

Mareham Le Fen Church of England Primary School

Attendance Policy

INTRODUCTION

Having care of a child means an adult with whom the child lives and who looks after the child on a day to day basis. Any reference to a “parent” in this Policy is a reference to anyone having care of a child as set out above.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child’s regular attendance at school, the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act.

Mareham Le Fen Church of England Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all pupils within a distinctively Christian context. To this end the School will do as much as it can to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems affecting attendance will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

It is recognised that

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access and education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive 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.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils/parents may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.

AIMS AND TARGETS

Mareham Le Fen CE Primary School aims to maintain our overall attendance during the 2016/2017 academic year to between 96-97% this will put us in line with the national average.

In 2017/18 the school aims to maintain this figure and continue to reward good attendance.

Parents will be sent a letter annually at the end of each academic year, reminding them of our attendance procedures ready for the start of the new year.

Children will be rewarded for good attendance through half termly class certificates for the class with best attendance, children with 100% attendance and above during a half term will be entered into a draw for a chance of winning a prize.

Children with annual attendance of 100% will receive a gift and certificate during the leavers service each year.

EXPECTATIONS

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- That they attend school regularly.
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.

We expect the following from all our parents:

- To ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time.

- To ensure that they contact the school as soon as reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend, preferably by 9:30am.
- To contact the school daily in relation to continued absence.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school appropriately prepared for the school day.
- To ensure that their children have had something to eat and drink/ breakfast before they come to school.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- First day contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing a good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to the school.
- Recognition and reward for good attendance.

RESPONDING TO NON ATTENDANCE

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond quickly and effectively.

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents by 9.30am, they will be contacted by text; it is extremely important that parents inform the school immediately with any changes in contact numbers.
- Further evidence of illness eg doctors attendance/ pharmacy receipt may be required.
- Where there is no response, a letter will be sent, or further phone calls made.
- Where non-attendance continues with no contact having been made with parents for 5 days, the Local Authority will be informed that the child is a child missing education. Further enquiries will then be carried out by both the school and the Child Missing Education Team at the Local Authority.
- For unauthorised absence in excess of 4 ½ days in any 6 week period, a Fixed Penalty Formal Warning Letter may be issued by school
- Where there is no improvement during the subsequent monitoring period, a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority.
- The return to school of a pupil after long term absence requires special planning. For example it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme.
- Designated staff should be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme.
- All staff need to be aware that this is a difficult process that will require careful handling and that any problems should be notified to the responsible member of staff as soon as possible.
- Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual needs and may involve phased, part time re-entry with support in class as appropriate.

The success of the Pastoral Support Programme will require the involvement of appropriate school staff, other agencies, the child and parents.

ADMISSION REGISTER

Entries

The names of all pupils admitted to school in accordance with the school's Admission Policy must be entered in the school's Admission Register.

Where a parent wishes their child to be known by another name, other than their legal name, the register can be altered for use in school but the parent must be informed that legal evidence of the change must be produced before any official records will be altered. If such evidence is not forthcoming, it is for the parents to resolve the position and to advise the school accordingly. Should any problems arise in this respect, advice will be sought from Children's Services of the Local Authority.

Deletions

The names of pupils can only be deleted from the Admission Register under the following circumstances:

- Where the school has been notified that the pupil has been registered as a pupil at another school.
- Where a pupil has ceased to attend the school and the parent(s) have satisfied the County Council that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than by attendance at school.
- Where the school has been notified by the School Medical Officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before becoming legally exempt from the obligation to attend.
- Where the pupil has been absent from school without reasonable cause, for 20 academic days and the Headteacher of the school has failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain the whereabouts of the pupil.
- Where the Headteacher has been informed that the pupil has died.
- Where a pupil has been permanently excluded.

Removal from the school roll under any other circumstances is not permissible.

Publication of Attendance Data in the School Prospectus, on the School Website and in Annual Reports

All children on a school roll, including those above and below statutory school age, should be included as statistics in the school prospectus.

The data should relate to the preceding school year and should consist of two percentage figures per term reporting on authorised and unauthorised attendance.

Computerised Attendance Registers

Since register entries form an important part of evidence in the event of prosecution of parents under Section 441(1) of the Education Act 1996, or in the seeking of an Education Supervision Order under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989, it is necessary to institute safeguards in respect of where and how registers are kept by computer as indicated below.

It is required that the original entry in a register is clearly distinguishable from any subsequent correction.

The school's attendance registers along with attendance date and printouts from Integris G2, the Management Information System, must be kept for a period of not less than three years.

The school uses computers to maintain its attendance registers and is registered as a data user under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Symbols to be used in Registers

From 1 September 2006 all schools are required to use a common set of codes to record pupil attendance and absence.

The use of fixed codes will also assist both Local Authorities and the DfE in monitoring not only whether pupils are absent with or without the permission of the school, but why pupils are absent from school.

Closing of Registers

In order that further actions may be taken regarding a pupil who is consistently late, it is considered appropriate for schools to maintain separate records of times of late arrival. In line with recommendations, our Registers are closed 10 minutes after the school opens for the relevant session, or at the discretion of the headteacher. For late arrivals before the close of Registration, the symbol used in the Register will be "L"; for arrivals after this time the symbol will be "U".

Post Registration Truancy

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children attend school at the beginning of each session.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Absences which are classified as authorised, may be authorised on the basis of evidence from several sources, examples may include parents, school, health authority; it is important to identify parentally condoned absence, which may adversely affect a child's education. A parent sending a note to/telephoning school stating that a child has been absent through illness may well be "authorising" the absence, but this may not make the absence valid within law unless authorised by the Headteacher. The Headteacher may request further evidence of absence due to illness eg evidence of doctor appointment, receipt of prescription medication, receipt of medication purchased from pharmacy etc. We will continue to be vigilant regarding authorised absence patterns, in order that parentally condoned absence is dealt with effectively. The responsibility for determining whether or not any absence is authorised rests with the Headteacher.

Examples of absences which will not be authorised include the following:

- Looking after a sibling
- Minding the house
- Absence due to parental illness/sibling illness/other family member illness
- Birthday trips
- Headlice treatment

This is a list of examples and not a complete list.

Holiday Absence

Absence from school, for any reason, can have a negative impact on a child's educational progress and holidays in term time should be avoided. The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 states that it **"prohibits the Headteacher of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application."**

Although it is not possible to define exceptional circumstances, it is at the discretion of the headteacher to ascertain whether individual applications for holiday meet the criteria of "exceptional circumstances". The onus is on the parent to state the exceptional circumstances at the time of requesting such leave. There may be instances where a proportion of the leave requested may be authorised with the remainder being unauthorised.

Circumstances which will not be considered as exceptional will include

- Availability of cheap holidays
- Poor weather in school holidays
- Work commitments of parents
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Shopping trips
- Birthday treats

When assessing a request for holiday, the Headteacher will take various factors into account including:

- Length of time requested
- Proximity of SATS and other examinations
- Frequency of such requests

Mareham Le Fen CE Primary School will follow guidance issued by Lincolnshire County Council regarding unauthorised attendance and fixed penalty notices. The traffic light system of notices and warnings will be used, samples are attached in appendices 1, 2 and 3.

EDUCATION SERVICES

Mareham Le Fen CE Primary School works with the Educational Services with the aim of improving attendance. Assistance and advice will be sought as required for individual cases.

Responsibilities

Headteacher

- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the Policy.
- To oversee the work of the Senior Administrator.
- To regularly report progress on attendance to governors, pupils and parents.
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence.
- To liaise with colleagues from the Local Authority as necessary.

Senior Administrator

- To oversee the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- Analyse attendance data, at least termly.
- An absence book to be maintained in the school office.
- Maintain a late record.
- To produce the attendance profile for the whole school.
- To report to the Headteacher on attendance issues.

Class Teacher

- To complete registers accurately and on time.
- To follow up immediately any unexplained absence by informing the school office.
- To challenge suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence.
- To record all reasons for absence in the register.
- To inform the Headteacher of concerns in a timely manner.

Governors

- Governors can play a valuable role through representation at school attendance panels, parents evenings etc
- Request regular attendance progress reports for Governors Meetings.

Parents

- Contact with school on first day of absence or as soon as possible.
- Provide signed and dated absence notes for all absences.
- Support their child and the school in achieving maximum attendance.

LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

Research has shown that schools in partnership with the full range of support services have a greater impact on school attendance than when they act alone or when the support services are uncoordinated or disjointed.

Poor school attendance may be a symptom of a wide range of institutional, community, family or individual circumstances. Many of these circumstances will demand expert support beyond the remit of the school or Education Welfare Service. It is therefore vital that strong partnerships are established with all agencies that work with children and young people.

- Other Agencies to be used where appropriate in individual cases:
- Educational Behavioural and Support Services
- Educational Psychologists
- Special Educational Needs Service
- Children's Services
- Youth Service
- Local Police

Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the Act. Each school has a Data Protection Notification which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the Police or Children's Services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

This Policy is agreed by the Governing Body and is reviewed bi-annually.

Signed : Chair of Governors

Date:

Appendix 1: Initial Letter to all parents explaining expectations

Dear Parent / Carer

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

I am writing to all parents and carers to remind you of the importance of regular school attendance which is a priority for your child and our school. You will be aware it was an area highlighted by our recent Ofsted Inspection and is a priority on our action plan for the forthcoming academic year. There is a very strong link between regular school attendance and achievement and if your child is frequently absent from school the chances of them reaching their potential is much lower.

When children have been asked why they think it is important to come to school every day, (except when ill). This is what they said:

- You miss the work the other children have done
- You forget what you have learnt
- You miss your friends

Remember 90% attendance sounds good if it is in a test but 90% attendance throughout your child's school career means over one year's absence!

To improve attendance we have to work together. If something is stopping your child coming to school, please come and talk to us about it.

Our school and a representative from Education Welfare Services, meet regularly to discuss ways of improving attendance and achievement and with your help we aim to make a real difference. That is why we are introducing a new attendance procedure next year.

From the beginning of the next academic year we will look at the attendance of every pupil in our school. We aim to review each child's attendance every half term.

- If your child's attendance is below 90%, you will receive a letter setting an attendance target for the next term.
- If this target is not met an Educational Welfare Officer will become involved in the monitoring and a further target will be set for the next term.
- Should this target not be reached you will be invited to a School Attendance Panel meeting which will give you four weeks to meet a new attendance target. Failure to attend this meeting could result in a Formal Legal Warning Letter.

This procedure may be shortened if your child's attendance is less than 80% and has not improved over the following four week period.

Mareham Le Fen CE Primary School and the Local Education Authority are determined to make attendance and achievement a high priority. We are sure you will help us with this. Please find attached a copy of your child's attendance for 2013/14.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Moore
Headteacher

Appendix 2: Amber letter for attendance less than 90%

Dear Parent / Carer

You recently received a letter from our school telling you of our plans to improve attendance and achievement. I am writing to you because since September your child's attendance has been less than 90% and this letter has been sent to the parents and carers of all children with attendances between 80% and 90%.

I realise that there may be a good reason for your child's absence and you may have already told us about it. However, it is vital that all pupils at our school attend well over 90% and therefore we will be monitoring your (s/d's) attendance over the next four weeks up to the DATE.

If at the end of this period your child's attendance is still less than 90% and we have concerns about the reasons for absence you will be contacted by an Education Welfare Officer who will monitor your (s'd's) attendance for a further four weeks up until the DATE.

With your support I would expect by this time that your (s/d's) attendance will have improved to above 90%. If it has not you will be invited to a School Attendance Panel to discuss your child's school attendance, or receive a warning letter. Either of which will give you a short time to meet the attendance target.

I would like to thank you in anticipation of your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Moore
Headteacher

Appendix 3: Final letter

Dear Parent / Carer

You recently received a letter from our school telling you of our and Children's Services - Education Welfare's plans to improve attendance and achievement. I am writing to you because since September your (s/d's) attendance has been less than 80% and this letter has been sent to all parents / carers of pupils with similar attendance.

An attendance of less than 80% means an average of at least one day off every week and this will harm your (s/d's) future if it is not improved. I realise that there may be good reason for your (s/d's) recent absence and you may have already told us about it. However, it is vital that all pupils at our school attend well over 90% and therefore we will be monitoring your (s/d's) attendance over the next half term up to the DATE.

If at the end of this period your (s/d's) attendance is still less than 90% and we have concerns about the reasons for absence you will be contacted by an Education Welfare Officer who will monitor your (s/d's) attendance for a further half term up until the DATE.

With your support I would expect by this time that your (s/d's) attendance will have improved to above 90%. If it has not you will become involved in the Local Education Authority's Prosecution Procedure and may be prosecuted under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act for failing to ensure your (s/d's) regular school attendance

I would like to thank you in anticipation of your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Moore
Headteacher