

# Mersey Park Primary School

## Attendance Policy



### Introduction

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. Mersey Park Primary School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy has been developed in consultation with governors, teachers, Education Welfare Services and pupil's parents/carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the schools commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

The policy will aim to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued;
- Raising the awareness of the importance of a differentiated and relevant curriculum;
- Promoting opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements;
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and creating a culture in which good attendance is 'normality';
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

### What is expected of the pupils:

- To respect themselves and others;
- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually;
- To inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are being bullied;
- To encourage friendship and a sense of belonging;
- To be happy and encourage others to feel happy.

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

### **What is expected of the Parents/Carers:**

- To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence;
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness;
- To ensure that their child is collected on time at the end of the school day;
- To work closely with the school and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance;
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be refused except in exceptional circumstances;
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as SATS.

Parents/carers have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly, and is in school for every lesson after they have registered. Parents/carers may be prosecuted if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually.

An offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a child's regular attendance at a school at which they are a registered pupil and when that absence is not authorised by the school and does not meet one of the statutory defences.

Penalty Notices are one of a number of legal sanctions available to deal with these offences.

If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned.

They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, education welfare services and social services where such a child's attendance is irregular.

### **What is expected of the School:**

- To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of;
- To meet the legal requirements set out by Government;
- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance;
- To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention;
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences;
- To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance;
- To encourage open communication channels between home and school;
- To develop procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees;
- To develop procedures leading to a formal referral to the EWO;
- To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum.

The school will endeavour to provide an environment that is conducive in educating every individual pupil. School attendance will be positively supported wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount. The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions. A register of attendance has to be taken once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register has to record whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil is absent it will be recorded whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised, using the correct attendance code (see table below).

### **What is expected of the Local Authority:**

The Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the Education Social Welfare Service (ESWS) the Local Authority provides support to schools and parents/carers to fulfil their legal duty. The ESWS is the enforcement agency of the LA, as well as providing guidance and support through its officers. The LA may prosecute the parent/carer and put in place a Parenting Contract, which includes a statement by the parents/carers that they agree to comply with whatever requirements are set out in the plan and a statement by the Local Authority agreeing to provide appropriate support. Parenting Contracts may also be drawn up between parents/carers and the governing body of the school.

### **Requests for leave of absence**

Parents/carers are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term time. If a parent/carer wishes to request a period of leave they are required to write to the Head teacher. The school may choose to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. The school will inform the parent/carer of the decision by letter and the request will be noted in the electronic register.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

In the case of unauthorised absences a fixed penalty may be issued. Head Teachers may submit a written request to the Education Social Welfare Service using the appropriate proforma asking for a Fixed Penalty Notice or a Warning Letter to be issued to parents/carers. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent/carer for the following reasons:

- Attendance below 85% with at least 10 days lost due to unauthorised absence. These do not need to be consecutive;
- 5 days or more unauthorised absence due to holidays in term time;
- Pupils stopped on Police Truancy Sweeps;
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion;
- A pupil arrives after the registers have closed on 10 or more separate occasions.

Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued by post. Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid after this time but within 28 days.

The Local Authority retains any revenue from the Fixed Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs. Non-payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the notice and may trigger a prosecution of parents/carers by the Education Social Welfare Service under Section 444 Education Act 1996. There is no right of appeal by parents/carers against a penalty notice.

### **School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance**

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school at **8.50am**. At **9.00am** the register is taken to the school office. Any late pupils should then enter the school through the main entrance. If any pupil arrives late the office staff will ask the parent/carer to sign their child in recording the name, class, time and reason for lateness. If a child arrives unaccompanied by a parent/carer the office staff will complete the record asking the pupil to offer a reason, and this will be followed up by a phone call from the Home/School Liaison Officer. If lateness becomes a regular occurrence parents/carers will receive a phone call to enquire about reasons and to offer support. All staff need to be aware that any child arriving late **MUST** register at the office for purposes of fire regulations.

The register officially closes at **9.30am** and any pupil arriving after this will be marked absent for the session. A reason for the lateness will need to be provided and a decision made by the school to mark it as an authorised or unauthorised absence. During the morning the absences from that morning and the previous afternoon will be recorded onto the electronic registration system and all the present pupils marked present. The offered reasons for any lates from the previous day or any absences will be assessed and the appropriate code entered into the system. The register is returned back to the class teacher before the start of the afternoon session and the register is again taken at 1.00pm.

The parents/carers of all absent pupils, where a reason for absence has not been provided, will be contacted by telephone, by the Home/School Liaison Officer, during the morning session. Reasons for absence will then be recorded on the daily attendance record. Where contact has not been made with parents/carers a home visit may be completed. If contact has not been made by the end of the school day, the school will inform the EWO to request further support.

Reasons for absence may be offered verbally by phone but should be followed by a letter on the child's return to school. The school may then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence. This decision will be made within the guidance set out in the 1996 Education act, which identifies the following reasons as acceptable reasons for an authorised absence:

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause;
- The child lives over a certain distance from the school and either the LA has failed to make suitable arrangements to register the child at a nearer school or the LA has failed to make suitable transport arrangements;
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith;
- The child is absent 'with leave'. This refers to leave being granted by the school if authorised for exceptional circumstances.

A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents/carers who have not offered a reason and will mark the absence as unauthorised if no reason is provided, after a reasonable length of time (maximum 3 weeks).

### Attendance codes

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the electronic register as required and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences.

Code	School Meaning	Statistical Meaning	Note
/	Present (AM)	Present	
\	Present (PM)	Present	
B	Off-site educational activity	Approved Educational Activity	Do not use for unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Authorised absence	Exceptional circumstances
D	Dual Registered – at another educational establishment	Present	Pupil scheduled to attend at the other school at which they are registered
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised absence	Alternative provision must be made from the sixth day of any fixed period
G	Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher	Unauthorised Absence	Cannot be changed retrospectively
H	Holiday authorised by the school	Authorised absence	Exceptional circumstances. Application made in advance.
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	Authorised absence	Parents/carers should notify school on the first day of absence. Can ask parents to provide medical evidence (e.g. prescription, appointment card) if the authenticity of illness is in doubt. Can record absence as unauthorised if not satisfied.
J	At an interview at another educational establishment	Approved Educational Activity	Interview to transfer to another educational establishment
L	Late arrival before the register closed	Present	Registers close at 9.30am
M	Medical or dental appointments	Authorised absence	
N	Reason for absence not yet provided	Unauthorised absence	Amend once the reason is known. This should not be left on a pupil's

			attendance record indefinitely. If no reason is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O
O	Absent from school without authorisation	Unauthorised absence	Given if school is not satisfied with the reason given
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity	Present	Approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence	May need to seek advice from the religious body
S	Study Leave	N/A	
T	Gypsy, Roma, Traveller absence	Authorised absence	Travelling for occupational purposes. Agreed with the school but not known if the pupil is attending elsewhere. If it is known where the child is attended they should be dual registered.
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Unauthorised absence	
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity	Includes residential trips
W	Work experience	N/A	
X	Not required to be in school	Attendance not required	When non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Attendance not required	School site closed, transport provided by the school or LA is not available, local or national emergency results in widespread disruption to travel
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Attendance not required	
#	Planned whole or partial school closure	Attendance not required	Bank holidays, up to five INSET days and use of school as a polling station, staggered starts.
-	Should attend	No mark recorded	

### Monitoring

The Deputy Head teacher, Home/School Liaison Officer and the EWO will review the attendance of all the school's pupils on a termly basis and any pupils identified as cause for concern or with less than 85% attendance on a more regular basis. A letter will be sent to the parents/carers of any pupil identified as having attendance problems informing them of the school's concerns and offering them support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending. The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and if after a two week period there appears to be no improvement the parents/carers of the pupil will be invited to an Attendance Panel meeting with the Head Teacher, Deputy Head

teacher, Home/School Liaison Officer and EWO to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the pupil from attending. If the parents/carers do not attend the meeting or after such meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve a formal referral to the EWO will be made.

The electronic registration system provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant and provide information to assist the school to strategically manage attendance issues. The EWO will also have access to this information and will use the reports to support their role.

### **Official Register**

The paper version of the electronically stored information will be bound together to form a year's record and stored for a period of 3 years in a secure location.

### **Strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality**

- Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
- Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports, and at the Home/School Discussion evenings in October and February.
- Positive verbal reinforcement is given to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time and an attendance action plan developed to help them catch up with any missed curriculum and promote future attendance.
- Weekly attendance leagues will promote and celebrate class attendance and 'Daley Bear' will be awarded to the class with the best attendance each week.
- Parents will be informed of the school's policy on attendance when their child first starts at the school.
- Attendance expectations will be included on the home/school agreement.
- Parents will be regularly informed of the whole school attendance target and the current position in meeting that target.
- Termly punctuality weeks will promote and celebrate the importance of arriving in school on time. Follow up letters will be sent to parents/ carers of pupils where punctuality is a cause for concern.
- Attendance Panels will be offered as a means to support parents/carers of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern.
- Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued through referral to the ESWS where parents/carers do not engage with the school to support an improvement in attendance for their child when attendance falls below 90%.
- 95%+ attendance will be celebrated at the end of each term and 100% certificates are awarded each term.
- 100% attendance will be rewarded at the end of the year, with reference made to pupil's having 100% attendance in consecutive years.

### **Monitoring and review**

This policy is monitored termly by the head teacher, who reports to governors on request about the effectiveness of the policy. The attendance policy is the governors' responsibility, and they review its effectiveness annually. This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if necessary.