to take a child out of school during term time to go on holiday. Families must seek permission from the school and your school's Headteacher is limited in what they can authorise. The Headteacher can authorise leave if a child is in a performance and a performance license has been granted by the local authority. For any other authorised holiday, there must be extenuating circumstances therefore they cannot authorise a holiday because it is cheaper outside of term time.

If an unauthorised holiday is taken and it is 5 days or more. Your school could raise a fine with out warning when you return. The fine is £160 if it is your first unauthorised holiday in term time, you will be able to pay at a reduce rate of £80 if you pay the fine within 21 day. There after you would have to pay the full amount. If you take another unauthorised holiday within a 3 year rolling period, you will have to pay £160. You will not be able to pay at the reduced rate. If there are further unauthorised holidays, your school will consider referring you to the local authority for legal intervention.

For parents who take their children out of school and they are back before the 5 days, your school will issue you with a warning letter and Notice to Improve. New “Notices to Improve” will also be the “final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued”. If there are further absence within a 10 week period, you could receive a fine. If there is more term time holidays taken but are below the 5 day threshold, your child’s school could refer you to the local authority to consider legal intervention.

Lambeth’s Focus on Early Intervention

Lambeth continues to focus on supporting our schools and families and have invested an additional £500,000 to increase our Education Welfare Service (EWS) and now primary schools will have a free Education Welfare Service to enable them to provide more early intervention support and joint working.

Lambeth Education Welfare Service works to raise and improve young peoples aspiration and life outcomes. This can only be achieved through positive partnership with you, your child, your child’s school and the wider community support

Support First

There are times when circumstances can impact on a child’s education. However, it is important that steps are taken to address and overcome these issues; through a positive partnership between the school and more importantly you, solutions can be found so that your child may overcome any barriers to learning and enjoy their education and time at school. Your child’s school may offer you school based support, such as a key worker or putting in educational based interventions. In some case a referral to Early Help can be made with your consent. For more information about Early Help, please visit the website: https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/children-young-people-families/early-help_services/access-support-your-family-community-early-help

Your child school may formalise support through a parenting contract. This contract can be a 3 or 4-way contract depending on your child’s age. It is an agreement between school, yourself, your child and any partner agency. The contract can last between 3- 12 weeks. It will outline what interventions and expectations are from your child’s school, whilst stating what you and your child (if appropriate) have agreed to and any support any partner agency may provide to you. The contract is regularly reviewed to see what is working well and that what has been agreed to is being actioned by all parties

If there is non-engagement with the plan or professionals and the school or Education Welfare Officer have have issued you with a Notice to Improve your child’s school attendance, your child’s school will consider either raising a fixed penalty notice or referring the matter for a School Attendance Legal Intervention Meeting.

Education Fixed Penalty Notice

New regulations standardise the use of fines for unauthorised absences. Absence fines charged to parents will rise from £60 to £80, or £160 if not paid within 21 days. Schools decide whether to issue fines, but Lambeth Council administer them.

Only two fines can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year rolling period. Any second notice will automatically be charged at £160.

Schools will have to consider a fine if a pupil misses 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The guidance indicates the school should “not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices”. The threshold can be met with “any combination of unauthorised absence”. For example, four sessions in term time plus six instances of arriving late. The period of 10 weeks can also span “different terms or school years”. Notices to Improve will be issued to engage parents in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued.

Daily Attendance Data Sharing

All state schools in England are now required to share their daily attendance registers with the DfE and recommended to share with local authorities, and academy trusts. This is so that the LA can know as early as possible when attendance is a concern and to foster partnership working to improve school attendance. Lambeth has invested in a platform called Study Bugs which will support us to have real time access to attendance and enable early intervention.

Long term illness

Schools are required to provide Lambeth Council the name and address of sick pupils who they believe will miss 15 consecutive or cumulative days. Lambeth Council will work with schools to ensure the correct support is put in place.

Schools will also be “expected to inform a pupil’s social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences from school”.

Mindful of Mental Health and Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Pupils with mental health concerns can access additional support both through their school or partner agencies. There is also additional support on our [Lambeth's SEND Local Offer | Lambeth Council](#) and [Emotional wellbeing and mental health | SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE \(lambeth.gov.uk\)](#). It is recognised that the pupils are still expected to attend school regularly and the Education Welfare Service will work with relevant agencies to ensure joined up working. Lambeth are also supporting schools with a pilot called the Exceptional Needs Grant (ENG) which allows schools to access funding for children and young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health and also an NHS EBSA project to try and reduce EBSA in the borough.

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