



MEADOW VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Reviewed date	June 2023
Next review	June 2024
Ratified by	Full Governing Board

In partnership with the whole school community and through an engaging curriculum, we aspire to nurture and empower every child to flourish.

We will encourage, inspire, motivate and support them to achieve their potential so they become confident, considerate, resilient and active members of society.

Aims

The school's policy and procedures relating to attendance aim to ensure that every child attends school every day, in order that they achieve well in school.

Parents and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's policy on attendance and the information regarding to the authorised and unauthorised absences of its pupils. This document details the accountability of each stakeholder and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Introduction

Meadow Vale Primary School believes that all pupils of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs they may have. The Education Act of 1996 states that a parent is responsible for ensuring their child attends regularly and punctually. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them.

The school's Attendance Policy is set with consideration of the following:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Penalty Notice) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended by The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- Department for Education Guidance regarding school attendance matters

The school takes its responsibility to monitor and positively promote the regular attendance of all its pupils seriously. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes a child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

Roles and responsibilities

School's responsibilities for pupils' attendance include:

- Having a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand
- Developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance
- Accurately completing admission and attendance registers
- Having robust, daily processes to follow up on attendance
- Having a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance

Parents' responsibilities for pupils' attendance include:

- Ensuring that their child attends every day the school is open, except when a statutory reason applies

- Notifying the school as soon as possible when their child has been unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness)
- Only requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance
- Booking any medical appointments around the school day where possible

Registering pupil attendance

The school day begins at 8.50am. Registers are taken at 8.55am and all pupils should be in their classes by this time. Registers are taken at the start of the afternoon session (12.30pm for EYFS and KS1, 1pm for Years 3 and 4 and 1.30pm for years 5 and 6). The school day ends at 3.15pm.

A pupil who arrives after the register has been taken is marked as late. The reason for lateness and time of arrival to school are noted on the register along with the late (L) mark.

A pupil who arrives after 9.10am will be marked as 'U' (late after register closed).

Lateness

Parents and carers are expected to ensure their child arrives in school on time. Persistent lateness will be followed up by the school by letter to a pupil's parent or carer and may be referred to the Education Welfare Service if there is no improvement.

A pupil arriving late:

- Should enter the building through the main entrance and report to the school office.
- Will have their name entered in the register and be marked as late with the reason and time of arrival.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that, where possible, any medical appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays; parents and carers should provide proof of the appointment.

Absence

This school expects its pupils to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there are good reasons for the absence to be registered as authorised.

There are two main categories of absence:

- Authorised absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification of the absence, or given approval in advance for the absence.
- Unauthorised absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence after a parent's request.

When a parent or carer contacts the school via telephone or email to advise that their child is unable to attend due to illness or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. A pupil's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.

Keeping a pupil off school with a minor ailment, such as a headache, is not acceptable. Repeated absence for the same or similar ailments will require evidence from a medical practitioner, such as a stamped appointment card or letter. Please note that the school will not ask any parent or carer to incur a charge for this information and will not be liable for any cost.

If a pupil is going to be absent from school, parents or carers should always telephone the school office on 01344 421046 or send an e-mail to attendance@meadowvaleprimary.com by 9.10am on each day of their child's absence.

If no communication is received by the school, with reason for absence, the school office will telephone parents or carers and the other contacts on the child's file on morning of any absence. If the school is unable to reach a parent, carer or other nominated contact, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where no adequate explanation for a child's absence is given and should the school remain concerned for the welfare of an absent child, members of the leadership team may attend a child's registered home address and/or a referral may be made to Children's Social Care.

Persistent absenteeism

Persistent absenteeism is defined as a pupils' absence equating to 10% or more of their possible sessions in school. For example, if a pupil's attendance drops below 90%, it may be classed as persistent absenteeism. Regular analysis of absenteeism will be carried out and letters may be sent to parents if attendance falls below the expected levels.

If attendance does not improve, parents will be invited to discuss the matter via a meeting in school or telephone call with the Education Welfare Officer or the school's Attendance Officer.

If there is no improvement in a pupil's attendance within an agreed period of time, parents will be invited into school to prepare an attendance action plan with the Education Welfare Officer and the school's Attendance Officer and discuss the potential consequences of non-improvement of a pupil's attendance.

Where there is improvement in a pupil's attendance within an agreed period of time, acknowledgement of this will be sent to a pupil's parent or carer.

The process identified below will be followed:

- School will issue a first letter to parents when a pupil has 6 unauthorised absences or when a pupils' attendance drops below 90%
- School will issue a second letter when a pupil has missed 10 sessions of school or when there is little or no improvement in their attendance
- School will invite parents to meet to complete and attendance action plan after the first attendance letter has been issued

Term Time Leave of Absence

At Meadow Vale Primary School, term time absences are actively discouraged. Our purpose is to ensure that all pupils achieve their full potential; there is a clear link between poor attendance and underachievement.

However, we recognise that there may be occasions where a parent considers there are extenuating or compassionate reasons for such absence. As outlined in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, the Headteacher will decide if the circumstances are “exceptional” and whether or not the absence will be authorised.

Parents must request leave as far in advance as possible, giving at least 2 weeks’ notice.

The request, to be made by the parent with whom the child normally resides, must be made by completing in full the “Application for Leave of Absence During Term Time” form, which is available from the school office.

The request must include the reason why it is felt necessary to take leave during term time.

- Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to ‘exceptional circumstances’. Parent will be informed by letter/email within 7 school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

Authorisation for term time leave will not be given for the following reasons:

- Availability or cost of holidays during term time
- Extended holiday at the beginning or end of the term
- A term-time booking made in error by the parent or another person
- Rescheduled holidays
- Family outings
- Celebrations of birthdays or anniversaries

School Action

On receipt of a leave of absence request, the Headteacher will consider the submitted application for leave of absence during term time. They will take in to account any reason as given by the parent for seeking such leave of absence ahead of deciding whether or not such given reasons are, in their view, “exceptional” to merit the granting such leave of absence during term time.

The parent who submitted the application for leave of absence during term time will be notified within 7 days of the school’s decision in response to the application.

Term time absence taken without authorisation may, where the criteria for doing so is met, be referred by the school to the Educational Welfare Service. A referral may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued in accordance with Bracknell Forest Council’s “Code of Conduct and Protocol For The Issuing Of Fixed Penalty Notices”.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice may be issued to each parent for each child. In the academic year 2022/23, the rate per parent per child is £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 22 and 28 days.

If an issued Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid within the prescribed time limit for payment, each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates'

Supporting pupils' attendance

Pupils learn best when parents and staff work in partnership to maximise pupils' attendance at school and everyone is clear of expectations and procedures. The staff at Meadow Vale have an obligation to enquire and challenge the reasons for pupils' absences and/or lateness and do insist on written evidence for any such absences. There is also an expectation that the staff report concerns over absence and lateness to the Headteacher.

The school may send letters to parents or carers regarding their child's current attendance level, unexplained absences, lateness or any other concerns.

The Education Welfare Service strives to support schools, parents and pupils with the aim of ensuring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. However, the Education Welfare Service also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

Section 444 of the Education Act states that "if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence".

Bracknell Forest Council, through the Education Welfare Service, may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecute parents when pupils do not attend school regularly.

A Fixed Penalty Notice when requested by a Headteacher can be issued as long as the evidence for the request is robust and the following criteria are met:-

- Where there is a minimum of 10 school sessions of unauthorised absence (5 school days) in any 10 week period (these do not need to be consecutive)
- Where term time leave is taken without obtaining authorisation from the school
- Unwarranted delayed return from term time leave without authorisation
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed (U code) on 10 or more occasions in a 10 week period
- Parents' or carers' failure to make arrangements to ensure that pupils who have been excluded from school are not in a public place at prescribed times during the first five school days of any exclusion, without reasonable justification*

*It is incumbent upon the parent(s) in such circumstances to provide proof of reasonable justification, for example, that the child or young person needed to attend a pre-arranged medical appointment, or a medical emergency requiring the child to be supervised elsewhere than at home.

A Penalty Notice will be issued on the first occasion if appropriate.

When a pupil is referred to the Education Welfare Service because of persistent poor attendance there are various actions that can be taken to try to bring about an improvement. The Fast Track Intervention framework promotes early intervention and aims to ensure that appropriate action is taken to tackle non-attendance as soon as attendance problems become apparent. Fast Track involves engaging the parent in specifying what improvements need to be made over a fixed time-frame (usually 8 weeks). Parents have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings may be initiated in the Magistrates' Court.

Contact details

- Our attendance officer: attendance@meadowvaleprimary.com
- The school's admin team: secretary@meadowvaleprimary.com
- The school's allocated Education Welfare Officer: info@school-attendance.org.uk
- Bracknell Forest's Education Welfare Service:
education.welfare-services@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Monitoring and evaluation

It is the Governors legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in their school. The school's attendance figures are monitored by the Governing Board on a termly basis.