

THE MEADOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY



JANUARY 2020

Mission Statement

The Meadows Primary School is committed to providing a full and inclusive education for all pupils. The school believes that all pupils benefit from the education it provides and therefore regular school attendance will maximise the opportunity for pupils to achieve their individual potential, as valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late.

To this end, the school will support families to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any issues or problems which may impede full attendance are identified promptly and acted upon as quickly as possible.

Implementation

This policy was formally adopted by the Full Governing Body at their meeting of 16th July 2013.

Aims

It is recognised that:

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupils should be deprived of their opportunities by either their own non-attendance or that of other pupils from receiving an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as required by law.
- Many pupils and their parents may need to be supported and efforts to improve recognised, at some stage, in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- Situations may exist beyond the control of pupils and/or parents, which schools need to address in partnership with external agencies.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to develop social skills, socialise with their peers and prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to make a positive contribution to the life and culture of their communities.

Expectations

Good practice will include liaison with parents (both in writing or face to face by inviting parents to an attendance meeting) to discuss the reasons for poor levels of attendance or referral to the

Education Welfare Service or other agency. The purpose will always be to support the family in bringing about an improvement in the pupil's attendance to facilitate their entitlement to access the curriculum. If there are any Child Protection concerns, then the appropriate safeguarding guidance will be followed without delay.

The school expects pupils to:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day.

The school expects parents to:

- Encourage children to attend school regularly.
- Contact the school as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child will be absent (ideally by no later than 9.30 am on the first day of absence) giving details of the reason for absence and the anticipated length of time the child will be absent.
- Ensure their children arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day, including having the correct equipment (clothing appropriate to the weather conditions; PE kit; completed homework etc.).
- Contact the school if a problem occurs or there is a change in family circumstances which may impact on the child's attendance.

Pupils and parents can expect the school to:

- Information regarding procedures for reporting absences to be provided upon admission to the school and otherwise as changes occur.
- Regularly, efficiently and accurately record attendance.
- Monitor the attendance levels of all pupils, identifying and supporting pupils with less than 90% attendance.
- Contact parents after 9.30 am on the first day of absence, where no reason for absence has been provided.
- Take the appropriate action promptly on any problems notified to the school.
- Encourage good attendance through positive reward strategies ie: weekly and termly class attendance levels; academic year 100% attendance certificates; annual attendance draw and class party.

Registration will be undertaken by the member of staff supervising the class twice daily as follows: Morning session 9.00 – 9.15 am; Afternoon session: 1.00 – 1.15 pm (FS/KS1); 1.15 – 1.30 pm (KS2) where a child arrives at school after the register has been taken and returned to the school office, but before registers close (ie: 15 minutes after the registration time) they will be marked as late (L). Where a child arrives at school more than 15 minutes after the beginning of the registration period, they will be marked as U.

The school currently operates manual registers which are then entered onto the school's Management Information System (Integris G2) each week. Symbols to be used for recording attendance and absences are provided inside the front page of registers. Registers are returned to and retained in the main school office following registration. In the event of evacuation, for instance in the case of the fire alarm sounding, registers will be taken out and given to the appropriate class teacher/member of staff in charge of the class for checking. In the event of a class taking part in an educational visit, registers will be completed prior to leaving school and a note taken of any children who are absent.

A record of messages received relating to reasons for children's absences is maintained and kept in the main school office.

Term-time holidays

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 remove provision for Head Teacher to grant leave of absence of up to 10 school days for a family holiday in 'special circumstances' and only allow leave to be granted in 'exceptional circumstances'.

'Exceptional circumstances' do not occur regularly or often.

The Governing Body has defined some examples of 'exceptional circumstances' as:

- Parent employment conditions e.g. unable to take leave in school holidays
- Family trauma e.g. bereavement, illness
- Close family wedding e.g. parents
- Religious circumstances e.g. confirmation
- EAL children returning to their home country to maintain contact with extended family.
- Medical appointments which cannot be arranged out of school hours e.g. hospital appointments.

The new regulations do not allow absence for the following circumstances:

- ❖ Relatives coming to visit
- ❖ Visiting family/friends who have different half terms or holidays
- ❖ Availability of cheap holidays
- ❖ Availability of desired accommodation
- ❖ Poor weather experienced in the school holiday period
- ❖ Overlap with beginning or end of term
- ❖ Day trips
- ❖ Illness where no medical evidence is forthcoming

If 'exceptional circumstances' leave is requested, parents must apply in writing to the Head Teacher stating the nature and purpose of the absence and detailing the 'exceptional

circumstances'. Evidence may be requested to substantiate requests. Granting leave will be at the discretion of the Head Teacher, taking into account the pupil's previous attendance pattern, the nature of the absence and the impact on the child's education.

The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents must pay £60 if they pay within 28 days; or £120 if they pay within 42 days.

Encouraging good attendance

The following strategies will be used to encourage regular attendance:

- Class attendance will be recorded and displayed weekly and termly, with a certificate awarded each term to the class with the highest attendance level.
- A celebration for the class with the highest percentage attendance for the academic year will be held in the Summer Term.
- Certificates signed by the Director of Children's Services will be awarded at the end of each academic year to pupils who have achieved 100% attendance.
- A prize draw for pupils who have achieved 95%+ attendance will be held at the end of each academic year.
- Where no reason for absence has been given, parents will be contacted after 9.30 am on the first day of absence to ascertain the reason for the child's absence.
- Parents will be contacted by letter regarding any unexplained absences.
- Letters highlighting the importance of punctuality will be given to parents of children who arrive late.
- Notify parents if their children's attendance falls below 90% to highlight the importance of regular attendance and offer support to ensure that their child attends school more regularly. If no improvement is subsequently made, parents will be invited to attend a supporting attendance meeting to discuss ways in which the school can support the family in improving attendance. If the child's attendance still falls below the expected level, a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Service.

The School Business Manager will monitor levels of attendance termly (6x per year) and meet with an Education Welfare Officer 3 times per year (long terms) to discuss whole school attendance levels and children whose attendance is below the expected level and a cause for concern.

Following any referral to the Education Welfare Service, the school will fully take part in monitoring the situation and work with the relevant parties and agencies in the interest of the individual child. It is acknowledged that such monitoring and co-operation may well concern matters other than those directly relating to attendance issues.

Reintegration

The return to school for a pupil after long-term absence requires careful planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) as detailed in the DFE Social Inclusion Pupil Support Guidance.

The Head Teacher will be responsible for deciding on the timescale for return and the management of the reintegration. The Head Teacher will inform the Class Teacher of the return of a long term absentee.

All staff need to be aware that this process can be difficult for the family, that it may require careful handling and that any problems that arise should be notified to the responsible member of staff as soon as possible.

Programmes of reintegration will need to be tailored to the individual needs of the child and may involve phased, part time re-entry with support as appropriate.

The success of the Pastoral Support Programme will require the involvement of appropriate members of staff, external agencies, the parents and the child. Programmes should be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary.

School Organisation

In order for any policy to be successful, all members of staff must be committed to making attendance a priority and convey to pupils by their behaviour, the importance of attending school regularly to fully access the curriculum. For instance, staff should arrive to lessons on time and well prepared. In addition, there may be specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff groups as follows:

Head Teacher:

- To oversee the whole school attendance policy.
- To report to the Governing Body.
- To display information on attendance

Class Teachers:

- To complete registers accurately and on time.
- To record all reasons for absence in the register.
- To inform the Head Teacher of any concerns.

School Administrator:

- To follow up on the first day of absence any unexplained non-attendance by contacting parents.
- To write to parents to ascertain the reason for absence where non has been provided upon the child's return to school.
- To record all reasons for absence in the register, where messages have been received in the main school office.
- To input attendance to the school's Management Information System (Integris G2) from manual registers accurately and in a timely manner.

School Business Manager:

- To monitor attendance levels of individual children and the whole school termly and take appropriate action to address poor attendance.
- To create attendance reports for Governors meetings.

All staff:

- Ensure parents complete a signing in/out book when collecting/returning children.
- Inform the Head Teacher of any pupil whose parent intends to remove them from the school roll.

Governors:

- Governors may be given a specific role/interest in monitoring attendance and/or policies.

Parents:

- Contact school on the first day of absence or as soon as possible.
- Provide written absence notes for absences that are longer than initially indicated.
- Support good attendance.

Liaising with various agencies

Good professional relationships and working practices are essential in ensuring that the needs of the school in meeting its legal obligations and the needs of the child and it's family in maximising educational opportunities are met and that all parties receive support to do so. Some parents may need the support of external agencies to fulfil their legal obligations to their children.

Education Welfare Service:

- The Education Welfare Service as part of the core offer to all LA maintained schools may support the school in:
 - ❖ An annual health check of policies and procedures.
 - ❖ Up to 2 days per year absence screening to check for unauthorised absence.
 - ❖ Preparation of evidence prior to submission of cases to the Education Welfare Legal Panel.
 - ❖ Liaison with County Solicitor and parents/carers to ensure correct procedures are implemented.
 - ❖ Attendance in court on behalf of the Local Authority.
- Education Welfare Service will commence intervention with families and young people, where the school feel that attendance levels have not improved, as an additional brokered service.

Other agencies are used where appropriate in individual cases, including Educational and Behavioural Support Service, Educational Psychologists, Special Educational Needs Service, CAMHS, and Children's Services. Research has shown that schools who work in partnership with support services have a greater impact on school attendance that when they act alone or when the support services are uncoordinated or disjointed.

Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. The school recognises the importance of having full regard for the requirements of the Act. The school has a Data Protection Registration which details the circumstances under which data is managed and is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office.

Review

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually and otherwise as required by new legislation and/or to reflect changes in good practice.

Guidance for Class Teachers

The importance of registration:

- An attendance register must be completed at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, marking pupils present or absent. Registers will be collected from and returned to the main school office.
- Registers must be completed in ink and any corrections must be made in such a way that the original entry and the correction are both clearly distinguishable. Correction fluid should not be used.
- Authorised absences should be entered in red initially with the correct symbol for categorising the absence in blue or black ink.
- Accurate marking of registers and appropriate maintenance of electronic and computerised systems can have a significant impact on overall school attendance and absence figures.

Categorising absence:

- Only the school, in the context of the law can approve absence, not parents. If a member of staff does not accept the explanation offered for absence as a valid reason, then the matter must be referred to the Head Teacher.
- Emerging patterns of authorised absence should be reported to the School Business Manager.
- Where there is difficulty in obtaining a reason for absence, this will be investigated by the School Administrator who will contact parents directly.

Authorised or Unauthorised absence:

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be absent or has accepted an explanation offered retrospectively as a satisfactory reason. All other absences must be regarded as *unauthorised*.

The following may be reasons for authorised absence, however, this list is not exhaustive:

Illness; family bereavement; medical and dental appointments; days of religious observance; fixed term exclusion; permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

Family Holidays

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 remove provision for Head Teacher to grant leave of absence of up to 10 school days for a family holiday in 'special circumstances' and only allow leave to be granted in 'exceptional circumstances'.

If 'exceptional circumstances' leave is requested, parents must apply in writing to the Head Teacher stating the nature and purpose of the absence and detailing the 'exceptional circumstances'. Evidence may be requested to substantiate requests. Granting leave will be at the discretion of the Head Teacher, taking into account the pupil's previous attendance pattern, the nature of the absence and the impact on the child's education.

NB: Pupils who are absent from school but taking part in an approved educational visit will not be marked as present, but will not be deemed to be absent for the purposes of Management Information Systems data. The appropriate absence code for educational visits will be used.

The following may be reasons for unauthorised absence, however, this list is not exhaustive:

Shopping trips; house-sitting or looking after siblings; lateness if registration is missed; medical appointments that cannot be verified; no reason is given; school staff feel the reason for absence is not genuine or invalid.

It is acknowledged that unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a pupil being absent from school. The Head Teacher will have the discretion to determine whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered.

Lateness

The school actively discourages lateness by challenging parents of children who persistently arrive late to school, without reasonable explanation. Parents are given a letter outlining the importance of forming good habits of punctuality at an early age and the impact lateness has on their child's academic and social development. Children who arrive late are quietly welcomed into school and care is taken to ensure that the child does not feel uncomfortable about joining their class after the beginning of a lesson.

Children will be deemed to be late if they arrive in school after registration. This may be extended during periods of bad weather where travel is difficult. Where a pupil arrives after registers have closed, this will be an unauthorised absence and the appropriate absence code will be used.

Removal from the school roll

There are strict guidelines on the circumstances under which a pupil may be removed from the school roll. These can be found in the current edition of Lincolnshire County Council's School Administration Handbook. Removal from the school roll under any other circumstances is illegal.

The names of pupils may only be deleted from the school roll when:

- The school is informed by the receiving school that the child has been admitted to another school.
- The pupil has ceased to attend the school and parents have informed the school and the Local Authority that the child is receiving education otherwise than by attendance at school.
- The pupil has been absent from school without reasonable cause for 4 academic weeks and the Head Teacher has failed after making reasonable efforts and in consultation with the Education Welfare Service to locate the child.
- The Head Teacher has been notified that the child has died.
- A pupil has been permanently excluded and this decision has been confirmed by the Pupil Discipline Committee and the period during which an appeal can be lodged has passed.

Ensuring pupil information is up to date

As far as is reasonably possible, the information the school holds on pupils and their families will be accurate and up to date, to ensure that contact with families is effective and that referrals to other agencies can be actioned effectively.