



# Lochside Academy

## Attendance Strategy

November 2024

### Overview

Lochside Academy promotes good school attendance and punctuality through our nurturing and inclusive ethos and our vision and values.

The national policy landscape continues to increasingly emphasise the importance of wellbeing and relationships in shaping positive outcomes for young people. Improving wellbeing is a key priority at Lochside Academy. Staff are committed to ensuring that the school is a compassionate and connected community where learners feel supported and welcomed. Our school ethos, culture and values, staged intervention structures and promotion of good attendance are fundamental to promoting positive relationships and behaviour.

A strategic priority for Lochside Academy is improving attendance. Regular punctual attendance will establish good habits that will support young people throughout their lives and help them reach their potential. At Lochside Academy we aspire for 100% attendance and our School Improvement Plan for session 2023-24 states that almost all young people will have attendance over 85%.

### Strands of the Improving Attendance Strategy at Lochside Academy

- Proactive Measures to promote positive attendance
- Responding quickly to issues which could impact on attendance
- Encouraging early intervention to address patterns of absence
- Follow up on absences
- Support reintegration into learning on returning from absence
- Involving stakeholders, including raising the importance of attendance and the impact of absence
- Ensure parents/carers understand their legal responsibilities
- Fulfilling UNCRC Article 28 – children and young people have the right to education no matter who they are

### Key Sources

- Lochside Academy School Improvement Plan
- Aberdeen City Council Guidance on Managing and Promoting Pupil Attendance
- Included, Engaged and Involved: Part 1
- Legislation
- Lochside Academy Guidance on Managing and Promoting Pupil Attendance - Key Roles and Responsibilities



## Stakeholders

Partnership working is critical to the Attendance Strategy at Lochside Academy. All stakeholders have a role in working together to promote and achieve a regular pattern of good attendance for pupils.



Our approach to improving attendance is being developed with stakeholders and reviews will be undertaken annually. The roles and responsibilities of every person involved in supporting a young person's attendance in school are clearly defined and shared with all stakeholders. See appendix 3.

### **Proactive Measures to Promote Positive Attendance.**

Lochside Academy recognises that good attendance occurs when young people feel safe and enjoy coming to school. School staff are committed to creating an environment that is conducive to high levels of attendance. Measures include:

- A positive ethos and culture that celebrates pupil accomplishments and contributions
- Ensuring that pupils are included and engaged
- Reviewing and improving anti-bullying measures
- Using nurturing approaches – connection and compassion – across the school
- Supporting all learners to overcome barriers to learning and participation
- High quality learning & teaching
- Promoting positive relationships among young people
- Curriculum



- Raising Attainment

### **Raising the Profile of Attendance**

School staff contribute towards raising awareness of the importance of attendance and the impact of absence by:

- Ensuring attendance is accurately recorded each period and absence is followed up
- Identifying patterns of absence and sharing these with House staff
- Raising the profile of attendance and absence within the school community through the school handbook, the school website and social media accounts
- Displays within the school
- Assemblies and Form Class Activities
- Recognising improvements in attendance
- Recognising a positive pattern of attendance in an appropriate and sensitive manner, such as communication with home

### **Communication Between School and Home.**

Lochside Academy strives to communicate frequently with parents and carers using a range of methods such as, Groupcall messages, direct telephone calls and emails, the school website, Twitter and Facebook accounts, regular newsletters and information evenings. When parents wish to speak to a member of staff, about any aspect of their young person's education, including attendance, progress and engagement, this communication usually goes to the PT Pupil Support of their young person.

Parents and carers have a key role to play in promoting and supporting regular attendance of their young person in school and staff at Lochside are committed to working in partnership to ensure there is good communication about issues related to attendance. In the case of pupil absence from school, parents/carers are requested to contact the school by telephone call or email detailing the reason and duration of absence so that records can be updated. Notes can be handed to the Form Class Leader to advise of upcoming absence.

If a pupil is absent this will be checked against details of contacts made by parent/carer. If the school has not been made aware of an absence, then it must be assumed that the parent/carer is unaware and that the pupil is either missing or absent without parental awareness. This must be recorded as unauthorised absence until an explanation is received by the school.

If a pattern of absence is noted, then school staff are committed to working alongside parents/carers to resolve any issues.



## **Absence Procedures**

- It is important that information about pupils' attendance and absence is recorded accurately, and that information is used to inform interventions to support pupils
- Parents and carers will be contacted when a pupil has not arrived in school. This is usually done by Groupcall but sometimes by phone call by the Family School Liaison Officer or another member of staff
- If attempts to contact the parent or carer are unsuccessful, then the emergency contacts will be used.
- If contact fails to establish the whereabouts of the young person, the record of absence is passed on to the PT Pupil Support whose knowledge of the young person will determine what further actions need to be taken. This may include contacting the HSLO to do a home visit, the Police to do a safe and well check or the Child Protection Officer
- In the case of a care experienced young person this should be followed up immediately. For those who are looked after at home, the Social Worker should also be contacted.

## **Staged Intervention**

Many absences related issues can be dealt with quickly by supports in school and by ensuring that there are positive relationships in place to support young people and their families. However, there are times when absence from school is a more significant cause for concern. Staged intervention processes at Lochside include:

- High quality pupil support systems for early response to absence and signs of difficulty
- Effective approaches to identify, assess and plan for additional support needs which need to be addressed to alleviate any barriers to learning that might impact on attendance
- Developing a Child's Plan which outlines the supports and interventions that will support any wellbeing or additional support needs
- Flexible pathways and consideration of approaches to include and engage pupils in their learning
- Collaboration with a range of partners
- Request for Assistance from local authority wellbeing hubs
- Recourse to measures for compulsory compliance by parents and carers of young people, through attendance orders or referrals to the Children's Reporter.



## **Authorised Absence**

Schools are permitted to authorise absence when satisfied by the reason provided. Requests for authorised absence are usually communicated by the parent/carer via a letter or note handed in to the Form Class teacher, by contacting the school via email, or leaving a voice message on our school's absence line. Senior pupils aged 16 and over can self-certify. Other service providers may sometimes notify absences which can be authorised.

Reasons for authorised absence can include:

- Illness where no learning provision is made (including ongoing mental health concerns)
- Medical and dental appointments – recorded in a separate category
- Meetings prior to, and during court appearances and other legal processes
- Religious observance
- Bereavement
- Wedding or funerals of close friends or family

## **Unauthorised Absence**

Schools must record absence as unauthorised when they perceive that there is no valid reason for absence provided

## **Reintegration to Learning and Returning from Absence**

All staff in school have a role to play in promoting good attendance and helping to reduce absence from school. Staff with a specific pupils support responsibility will regularly monitor attendance during operational/universal weekly House meetings to

- be aware of early signs or concerns which may cause absence, to allow support plans to be arranged and adaptations and plans to be drawn up as appropriate
- ensure absence does not become a pattern or habit following a specific issue
- develop positive and trusting relationships with pupils and parents to prevent difficulties arising and to ensure difficulties are discussed and resolved when they do take place
- respond quickly to absence, to ensure children and young people are safe and well
- follow up on absence, to enable the school and its partners to make an effective response
- support reintegration into learning on returning from absence

Pupil Support staff should establish links with partner agencies to strengthen support to children and young people and parents.



Continuous Professional Development for all staff around areas such as promoting positive relationships; parental engagement; and learner participation can help schools to develop practice that will support good attendance. Professional development which explores systems and processes to monitor and improve attendance can also be helpful. There should also be a focus on the underlying reasons for absence (which may include mental health) particularly for those who may be working more directly in this area, such as home-school link workers or family support workers. Pupil Support staff have a key role in monitoring, assessing and supporting absence. They should, where possible, identify patterns and underlying causes for absence in order that these can be addressed as quickly as possible. Other school staff and agencies may also contribute to this assessment.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.