

Learning to Flourish



Attendance Policy

A Telford and Wrekin policy adopted by Moorfield Primary School

Implemented: September 2018

Review date: September 2021

Legal Responsibilities

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Section 44 further states that:- “The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law. An offence is NOT committed if it can be demonstrated that:-

- The pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence)
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/parents belong.
- The school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child’s home and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the LA. “Walking distance” is defined as two miles for pupils under eight and three miles for all other pupils. Telford and Wrekin Council have, however, chosen to define these distances as two miles for infant, junior and primary pupils and three miles for other pupils. Distances will be measured by shortest available walking route.
- A limited defence is available to the parents of travelling children.

The Act also places a legal obligation on :-

- The LA to provide support to enforce regular school attendance with legal intervention relation to non-attendance offences.
- Schools to register attendance and notify the Nominated Attendance Person within school of a child who is absent from school without authorisation for 10 or more days.
- The governing body to ensure that two school registers are kept, one for attendance and one for admissions.

Philosophy

Moorfield Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that, if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance is crucial. As a school, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to pupils and parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is a concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

Principles

The school will

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive in-service training on registration regulations and associated education law;
- Complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session;
- Stress to parents /carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence;
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior managers, EWO, and the school governors;
- Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a pupil is absent, he or she will be missed.

Procedures

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence we will:

- Follow "first day of contact" procedures and contact the parent by telephone, or if the parent is unavailable calls will be repeated throughout the day.
- If the child does not return to school on the third day and no contact is received from the parents/carers a referral to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) is made to follow up absence.
- If no response is received after 5 days of absence and consider a referral to the "Children and Family Locality Services" or contact "Family Connect" if no contact can be made with the parent.
- Invite the parents into school for an Attendance Concern Meeting (ACM) after a maximum of 10 days absence, unless other action is planned. This meeting will include a senior member of staff, parent, pupil and the NAP/EWO. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance.
- Help the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks. In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence then an Individual Reintegration Programme (RP) will be implemented. The IRP will include all members of the school staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupils needs as possible.
- Contact **Family Connect on 01952385385** for further guidance and available support.

In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of the school staff will make attendance a priority and convey to the pupils the importance of their education.

Performance

It is important to set realistic targets for both attendance and persistent absence; these targets are set during the Autumn term of each academic year in consultation with the EWO and the Governing Body. The Governing Body will approve the school target for attendance to be set for the following academic year. The target will be sent to the Attendance Support Team by the end of the Autumn Term at the latest. In compiling an Action Plan, the school will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process. When evaluating success the school will consider whether or not

- Attendance has improved
- Persistent absence has reduced
- Punctuality has improved
- Parental responses to absences has improved
- Re-integration plans where implemented have been successful
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, governing body and local community
- Pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within school.

Practice

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately;
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers;
- Regularly analysing attendance data;
- Ensuring prompt follow up action in cases of non-school attendance;
- Liaising closely with the schools NAP/EWO if appropriate;
- Recording (and retaining) carefully all telephone messages;
- A signed copy of any correspondence to parents is retained by the school;
- A referral is made to AST (Attendance Support Team) for intervention.

Keeping the Registers

The Status of the Register

The register is a legal document which can be maintained in paper or electronic format. Registers will be kept accurately. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute data to pupils' end of term reports, to records of achievement and leavers' references.

Marking the register

- **No pupil should be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is taken or unless he or she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher.**
- Spaces must not be left in the register
- Registers should be closed at 9.30am and 1.45pm each day. AST have circulated LA guidance in line with DFE guidelines.
- Where a pupil arrives late (after the gates are closed) but the register is still open, the pupil should be marked as late but counted as present for that session.
- Where a pupil misses registration (arrives after registration has closed) absence must be marked as an unauthorised absence – U code.
- Where a pupil misses registration but provides an adequate explanation, he/she should be recorded as late but coded as an authorised absence for that session e.g. M for dental or medical appointment.
- Pupils must not mark the register under any circumstances.
- Attendance data from registers will be monitored as appropriate.

The decision to authorise an absence should be made within a maximum of two weeks from the date of the absence. If no reason has been provided during this time, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised

Removal from Roll

(See also DFE Guidance – School Attendance – guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (November 2016) and “Children Missing Education – Statutory Guidance for local authorities (September 2016)

Schools should inform their LA of any intended deletion from roll. Pupils should only be removed from the school roll and class registers under the following circumstances:

a)

Where a parent informs the school that they are moving out of the area and give a new address and school where they intend to register the child. Following the date given for the move, the Admissions Team or Attendance and Pupil Tracking Officer will contact the new LA to ascertain that the child is, in fact, living in the area and has been registered at a school. If confirmed, the LA will then advise the Headteacher that the pupil can be removed from school roll and registers, retrospectively from the date given for the move.

b) Where a parent informs the school that they will be pursuing a place in another school in the area the parent should complete the in-year transfer form and this should be forwarded to the Admissions Team at Telford and Wrekin Council. A date for the transfer should be requested and the subsequent transfer should be made via the Admissions Team who will inform the parent that a place is available to them at the new school. Once contacted by the new school and admission confirmed, the pupil can then be removed from the host school roll.

c) Where a parent informs the school **in writing** that they intend to teach the child **otherwise than at school**, the school must inform the LA who will arrange for the educational provision to be checked by the LA Advisory Teacher for Elective Home Education.

d) Where a pupil has been continuously absent for not less than 4 weeks and the school has made extensive enquiries which have failed to locate the pupil. In such cases a school representative or an attendance and pupil tracking officer will make home visits and other enquiries to ascertain that the family are no longer living at their last known address. Removal of a pupil from the class register should only be undertaken when authorised by a headteacher after these enquiries have taken place. **The school will notify the LA in all cases of a pupil being removed from the school roll where a family has moved and cannot be traced in line with the DFE guidance “Children Missing Education” – September 2016. This information should be uploaded by the school onto the s2s system and the Attendance and Pupil Tracking Officer notified to ensure the pupil is tracked.**

e) Where a pupil is registered in accordance with a school attendance order and the LA substitutes another school.

f) Where a pupil has been granted leave of absence e.g for the purpose of a holiday but has failed to attend school within the twenty school days immediately following the expiry of the leave (except by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause) Extensive enquiries by the school must be made in these circumstances to trace the pupil, prior to removal from the school roll. **The school must notify the LA in all cases of a pupil being removed from the school roll owing to non – return from leave of absence e.g for a holiday.**

g) Where a pupil is certified by the School Medical Officer as unlikely to be in a state of health to attend before ceasing to be of compulsory school age.

h) Where the pupil has died

i) Where the pupil has been permanently excluded. The Pupil Discipline Committee must have met. 15 school days will then be allowed for a possible independent appeal panel hearing before the pupil is removed from the school roll.

It is not lawful to remove a pupil from a school roll simply because the pupil has a poor behaviour or poor attendance record.

Professional Development Days

Moorfield Primary School liaises with other local schools when proposing to take PD days to enable parents to make the appropriate childcare arrangements.

Leave of Absence During Term Time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulation 2006 previously allowed headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “special circumstances” of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 Regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Any leave of absence during term time can be disruptive both to the child’s learning and to the school whether for a family holiday or for any other reason. Schools will only consider leave in term time where both:

- The application is made to the headteacher in advance of the leave by a parent/carer the child normally lives with
- There are exceptional circumstances, as agreed by the headteacher for the leave.

Applications should be made as far in advance of the leave as possible and parents/carers should speak to the school before they book any holidays. Schools will only agree absence in exceptional circumstances.

Penalty notices for unauthorised absence

Parents could be issued with a penalty notice if their child is absent from school without permission. In Telford and Wrekin, Holiday Penalty Notices (HPN) are issued to parents who take their children out of school during term time without getting authorisation from the school. The penalty is £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 21 days. If parent/carers fail to pay the penalty fine within 28 days they will be prosecuted.

The headteacher will explore with parents why leave of absence is necessary. Where absences are sanctioned, they will be counted as authorised absence. Where parents fail to abide by the agreement reached with the school and keep a child away from school in excess of the period agreed, or, where parents fail to apply for permission, the extra time should be treated as unauthorised absence.

All requests for leave of absence should be in writing and the application should be made by a parent with day to day care of the child even if they are not actually going on holiday themselves. If the parent with whom the child lives does not give consent to the holiday, leave cannot be given lawfully by the school except by a court order.

What happens when all avenues have been explored, and the child still does not attend school regularly?

Provided absences are unauthorised, a Warning Notice (AST 1) will be issued and attendance monitored for a minimum of 15 school days between each intervention. If there is no improvement in attendance a Final Warning Notice (AST 2) will be served on the parents.

If not significant improvement in attendance is noted within a minimum of 15 school days of the serving of this warning, AST will invite the parent to an Interview Under Caution (IUC) also known as a PACE interview (under Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984)

If attendance does not improve, following the IUC Court proceedings will be considered under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act.

The LA Policy for Prosecution is as follows:-

The parent (s) of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to achieve regular attendance will be considered for court proceedings unless there are extenuating circumstances. All referrals will be considered and discussion between AST and school staff encouraged.

All parents must be given sufficient notification of their children's attendance via the serving of official warning notices.

If it is decided to prosecute, the AST staff will work with the school staff to produce the necessary witness statement and appropriate supporting evidence.

Who is responsible for instigating court procedures?

The LA is responsible for all aspects of the procedure. In Telford and Wrekin this duty is delegated to the Attendance Support Team. A summons will be issued and served in accordance with the requirements of the respective Magistrates Clerks and a representative from the AST will attend court and present the case on behalf of the Local Authority. In certain circumstances legal services will ensure a Council Solicitor is made available to present cases on behalf of the Local Authority, e.g not guilty pleas and contested cases. A certificate signed by the Headteacher confirming the contents of the child's school attendance register during the period of prosecution referred to in the summons will be required as documentary evidence by the court.

NB ONLY Unauthorised absences can be used in evidence.