

Attendance Policy

Our Vision

Meadowside is a nurturing community primary school with a strong sense of pride and belonging, with the belief that all have the potential to thrive.

Our Purpose

We exist to cultivate a love of learning by broadening horizons and opening minds to new possibilities. Through our School Values, we grow confident individuals who aspire to shape the future.



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| Chair of Governors: | Angela Pratt | Signed: |
| Chair of Committee: | Full Governing Body | |
| Committee Responsible: | Full Governing Body | |
| Staff Responsible: | Josie Garnham | |
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At Meadowside Primary School we take professional responsibility seriously, this applies to:

- reinforcing and promoting a working environment free from discrimination, victimisation, harassment and bullying.
- a clear commitment to treat all information acquired through employment, both formally and informally, in strict confidence.
- to be aware of the school's responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 1984 for the security, accuracy and relevance of personal data held on such systems and ensure that all processes comply with this.

Introduction

Meadowside Primary School aims to encourage every pupil to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance in order to take full advantage of the learning experiences available to them. The School adopts the Government definition of good attendance as being 97% or above.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that our expectations are clear: that pupils arrive on time and attend regularly. We will actively promote these expectations and encourage our pupils to achieve them. Where these expectations are not met, we will aim to identify and address the barriers that prevent this.

This policy applies to all staff, governors, pupils and parents/carers of the School. We will ensure that all parents/carers and other working partners are aware of our attendance policy by highlighting it on our website and in our school prospectus, through various School communications and by raising awareness at meetings with parents/carers.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are a registered pupil. The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter / message will the absence be authorised.

Guidance Informing the Policy

The Education Act 1996 which states if any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent/carer is guilty of an offence

- Pupil Regulations 2006 amended September 2016
- Parental Responsibility Measures – Penalty Notices (fines)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education DFE September 2020
- Educating Children with Health Needs DFE 2013
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions August 2017
- School Attendance DFE July 2019
- Parental Responsibility Measure March 2019
- North and West Northamptonshire Councils local Code of Conduct with regards to issuing of Penalty Notice

Responsibilities

Maintaining high standards of attendance at Meadowside Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community: pupils, parent/carers, and all staff/governors.

School Staff and Governors

The school has a legal responsibility for maintaining registers and taking the register twice a day. The school also has a responsibility for reporting absence to the Local Authority as part of our safeguarding procedures.

Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff. Staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents/carers.

The school will celebrate and reward pupils who achieve our expectations of regular, good attendance and those who have shown sustained improvement.

School will promote high attendance and punctuality through assemblies, individual meetings with pupils and groups of pupils, always reinforcing the link between attendance and achievement.

The school has an Attendance Team, which monitors pupils closely and will communicate attendance matters to parents/carers via text, telephone, email and letter. Attendance figures are regularly shared with Governors.

Parents/Carers

The Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that registered pupils of school age attend school regularly and punctually and that they receive an education suitable for their aptitude and ability. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.

If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents/carers are requested to notify the school on the first day of absence.

A pupil's absence from school will be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received from the parent/carer. Parent/carers will be informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parent/carers whose child's attendance is a cause for congratulation or concern will be contacted.

Definition of Absence

Absence will be recorded using the codes outlined by the Department for Education Guidance on School Attendance. There are only two categories of absence from school: Authorised (approved) and Unauthorised (not approved). By law, only the Head Teacher (or their delegate) can approve an absence from school.

Authorised Absence

'Authorised absence' means that the School has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to not be present, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence i.e. the pupil was ill or 'prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause'.

Possible types of authorised (approved) absence (this list is not exhaustive):

- Off-site educational activity
- Dual Registered – attending at another educational establishment
- Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- Educational visit or trip
- Leave of absence – i.e. for bereavement, funeral
- Medical absence for appointments
- Illness – evidence should be provided where possible (e.g. appointment cards, copies of prescribed medication) particularly for frequent absences
- Religious observance
- Exclusion from school

Unauthorised Absence

If a pupil is not in school and an explanation is not forthcoming or the school is dissatisfied with the explanation, the pupil will have an "unauthorised absence" recorded in the register. Examples of unauthorised (not approved) absences are (this list is not exhaustive):

- Absence due to birthday, shopping for uniform, looking after family members
- Holiday in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed to by the Head Teacher, in line with changes to the law implemented in 2013
- Late arrival to school after the register has closed has to be recorded as an unauthorised absence
- All absence – authorised and unauthorised – will be analysed and subject to challenge to ensure that any concern regarding frequency, pattern or validity is acted upon swiftly.

The Policy in Practice

Punctuality

Pupils who arrive late to registration are recorded as L (late before registration closes). First registration takes place at the start of Lesson 1 at **8.55am**. Pupils are expected to be on the School site by 8.45am to avoid them being late for registration. Persistent late arrival will be challenged by school and could result in parents/carers and pupils being asked to attend an attendance meeting with the Attendance Team. Pupils who arrive after 8.55am must sign in at the school Reception and will be asked about their reason for their late arrival: this will be followed up with contact to parents/carers. Pupils are expected to be punctual.

Registration

Registers will be taken electronically promptly at 8.55am and at 1.00pm. Registers will close at 9.00 am and at 1.05pm. If a pupil fails to arrive before the registers close, they will be marked as 'absent'.

Medical Appointments

The school acknowledges that hospital and specialist clinic appointments, including paediatric may require a pupil having time out of school. Our expectation is that the minimum amount of learning should be lost. We will seek an explanation from pupils and parents/carers where a whole day is missed for this reason. Proof of unavoidable medical appointments in school time must be provided in advance of the appointment. Routine, non-urgent appointments should be made after 3.15pm and during the School holidays where possible. The school will monitor the amount of absences due to medical appointments carefully.

Illness

Pupils are likely to experience bouts of illness from time to time, this may include mental illness. When a pupil is identified as having frequent absence for reasons of minor illness, a meeting will be arranged to discuss this with the Attendance Team. Some pupils will be managing chronic or more serious medical conditions that impact on their attendance. We will support pupils in these circumstances to ensure they do not miss out on their education and support their mental health and wellbeing.

Holiday Absence in Term Time

Parent/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays. Such holidays will be counted as an unauthorised absence, other than in exceptional circumstances.

If a parent/carer feels there are exceptional circumstances that support a request for leave of absence in term time, they must put the request in writing using the designated form, which is available at Reception. Each case will be considered individually and the decision communicated to the parents/carers.

When a pupil has a minimum of 10 school sessions recorded as unauthorised in a 6 school week period; a school day is two sessions (morning and afternoon) cases will be referred to the Local Authority for the issuing of a Penalty Notice (fine).

The Penalty Notice is £120 per parent/adult for each student to be paid within 28 days, decreasing to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority may instigate legal proceedings under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000. The monies collected do not go to the School.

Children Missing from Education

According to Keeping Children Safe in Education: *“All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Staff should be aware of their school’s or college’s unauthorised absence and children missing from education procedures.”*

The school has a duty to inform the Local Authority if any pupil who is on the school roll is not in attendance and their whereabouts cannot be established. This particularly applies to pupils who move to another authority or country but are not yet in education. If a parent/carer wishes to move their child to another school, they must let the School know to ensure the child is not recorded as missing from education.

Home Education

Parents/carers have a right to educate their children at home. If a parent/carer wishes to withdraw their child from school to pursue this option, this decision must be put in writing to the Head Teacher stating 'a **decision to electively home educate**'. The school will then inform the Local Authority and take the child off roll.

School Attendance Monitoring

Pupils may be subject to a formal attendance monitoring process for any of the following: where attendance falls **below 97%**, where there are a high number of frequent absences each term, where there are frequent minor medical absence or where a pupil is persistently late.

The following steps will be initiated:

Stage 1: Attendance Concern Letter

Parent/Carers will receive a Stage 1 Letter when a pupil's attendance falls below 97%. Parents/carers can contact the Attendance Team to discuss this and if a support plan is required it will be started.

Stage 2: Attendance Support Plan (ASP)

If there is no improvement following the Stage 1 letter, parent/carers will be requested to attend an Attendance Support Plan meeting with the Attendance Team to discuss strategies to improve attendance and to set a target for improved attendance. Attendance will be monitored for a 5- week period.

Stage 3: Parent/Carer Contract Meetings (PCM)

If no improvement is recorded in spite of the ASP process, parent/carers will be requested to attend a Parent Contract Meeting with the Attendance Team to discuss further strategies to improve attendance. An improvement target will be set and attendance will be monitored for a 5-week period.

Stage 4: Legal Proceedings

If attendance has not improved or there is a decrease in attendance, legal proceedings will be initiated in the form of a Penalty Notice or Referral to Local Authority for Prosecution.

If a parent/carer fails to attend the scheduled attendance monitoring meeting, the meeting will take place in their absence, to ensure a support plan is put in place and the monitoring period will commence. The Local Authority will take account of any lack of parental engagement if the process reaches the stage of legal proceedings.