



Attendance Policy

Review Date	Reviewer	Approved by	Date Approved	Implementation
	R Morgan	A Allison	November 2022	November 2022
September 2023	L Coates	A Bartlett	July 2023	September 2023
September 2025				

Revision History

Issue No	Date	Description
1	November 2022	New policy
2	September 2023	Amended start times for Nursery. Amended finish times for Nursery and Reception.
3	September 2023	Amended rewards to reflect school's current practice: weekly reward for all classes achieving 97% and above.

Introduction

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in line with the DFE 'Working together to improve school attendance' Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities (published May 22 applies from September 2022) and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015).

As part of the North East Learning Trust, Meadowdale Academy seeks to ensure that all pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities and enables them to realise their true potential. The Academy will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the Academy community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all pupils benefit from the education we provide and, therefore, from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance and can be contacted via telephone on 01670 823170 or email at enquiries@meadowdaleacademy.co.uk. The Headteacher will ensure the accurate completion of registers at the start of each morning and afternoon session, and at the beginning of each teaching class. Attendance figures will be reported to parents/carers in annual reports. All staff will work with pupils and their families to support parents/carers in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their child/children attend the Academy regularly and on time. The attendance target for this academic year is 97%, which is equal to 6 days absence in a whole school year.

The Academy has incentives and rewards to acknowledge those pupils with outstanding and improved attendance and will support those pupils and parents/carers who are finding school attendance and punctuality difficult.

To identify patterns of absence the Academy will analyse weekly attendance data and inform parents/carers where attendance falls below the Academy target. If there are further absences the Academy will work with pupils and parents/carers to identify and remove barriers to attending school.

Aims

- To maintain high standards of attendance of pupils registered at the Academy.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the Trust and the Academy including pupils, parents/carers, staff, Governors, and Trustees.
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and the Academy.

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- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority’s (LA) Attendance Team and local partners working together to re-engage pupils.
- To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following periods of absence.
- To target support for persistent absence (those whose attendance falls below 90% 19 days of absence) and chronic severe absence (those whose absence falls below 80%, 38 days of absence) to remove any barriers to attendance by working with pupils, parent/carers and across a range of local partners.
- To ensure that all stakeholders understand the importance and also value outstanding attendance.
- To recognise and reward outstanding attendance.

Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Trust and Academy policies:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Children Missing in Education
- Exclusion Policy
- Home Visit Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Supporting Pupils/Students with Medical Conditions

Attendance and Attainment

We recognise that the relationship between attendance, attainment, well-being, and wider life chances of our pupils is inextricably linked.

Regular attendance at the Academy is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the Academy is dedicated to ensuring the attendance policy is adhered to.

The School Day

The school day begins at 8.45 am and registers are taken. We have a soft start which allows children to arrive from 8:40am.

Nursery’s morning session ends at 11:45am and the afternoon session ends at 2:45pm.

Reception, Year 1, 2,3, 4, 5 and 6 school day ends at 3.15pm.

Types of Absence

Every half-day (1 session) absence from the Academy must be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. It is not the responsibility of parents to classify an absence, only the Headteacher is able to authorise an absence from school.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for a good reason such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time. Other exceptional circumstances that warrant an authorised leave of absence will be considered on an individual basis considering the specific facts and circumstances.

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Unauthorised absence are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for reasons which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the LA using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absence codes are entered in line with statutory guidance.

Response to Absences

When a pupil is absent for no apparent reason it is the duty of all staff to consider possible causes. When considering reasons, they should bear in mind factors that could relate to Child Protection, Behaviour and Discipline and Anti-Bullying policies. The class teacher will have a role in identifying reasons for absence and addressing such issues, with the support of the whole school staff.

If a child is regularly late for school or is often absent, then the class teacher contacts the parent concerned to have an informal discussion about this. If this persists then the teacher registers their concern with the deputy Headteacher who will then work out patterns of absence and lateness and if necessary, contact the school's educational welfare officer.

Attendance Review

The school office manager will process attendance data and provide up-to-date information on class and individual returns. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will be informed of any subsequent findings.

The Head of Attendance for North East Learning Trust will meet with the Deputy Headteacher to discuss attendance issues and offer advice and support.

School Ethos

Meadowdale Academy is committed to providing an effective and efficient education for all pupils.

We believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell. We will endeavour to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that impede full attendance are identified and acted upon as soon as possible.

Attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, school places great emphasis on this in our partnership with parents/carers.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Carers

The school wishes to work with parents/carers to achieve good attendance. The minimum target attendance for all pupils is 97%.

Our Home-School Agreement emphasises the importance of attendance and punctuality and the expectations of parents/carers and children in supporting the school's policy. Regular attendance includes children being punctual.

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Parents/carers should contact the school on the morning of the first day of a pupil's absence. They should state the reason for their child's absence and the date they are expected to return to school. Information from parents/carers regarding absences are received in good faith. Only the Headteacher has the power to authorise the absence.

When an appointment has been made for medical reasons (these should be made outside of school time when possible), the appointment card should be shown in advance to the office manager and a school leave of absence request form submitted.

Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents/carers in leaflets sent home throughout the year. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.

At the pre-school induction meeting held each year for children about to enter the Reception class the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only ones left.

Parents/carers are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset children which mean they become unhappy and may not want to come to school. Parents/carers need to be aware of this.

Children are also admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. All parents/carers requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Headteacher. At this meeting the importance of regular attendance is always stated along with other school routines.

School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015) define a parent as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e., lives with and looks after the child.

As a parent you have decided to have your child registered at the Academy, and therefore have an additional legal duty to ensure your child attends school regularly. This means your child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually and be appropriately prepared for lessons. The target attendance for all pupils is a minimum 97%.

Local Academy Council

The Local Academy Council has responsibility for school attendance and will be familiar with current legislation.

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They will be acquainted with the registration system in the school.

They will request the Headteacher to report on attendance at each termly Local Academy Council meeting to monitor attendance.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher has the day-to-day responsibility for attendance and will ensure that the school meets the legal requirements for all aspects of school attendance, set required targets for attendance, reduce unauthorised absences, and will publish attendance figures. The Headteacher will also meet regularly with the Executive Headteacher and will discuss attendance issues highlighted by the school's monitoring system with the staff.

The Headteacher will ensure that parents/carers and pupils are aware of their responsibilities regarding attendance and punctuality at the point of admission. This will be supported in the signing of the Home-School Agreement.

Deputy Headteacher

The Deputy Headteacher has a specific attendance role and will take responsibility for overseeing registration procedures, monitoring overall attendance, collation, and reporting of attendance information. They will be responsible for ensuring that class teachers keep registers in a correct manner, will meet regularly with the education welfare officer and will discuss attendance issues highlighted by the school's monitoring system. They will also be responsible for supporting class teachers in following up all attendance issues.

The Class Teacher

Class teachers have a vital role to play in raising the attendance and punctuality in school. They will notify senior leaders of any attendance concerns after their efforts have failed to achieve an improvement.

Class teachers will be responsible for welcoming pupils back to school following their return from absence. They will also notify other staff members if a pupil is experiencing difficulties, allowing for confidentiality.

Partnerships

At Meadowdale Academy we will discuss pupils and contact parents/carers if there are concerns, likewise within the partnership that we have with parents and pupils, we expect to be contacted by parents/carers if they have any concerns about their child's attendance, or any other matters. The school will arrange to meet with parents who have concerns as a matter of priority and work with them in the interest of their child.

Rewarding Good Attendance

The Office Manager will provide the Headteacher and deputy Headteacher with weekly class attendance data and the Headteacher will reward the classes who achieve 97% or above.

Pupils who achieve good attendance will be rewarded at the end of every term at a special presentation assembly. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will analyse the attendance data provided by the Office Manager and reward those children with attendance rates of 95% and above. Pupils who achieve attendance of 95%-97% will receive a bronze award, pupils with 97.1%-99.9% silver, and pupils with 100% gold.

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Truancy

All staff are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare, and happiness. Although it is a very rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a concern that a child might be truanting then action is taken straight away.

If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher is notified, who then contacts the parent and the educational welfare officer. Parents/carers are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. In the event of not being able to talk to the parent then the Headteacher talks to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these are discussed with the class teacher and appropriate action is taken.

Persistently and severely absent pupils

Persistent Absence (those whose attendance falls below 90% 19 days absence) and chronic severe absence (those whose absence falls below 80%, 38 days of absence).

The Academy will adopt a whole school approach to help and support pupils and parent/carers to remove barriers. The Academy will help pupils and parents/carers to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include a referral to local support services where absence is a symptom of wider issues. The Academy may also request that a parent/carer provides the Academy with supporting medical evidence to verify prolonged or frequent absences and will refuse to authorise absences unless this proof is provided.

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, a referral will be made to the LA Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

The Law

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school 'regularly' means attending in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not 'sufficiently frequent attendance'. This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so and failure to do this may lead to the committing of an offence.

Legal action to enforce school attendance includes a Parenting Order, an Education Supervision Order, a School Attendance Order or a fine.

In accordance with Section 444 of The Education Act 1996. If a child is absent without authorisation, then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e., all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up

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to £1000. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act, then the parent is guilty of an aggravated offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2500 and a prison sentence of up to three months.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

The law states that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of the Academy for holidays during term time other than in exceptional circumstances.

Headteachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The Academy will consider each request of absence individually; considering the circumstances, such as the nature of the event for which leave is sought and any key events taking place in the Academy at that time e.g., termly tests.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

An application for leave of absence must be submitted at least two weeks in advance via a form which is available from the Academy website or in person from the Academy reception. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion (or in the absence of the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher is the person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school). Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from the Academy. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

If the Academy refuses a request for term-time leave and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and a Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority. The current threshold as set out in the current Northumberland County Council code of conduct for fixed penalty notices is "a minimum absence of ten sessions (five school days) which are unauthorised must be recorded against the pupils named within a 6 to 12 school week period". A separate notice will be issued to each parent for each child. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 which rises to £120 if not paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid after 28 days, you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.

In exceptional circumstances, however, the Academy may be prepared to authorise a holiday during term-time. Proof of exceptional circumstances must be provided at the time of submitting the Leave of Absence Request form. If a leave of absence is taken during term-time without the Academy's permission, the pupil's absence will be recorded as unauthorised. In the event of a pupil not returning to the academy on the agreed date, any absences after this date will be recorded as unauthorised.

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