MARLCLIFFE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Last Reviewed	September 2023	Next Review	September 2024
		Ratified by Governors	September 2023

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1. Aims

At Marlcliffe Primary we understand that there is a relationship between the attendance and punctuality of children and their social and emotional development, attainment and progress. Therefore, we are fully committed to promoting excellent attendance and punctuality as part of our dedication to ensuring quality educational provision which gives our children the best start in life. We will encourage children to attend daily and be punctual. We will put in place effective procedures to support regular attendance and punctuality and to ensure that children have access to full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

2. Guiding Principles

At Marlcliffe Primary:

- We emphasise that it is the responsibility of everyone to improve attendance and punctuality.

- We ensure that all our children access a full-time education which meets their needs and allows all to realise their potential.

- We strive to provide a safe and caring environment where each child can engage in all opportunities offered.

- We work with children and their families to ensure every child has good attendance and punctually.

- We will challenge the behaviour of those children and parents/carers who give a low priority to attendance and punctuality.

- We have an effective system of communication with parents/carers together with appropriate agencies to provide mutual information and support.

- We will support all aspects of the *Education Act 1996* and the *Children's Act 2003*: *Every Child Matters* by implementing this policy in a consistent manner.

3. What You Can Expect from Marlcliffe Primary School

- We will promote good attendance and punctuality and will investigate any unexplained and/or unjustified absence.

- We will build strong, positive relationships with families to ensure our children have the support in place to attend school.

- We will support children to achieve good attendance and punctuality.

- We will support children returning to school after prolonged absence.

4. Registration

- The law requires the register to be taken twice a day. At Marlcliffe Primary, the morning register is taken at 8:50am for the morning session. It is also taken at the start of the afternoon session. The timing of this varies for each phase.

- Children are expected to be in their classrooms by the school start time in order to be ready for the start of the registration period and lessons thereafter.

- After registration has closed (20 minutes after the start of school), children will be marked as unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory explanation has been received.

- The register is marked using the DfE Attendance and Absence Codes (see [Appendix 1](#)).

5.   Punctuality

- Any child arriving after the school start time will be classed as late and will be required to enter through the main school entrance. The time of arrival and reason for arriving late will be recorded. Any child arriving late will receive a late mark in the register.
- Repeated lateness will be discussed with parents/carers.

6.   Reporting Absence

Parents/carers should contact the school office by telephone on the morning of the absence (preferably before 9am), giving a reason and an expected date of return.

Parents/carers should contact the school on each day of absence.

7.   Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

There are two types of absence: authorised and unauthorised. Parents/carers may not authorise absence; only the school can do this.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for an acceptable reason, for example:

- The child is too ill to attend school
- The child is prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause
- The child is absent on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parent/carer belongs
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their intention to return
- There is a close family bereavement
- The pupil has a local authority licence to take part in a public performance and the school has granted leave of absence
- Leave of absence is granted by the Head teacher under exceptional circumstances

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider to be reasonable and for which 'no leave' has been given. This includes (but are not limited to):

- No explanation is offered by the parent/carer
- The school is not satisfied with an explanation offered
- The child is staying home to look after parents, siblings or the home
- The child is absent on special occasions e.g. birthday

- The child is absent on exceptional term time leave for longer than agreed by the Head teacher
- The child is absent on holiday without agreement under the exceptional leave guidance
- The child is absent unnecessarily e.g. taken shopping, for a haircut

Schools will not authorise absences for children whose attendance is below school target and valid evidence has not been provided. Pupil attendance levels are reviewed at the end of each half term.

8. Medical and Dental Appointments

Routine medical/dental and other appointments should always be arranged out of school hours wherever possible. Children should, where practically possible, come to school before a medical or dental appointment, sign out and return to school after the appointment, in order to minimise the amount of lost learning. In order for the absence from school to be authorised, evidence of the medical appointment may be requested.

9. Religious Observance

Authorised absence may be granted for religious observance, for example, Eid. The Department for Education definition is as follows: "Absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals." If the religious body has not set the day apart, there is no requirement for the school to approve the absence or grant leave of absence. Individual religions and their religious observance are too numerous to detail in this document. Parents/carers should contact the school to request leave of absence for all religious observance.

10. Leave of Absence during Term Time

Any absence interrupts the continuity of a child's learning. Government Legislation now states that only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence, please refer to the Department for Education for the latest guidance. Parents/carers are strongly urged not to take children out of school for holidays during term time. Even where the circumstances are considered exceptional, please be aware that: It is expected that a *Term Time Leave* form is submitted to the school at least four weeks in advance of the proposed absence. All factors that need to be considered must be stated on the request form and any supporting evidence submitted. The school has the right to make a request to the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice for parents/carers who insist on taking their children out of school without authorisation. Penalties are £120 (if paid between 21 and 28 days) or reduced to £60 (if paid within 21 days). Each parent/carer can be issued with a

penalty notice, one per parent, issued separately. Failure to pay within the specified timescale could result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court for failure to ensure regular school attendance. This legislation also applies to any child taking leave of absence without prior notification to the school.

11. How We Respond to Absence/Lateness

If a child is absent at morning registration without contact from a parent/carer to explain the absence, the school will contact parents/carers. We take our safeguarding responsibilities seriously and will always do our best to contact parents/carers to ensure that they are aware of their child's absence. Schools will use all available emergency contacts in order to find out the whereabouts of a missing pupil if we are unable to contact parents/carers.

Parents/carers are asked to contact the school office on receiving either a message, email or telephone voicemail. We ask that parents/carers ensure that school has their most up to date contact details at all times.

If no response is received, the school will continue to telephone, or in some cases, make a home visit to parents/carers to fulfil our legal duty to establish the whereabouts of the child. Continued unexplained absences will be referred to the Safeguarding Team in school.

Where a child's continued absence is cause for concern, the school will contact parents/carers to work together to support the child to improve attendance. Contact may be by any or all of the following: telephone, letter, meeting in school and/ home visit. Our Education Welfare Officer may be informed and may deem it necessary to conduct a 'Safe and Well' visit. And provide further support.

Where no sustained improvement in attendance is demonstrated despite intervention, the school will follow a formal attendance process. Penalty notices may be issued. Where attendance issues persist, parents/carers risk the possibility of a local authority fine and or other appropriate legal enforcement.

12. Persistent Absence

A child becomes a Persistent Absentee (PA) when they miss 10% of their schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Children whose attendance has reached the PA threshold or children at risk of moving towards that threshold are given priority for intervention.

13. Re-integration Following Long-term Absence

Where a child has been absent for a prolonged period of time, perhaps due to illness, the school will:

- welcome the child back to the school and value their return
- provide support for the child in consultation with parents/carers to enable a successful return to school
- ensure that all relevant staff are informed of the circumstances
- work with other agencies, where appropriate, to ensure a successful outcome
- consider a personalised programme of return if appropriate
- nominate a key member of staff to monitor and review the child's return.

14. Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

Children are more likely to attend regularly if the curriculum is engaging and personalised to meet their needs. The curriculum is monitored and revised regularly so that it meets the ability needs of all children.

- Good and improved attendance and punctuality will be promoted and rewarded.
- Children, parents/carers and staff are regularly reminded about the importance of good attendance.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to contact school at any time to discuss their child's attendance.
- Regular meetings will be held with the appropriate members of staff/external agencies to identify and support those children whose attendance is a cause for concern.
- Children who have been absent for extended periods of time will be supported as appropriate to re-integrate back into the school.
- Children's attendance will be reported termly via registration certificates sent home.

15. Attendance Data and Targets

- We strive for 100% attendance for all children. Only by achieving full attendance can children expect to achieve their full potential. Our school attendance target for the academic year of 2023-2024 is 96%
- Attendance data will be collected and analysed regularly and used to inform the school's attendance practices and interventions.
- Individual pupil data will be analysed and monitored regularly to enable early intervention.

- Pupil-level absence data will be collected each half-term term at a local authority level. The school will compare attendance data to national and local averages, and share this with the governing board.

16. Statutory Requirements, the Law and the Local Authority

Under the *Education Act 1996*, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. As such, this policy complies with the statutory requirements laid out in the documents and statutory guidance, but not limited to, the following:

- *Education Act 1996*
- *Equality Act 2010*
- *The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)*
- DfE (2022) *Working together to improve school attendance'*
- DfE (2016) *Children missing education'*
- DfE (2022) *Keeping children safe in education 2023*

Registers are legal documents; regulatory requirements placed on schools regarding the keeping of registers are to be found in the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006*.

Section 7 of the *Education Act 1996* states that parents/carers are responsible to ensure their child receives a suitable education.

Under Section 444 of the *Education Act 1996*, a parent who fails to ensure their child attends the school at which they are registered, is guilty of an offence.

We work together with the relevant Local Authority to ensure that parents/carers fulfil their responsibility. There are a range of legal sanctions that may be imposed for dealing with unauthorised absence: Penalty Notices, Parenting Contracts and Orders, Education Supervision Orders or referral to the Magistrates Court which can recommend fines (up to £2500) or up to 3 months in prison.

All sanctions are used to improve attendance and punctuality and reduce absence.

17. Roles and Responsibilities

At Marlcliffe Primary, we understand that improving attendance and reducing absence is everyone's responsibility.

The Role of Our Children
- To attend every day on a regular basis

- To be punctual and arrive at school ready to learn
- To report to the school office if they arrive late to school

The Role of Our Parents and Carers

- To fulfil their statutory duty to ensure their child attends school regularly
- To ensure their child attends school dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn
- To avoid keeping their child away from school for any reason other than genuine illness or other authorised explanation
- To read the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- To contact staff if there is an issue preventing their child attending school
- To provide a valid reason for each day's absence before 9am
- To book routine appointments after school, at weekends or in school holidays
- To provide evidence for all absence (where possible)
- To provide evidence of any medical appointment and ensure that time missed is kept to a minimum
- To contact school to arrange a reintegration package of support if their child is returning after a long period of absence
- To avoid booking holidays during term time
- To inform school of any term-time leave by completing a Term Time Leave form at least 20 school days (four weeks) in advance

The Role of Teaching Staff

- To welcome and value the attendance of all children in lessons
- To keep accurate attendance and punctuality records
- To report any absence trends or attendance concerns to relevant staff
- To promote our Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- To take the official electronic register promptly at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions
- To promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- To welcome pupils back after an absence
- To provide a positive learning environment
- To promote attendance rewards and incentives
- To discuss attendance and punctuality at Parent Consultation Evenings
- To direct parents reporting pupil absence to the main school office.

The Role of the Office Team

- To keep accurate attendance and punctuality records
- To accurately record pupil absences and late arrivals and report these to the Attendance Officer

- To report any issues preventing a pupil attending school to the relevant member of staff in school
- To promote our Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- To welcome parents, carers and pupils when arriving into the reception

The role of the Attendance Officer

- To promote our Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- To monitor and analyse attendance data
- To provide regular attendance reports to school staff and report attendance concerns to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Headteacher
- To advise the Headteacher when to request that Fixed Penalty Notices are issued
- To receive calls and messages from parents/carers regarding child absence, challenging absences where appropriate
- To contact parents/carers who have not notified school of the reason for absence
- To report any safeguarding concerns relating to pupil absence to the Safeguarding Team in school
- To have an overview of all pupil attendance
- To maintain accurate pupil registration records
- To keep pupil records up to date with reasons for absence, details of any communication, interventions and additional support
- To follow the attendance process where a pupil's attendance is a concern
- To work with the designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance to coordinate strategies to promote excellent attendance
- To attend regular meetings with the designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance to identify attendance concerns early
- To welcome pupils back to school after an absence
- To support parents, carers and pupils to overcome barriers to regular attendance at school
- To work with appropriate school staff to implement support plans for pupils who are Persistently and Severely Absent
- To ensure all Local Authority and DfE protocols are adhered to and followed
- To work with external agencies where necessary to support pupils and families and liaise with schools where siblings attend if appropriate
- To support delivery of the school's Attendance Plan
- To process Term Time Leave requests
- To process and refer penalty notice documentation to the Local Authority
- To report children who are 'Missing in Education' to the Safeguarding Lead in school
- To support the gathering of evidence to support legal proceedings in relation to irregular school attendance

The Role of the Designated Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance

- To lead attendance across the school
- To offer a clear vision for attendance improvement
- To implement the school's Attendance Plan
- To evaluate and monitor expectations and processes
- To have an oversight of data analysis
- To devise specific strategies to address area of poor attendance identified through data, including vulnerable groups
- To arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- To arrange targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- To ensure all staff, pupils and parents are aware of our Attendance and Punctuality Policy, documentation and procedures relating to attendance and punctuality
- To provide staff training and development on attendance as and when appropriate
- To hold regular meetings in school with relevant staff, as well as with Local Authority Attendance and Inclusion Officers to identify attendance concerns and areas of development.

The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Leader/Deputies

- To promote the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- To have a daily overview of pupil absence
- To conduct 'safe and well' visits where appropriate
- To liaise with attendance staff where there is unexplained or concerning absence
- To attend regular meetings in school to discuss pupils where attendance is a concern
- To assist with parent/carer attendance meetings when safeguarding is a factor
- To promote good attendance to parents, carers, pupils and external agencies in meetings
- To report any child who is 'Missing in Education' to the Local Authority.

The Role of the Headteacher

- To ensure consistent implementation of our Attendance and Punctuality Policy and develop a school-level attendance strategy
- To monitor school-level absence data and report to governors
- To support staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- To monitor the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- To request that the Local Authority issues Fixed Penalty Notices and other legal sanctions, where appropriate

- To ensure there is a whole-school approach to improving attendance
- To ensure accurate maintenance of the school roll
- To promote good attendance to parents, staff and pupils
- To provide a positive learning environment
- To ensure effective systems for home-school liaison are in place.

The Role of the Governing Body

- To recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- To ensure leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties around attendance
- To regularly review and challenge attendance data
- To ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance
- To hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of our Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- To ensure the Headteacher provides the local governing body a termly attendance report

The Role of Other Agencies

Where attendance and/or punctuality is not as healthy as it might be, other support agencies may be informed and/or asked to support in order to enhance the healthy challenge and support of this attendance or punctuality concern.

Key Staff

Headteacher	Clare Hayes	chayes@marlcliffe.sheffield.sch.uk
Designated Senior Leader with Responsibility for Attendance	Clare Hayes	chayes@marlcliffe.sheffield.sch.uk
Attendance Officer	Charlotte Codd	ccodd@marlcliffe.sheffield.sch.uk
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Clare Hayes	chayes@marlcliffe.sheffield.sch.uk

Appendix 1 – Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the Department for Education's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody

z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day