



Attendance Policy

School Attendance Officer - Katherine Campsall

Reviewed: January 2023
Next Review: January 2024

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Leen Mills Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.

- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and Early Help so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school, or their attendance has fallen below 95%.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, or lack of medical evidence, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to targeted support any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Nottinghamshire County Council and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Senior Leadership Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.
- Daily monitoring will be undertaken by the office staff with weekly monitoring of all attendance will be undertaken by the Attendance Officer.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at parents' evenings where necessary.

Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Weekly monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to Early Help.
- Providing reports and background information to inform referral discussion.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring Scholarpack is updated with any absences and late arrivals.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

All the school doors open at 8.40am until 8.45 am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom. A breakfast club is available for registration between 7.30am and 8.40am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00am and by 1.20pm. (Attendance code for present am / and \ for pupils who are present pm - absences should be marked with the relevant code on ScholarPack) these registers are then returned to the school office.

All attendance records are documented using Scholarpack software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Once the doors are closed at 8.45am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way after 8.45am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.15am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.15am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

ABSENCES

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a text message. If this text is not replied to, a phone call will be made to parents/carers to try and ascertain the reason behind a child's absence. If no reason is established by 12 noon the absence will be coded as unauthorised (Attendance code O).

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence (see Monitoring). This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of head teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, the Headteacher is only allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. An unauthorised leave of absence of more than 3 days / 6 sessions (over a 6 week rolling period) for the purpose of a family holiday can lead to you being issued with a penalty notice fine of up to £120 for each child who is absent. The fines can be issued to both parents for each child.

A penalty notice will be requested if the child's attendance falls to below 90% because of the holiday absence.

A penalty notice will also be requested if a second period of absence occurs due to a holiday being then during term time, or if a child's attendance is already cause for concern (below 90%).

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to Early Help.

Issuing a penalty notices to parents to address poor attendance patterns will be at the discretion of the headteacher and Attendance officer.

Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the ScholarPack attendance software. The Attendance Officer will monitor attendance on a weekly basis and regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Monitoring Process

Attendance is beginning to cause concern when a child is absent for a number of sessions that would lead to attendance below 95% (which is below the national average), or has an identifiable pattern of absence (e.g. most Fridays) or changes suddenly without explanation. For the Autumn Term we calculate how many sessions a child would have to miss in the entire term to end with 95% (7 sessions, 3.5 days) so that a very short absence at the start of the year doesn't automatically trigger absence procedures. For the rest of the year, we use percentage absence to set the threshold and send letters out as appropriate.

At this point a letter (Letter 1) and a copy of the attendance record will be sent home to parents to inform them of their child's attendance and how this may impact upon their learning. This letter also informs them that we will no longer be authorising any absence without appropriate evidence (appointment cards, prescriptions etc.).

We will then start monitoring their attendance and, if there are more than 6 unauthorised sessions of absence within a rolling 6 week period we will issue a letter requesting the parents contact school to arrange a meeting to discuss attendance (Letter 2). At this meeting with the attendance officer we will discuss the reasons for the child's absence and if the school can help with improving attendance in any way. At the meeting we will also give you a letter detailing possible further actions should attendance not improve or be evidenced where appropriate (Letter 3).

If parents do not respond to Letter 2, then a further letter (Letter 3a) will be sent detailing the possible further actions that can be taken and informing the parent that a lack of engagement will leave the school with no option but to refer to Early Help or issue a penalty notice (fine) unless they contact the school as soon as possible after receipt of the letter.

If there is no contact after Letter 3a, and there are 6 more unauthorised sessions (3 days), then a final letter (Letter 4) will be sent notifying the parents that the school has requested the Local Authority issue a penalty notice. If the school has sent a referral to Early Help, then the parents will be informed of that either verbally or in writing.

If parents do not attend the meetings detailed in Letters 2 and 3a above, then referrals may be made to Early Help requesting support for the family.

If, at any time, there are wider concerns about the child's welfare then safeguarding procedures will be started immediately in line with our child protection policy.

Penalty Notices

After issuing letter 3 (in the meeting) or 3a (if meeting has not taken place), if attendance does not improve, the school may issue a penalty notice. The first monitoring period will be up to 12 weeks after the issue of the warning letter (Letter 2). A penalty notice will be issued as soon as 3 days (6 sessions) of unauthorised absences are recorded in a continuous 6 week period from Letter 2 being issued. After the 12 week initial monitoring period, monitoring will continue on a rolling 6 weeks basis for the rest of the academic year.

If a child ends the year with attendance below 95% we may continue to monitor them closely the following academic year if we have cause to be concerned. All children who end the year with attendance below 90% will be monitored closely from the start of the year.

Please note a 12 week monitoring period can stretch either side of a holiday and is 12 school weeks - not including holidays.

The school follows the "Nottinghamshire Local Code of Conduct for penalty notices issued in respect of truancy and excluded pupils" and this is available on our website and the local authority's website.

Home visits

It is the policy of Leen Mills, that staff only make home visits as a short term intervention, not a long term solution to a parent's inability to get their children to school.