

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

'Working together to achieve success'



At Mossgate Primary School we recognise that attending school regularly, and on time, has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for children. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and children with poor attendance tend to achieve less academically. We encourage excellent attendance for all pupils, by offering an environment in which pupils feel valued and part of the school community.

At Mossgate Primary School, we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school; including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Act early to address concerning patterns of absence.
- Set targets to improve individual, vulnerable group and whole school attendance levels.
- Reduce absence robustly, including persistent absence.

Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

Mossgate Primary School believes that it is important that parents and carers, pupils, school staff and governors all work in partnership to encourage good attendance for all pupils. The following is a summary of the rights, roles and responsibilities for individual groups of stakeholders.

Parents and Carers

Ensuring your child's regular and punctual attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in legal sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecution.

- Ensure the child(ren) in their care attend school regularly and punctually.
- If the child(ren) is/are absent to inform the school office or class teacher on the first day of absence and provide a reason for the absence. Medical evidence may be requested before authorisation is given.
- If the child(ren) is/are absent for more than one day, to inform the school office of the continued absence and update as to the reason for the absence regularly. Medical evidence may be requested before authorisation is given.
- Ensure that school have up to date contact details and at least two emergency contacts who can be contacted in the event that parents are unavailable.
- To avoid leave in term time. Where this is not thought possible, contact the school at least two weeks prior to the first proposed day of absence, and prior to making any financial commitment. Leave can only be granted in exceptional circumstances (see Leave of Absence below).
- To advise the school, by contacting the school office, immediately if they become aware of problems with attendance and punctuality.
- To co-operate with the school in promoting and improving attendance e.g. attending meetings, participation in attendance & punctuality contracts and supporting the school in agreed intervention / action plans.
- Adhere to systems for late registration and signing in and signing out.
- Ensure children go to bed at an appropriate time so they are ready to learn when at school.

Pupils

- Attend school regularly and punctually.
- Adhere to systems for late registration and signing in and signing out.
- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school to ensure good attendance e.g. early bedtimes and getting uniforms ready the night before.

School Staff

The headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are appropriate and efficient systems in place to promote and support the school attendance & punctuality policy, that these are adhered to and

training is given where appropriate. The headteacher is also responsible for liaison with individual families, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST) to ensure appropriate support is given where attendance concerns are identified and for liaison with the local authority and Department for Education (DfE) to ensure that the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance. However, we believe that all staff have responsibilities and a role to play in promoting good attendance by:

- Providing a welcoming atmosphere and safe learning environment for children.
- Ensuring an appropriate and responsive curriculum.
- Providing a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns.
- Being aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance and lateness.
- Being aware of the role all staff can play in ensuring attendance and punctuality is seen as important for all pupils and parents.
- Adherence to the systems and procedures in place within school to promote good attendance and punctuality and highlighting any concerns to the headteacher.
- Participation in training regarding school systems and procedures.
- Willingness to communicate with children and parents about attendance and lateness.
- Completion of the attendance registers in accordance with the legislation and under the direction of the headteacher.

Some staff will have specific individual responsibilities to support the attendance & punctuality policy and these are outlined in the procedures section of this framework.

Governors

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended.
- Adopt an attendance & punctuality policy and review it annually.
- Agree targets for attendance and punctuality.
- Review attendance, persistent absence and punctuality termly.
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance targets, or when the governors believe there is cause for concern, to require a review of the systems and procedures in place to promote good attendance.
- To promote the strong link between attendance and educational attainment to parents and pupils where appropriate and ensure that the school attendance & punctuality policy and procedures are communicated effectively.
- Authorise the headteacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

In every instance, it is the headteacher who determines whether an absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. This decision is made based on information provided by parents, however, because the register is a legal document, the headteacher has responsibility to ensure that it is completed accurately and in accordance with the legislation. For this reason, it is not sufficient for an absence to be recorded as authorised based entirely on information provided by parents, therefore, parents may be asked to provide evidence of reasons for absence before authorisation is granted. For example, in the case of absence due to illness or medical appointment, evidence may be requested in the form of: sight of a prescription, prescribed medication, a medical appointment card or similar.

The school office is responsible for entering attendance on the electronic register, inputting absence codes on a daily basis, with approval by the headteacher, and reasons and length of absence.

- Parents are required to contact the school office or class teacher on the first day of absence, advising of the reason for the absence and expected return date; if known.
- Where the absence is for several days, the parent is responsible for informing the school of the continued absence and updating them as to the reason for the absence on a regular basis.
- The reason for absence should be linked directly to the pupil (e.g. illness or medical appointment of/for the child). Reasons for absence relating to parents or siblings may not be authorised.
- Where no explanation for absence is provided, or the reason provided is unsatisfactory, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be addressed with parents promptly.

- Schools have a responsibility to report such absence to the local authority after a period of 10 school days, or sooner if appropriate.

If a child is absent and no contact has been made by the family, the school office will contact the family on the first day of absence, after the registers close at 9:00am. If contact cannot be made, school will try to contact the people named as emergency contacts. Where reasonably practicable, for every pupil, schools should hold an emergency contact number for more than one person. Our school will request emergency contact numbers from the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. If no contact is possible with any of the emergency contacts, the headteacher will be informed and consideration made whether to request/undertake a welfare/home visit. In the case of prolonged or repeated absence without justification being given, the headteacher will determine whether a referral to the Pupil Attendance Support Team should be made.

The headteacher is responsible for determining what is classed as authorised and what is classed as unauthorised absence.

Examples of **authorised absence**:

- Medical or dental appointments, which relate directly to the pupil and unavoidably fall during the school day (evidence may be required prior to authorisation).
- Illness of the pupil (evidence may be required prior to authorisation).
- Leave which has been authorised by the headteacher due to exceptional circumstances.

Examples of **unauthorised absence**:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily including absence / illness of siblings and other family members.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and leave in term time which have not been agreed.
- Days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the headteacher.

The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register. Where they are not certain whether an absence is authorised or not, they should seek advice from the headteacher. Office staff may also use the comments facility within SIMS in order to log the number of minutes late with reasons and specific reasons for absence. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of absence more effectively and share such information with parents.

Leave of absence

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, **schools cannot authorise any leave other than in exceptional circumstances**. At Moss gate Primary School, the headteacher is the person authorised by the governing body to make this decision.

Leave of absence **shall not** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **exceptional circumstances** relating to the request.

No leave will be authorised during statutory assessments for pupils in the following year groups:

- Y2 and Y6 complete national assessments, known as SATs, in May.
- Y1 pupils complete the Phonics Screening Check in June.

Additional Factors for Consideration

Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year. Regular attendance is vital for your child's educational progress. The local authority expects that all parents/carers ensure their children attend school whenever possible. Absence during school time is largely prohibited by regulation and hinders academic progress. Even in exceptional circumstances, the following factors may be taken into account when considering an application for leave:

- Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil's education?
- Will he/she miss any national tests or examinations?
- Is his/her attendance a cause for concern?

- Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?
- Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?

Parents who need to request leave during term time should complete an application form, available from the school office, as soon as possible prior to the first proposed date of absence.

If the leave is being requested for a holiday, approval should be obtained prior to making any bookings. If work commitments are stated as supporting evidence towards an exceptional reason for requesting leave, parents may be asked to provide employer details and any additional evidence which shows why leave cannot be taken during the school holidays.

Parents are asked to provide any relevant information regarding this request on the form if they believe the circumstances are exceptional. Information provided after a decision has been made may not be considered. The headteacher will consider the request and advise in writing within 10 days, whether the absence will be authorised or not. The headteacher may request a meeting with parents before any period of leave is authorised.

Reasons why you should not take your child out of school in term time

- Evidence shows that even small amounts of absence from school can affect your child's progress and attainment.
- The education of your child could be disrupted both prior to and after any leave, causing them to fall behind and struggle to catch up.
- For every week of school a child misses; they lose 25 hours of education which can never be regained.
- If you choose to take your child on holiday in term time without permission, you may be issued with a penalty notice.
- Approximately every 6 weeks your child gets a holiday from school, therefore you should use this time to take your child on holiday.

Registration and lateness

Morning Registration is between 8:30am and 8:35am with afternoon Registration between 12:45pm and 12:50pm. The registers must be completed promptly to avoid discrepancies between classes by the class teacher or their nominated representative. The class teacher must ensure that the marked register, plus any notes received regarding absence, is returned to the school office immediately after the registration period.

8:30 → 8:35am	Registration period	12:45 → 12:50pm
9:00am	Registers close	1:20pm

In accordance with current guidance, any pupils arriving between 8:35 to 9:00am are recorded as late (L) in the register. Pupils arriving after the registers have closed at 9:00am but before the end of the session will be recorded as 'late after the registers closed' (U). This code is classed as an unauthorised absence but displays that the pupil was physically present in school for part of the session.

In addition to using the L and U codes, office staff also record the number of minutes late for each pupil, on each occasion. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of lateness more effectively and make a clear link between lateness and missed curriculum; and share such information with parents.

The fact that the U code is classed as an unauthorised absence means that when it is used, pupils are likely to be missing significant amounts of schooling, putting their educational progress at risk. For this reason, the use of this code will be considered as serious as any other unauthorised absence and will attract the interest of external agencies, including referral to the local authority attendance team and consideration of the use of legal measures, in just the same way.

Pupils requiring admittance to school following registration periods must go to the main entrance and request entry via the school office. For health and safety reasons parents must accompany late arriving pupils to the office in order to sign their children into school.

Signing Out

The school office is responsible for overseeing the procedure for releasing children where parents have requested and been granted leave during the school day. The original mark in the register must remain in the register and the signing in/out book should be referred to during an evacuation situation to ensure all pupils can be accounted for.

The child(ren) can only be released to a parent or authorised carer/family member. When an authorised adult is picking up a child within school time, the school office is responsible for ensuring that they (the authorised adult) complete and sign the school signing out book. The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register, where appropriate.

Religious Absence

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register. Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Partnership Working

Mossgate Primary School will work with the local authority attendance team (Pupil Attendance Support Team), the School Attendance Consultant and other support agencies as appropriate to ensure regular attendance at school.

A request for support will be made when:

- School have informed parents of their concerns regarding attendance
- School have attempted to employ appropriate strategies in order to improve attendance
- School strategies have failed to prompt the required amount of improvement in attendance OR parents refuse to engage with school support

In addition to the above, the headteacher (or designated person) can discuss general attendance or case specific matters with the School Attendance Consultant.

Monitoring, Analysis and Action Planning

The governors have determined that the headteacher has overall responsibility for the monitoring, analysis and action planning of school attendance. The headteacher is also responsible for ensuring that data is returned promptly to the local authority and DfE within deadlines. However, it is expected that the day to day implementation of this will largely rest with the class teachers, who take the register and highlight causes of concern, and the school office, who are responsible for maintaining the school records on attendance and for highlighting causes for concern.

The headteacher will review the attendance records at least once every half term to check that there are no outstanding causes for concern and that codes are being used consistently. In addition, the headteacher / attendance lead will address specific concerns as they arise by analysing patterns, including historical attendance and lateness information.

School System for Dealing with Concerns about Lateness and Absence

- The school office is responsible for advising the headteacher of pupils who are persistently late or absent as issues arise.
- The class teacher is also responsible for raising concerns about lateness or absence of class members to the headteacher and sharing these with parents as issues arise.
- In addition, the headteacher will use electronic systems to monitor the attendance of individual pupils at least once per half term.

Once concerns have been raised:

- The headteacher (or designated person) will discuss the matter informally with the family (including the pupil).
- Parents and children, if appropriate, will be asked to agree to an attendance & punctuality contract, or take part in attendance panels, which will include the setting of targets and will be reviewed regularly.

- When persistent lateness is an issue and/or parents fail to follow procedures by not accompanying late arriving pupils into school to sign them in, this will be communicated to parents via letter or a meeting in school as appropriate.
- If lateness/absence persists, and school procedures fail to promote the required level of improvement, the head teacher will contact the Pupil Attendance Support Team who will attend meetings with the family and head teacher as appropriate and help school determine whether any further interventions are required. These interventions will include consideration of the use of legal measures (penalty notices and prosecution).
- Incentive and reward schemes will be used for individual pupils, as appropriate.

School may also send 'Traffic Light Letters' to parents on a termly basis in order to keep parents informed about attendance and punctuality levels. These letters will indicate the following:

- Green Letter = Good Attendance - Well done (100 to 97%)
- Amber Letter = Attendance Below Target - Improvement Required (96.9 to 92%)
- Red Letter = Red Alert - Pupil Progress at Risk (below 92%)

Persistent Absence

The minimum attendance level which is expected at our school is 97% - the government's minimum attendance target for all children is 96%. When a pupil's attendance is at risk of falling below this level, we will consider whether it is appropriate to offer support in order to improve the situation. We will also use attendance levels from previous academic years to identify patterns and determine what steps may need to be taken to improve.

Both local and central government pay particular attention to reducing the number of pupils who fall into the persistent absence category (PA). A pupil is on track to becoming a persistent absentee when their attendance falls to 90% or below at any point during the school year; whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised. When attendance nears this level, children miss significant amounts of schooling; meaning that their educational progress is put at risk. If for any reason a child's attendance does fall into this category, parents will be asked to do all they can improve the situation by working with the school and other agencies if appropriate.

Families will be supported in this via school's robust systems for managing PA. This support may involve the need for parents, and children of an appropriate age, to agree to an attendance & parenting contract. Due to the seriousness of PA status, it is highly likely that such cases will be referred to a local authority attendance team (Pupil Attendance Support Team). Furthermore, absence data for individual pupils who are classed as persistent absentees are reported to the Department for Education; along with whole school absence figures.

Use of Penalty Notices

We take unauthorised absence seriously and, particularly in the case of repeated unauthorised absences, will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate. Furthermore, Mossgate Primary School will/may request that the local authority issue penalty notices in respect of unauthorised absence. This also includes leave of absence which is taken without a prior request being made; and leave taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of this advice. We may also request that the local authority issue a penalty notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason. Parents also risk losing their child's school place if they do not return from leave, as agreed, and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

The school office is responsible for recording leave requests in the electronic register and will retain copies of correspondence regarding requested leave of absence for 3 years. They will also be responsible for highlighting to the headteacher if absence continues after the notified period. In this instance the headteacher will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate and a Penalty Notice may be considered.

Alternative Provision and Use of Directions

There are a range of reasons why pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are listed below:

- Pupils who have been excluded, either for a fixed period (for more than 5 days) or permanently
- When a pupil is unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons
- When a pupil is required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour; either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (managed move)

When a pupil is required to attend alternative provision, the governors of the main school must issue a written 'direction' or 'notice' informing all parents of the alternative provision which their child is required to attend.

Pupils Who Are Unable to Attend School for Medical Reasons

The introduction of statutory guidance on 1st September 2014 places much more emphasis on the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils; whether their condition is short or long term. The school will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be as a result of specific practices or resources used within school or by sourcing more appropriate provision at another establishment. When education is to be provided at an alternative location, this will always be done via the use of a direction or notice (please see the relevant section of this policy).

School System for Reintegrating Pupils Who Have Had Long Term Absence

When a pupil has been absent from school for an extended period, the head teacher, the class teacher and other support services will liaise with the family to ensure that a smooth reintegration is achieved.

Monitoring the Attendance of Pupils Who Are Educated Off Site

For sessions when a dual registered pupil is expected to attend Mossgate Primary School, the usual attendance procedures will be followed. When this pupil is expected to attend the other establishment our registers will display the D code (Dual Registration). As the main school, we retain responsibility for dual registered pupils. Therefore, the other establishment will be contacted regularly in order to ensure that this placement continues to be successful. When this is not the case, appropriate action will be taken. In cases where we are the subsidiary school, our normal first day absence procedures will be used and any concerns regarding attendance will be reported to the main school. In addition, we will provide other information regarding attendance to the main school on request.

When pupils are present at an approved off-site educationally activity school will decide which of the following codes is most suitable:

Code B – Educated off site Code P – Supervised sporting activity Code V – Educational visit or trip

The headteacher is responsible for the pupil's education and wellbeing during these sessions. Therefore, before any of these codes are used, school must ensure that the following criteria are met:

- The activity is broadly educational in nature
- it is suitable for the pupil's age and ability
- it will complement the pupil's curriculum
- it is taking place during the session for which the approved off-site educational activity code is being used and
- suitable supervision and safeguarding arrangements are in place

Notifications to the Local Authority

- **Admissions** - All schools must notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register and must provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil. This duty does not apply to pupils who are added to the admission register at the start of the school's youngest year unless the local authority also requests for such information to be provided (Lancashire currently does not).
- **Leavers** - All schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, as soon as the ground for removal is met and

no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply where the pupil's name is removed after they have completed the school's final year, unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided (Lancashire does not currently).

Where a school notifies a local authority that a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register, the school must provide the local authority with the following information as laid out in regulation.

- **Notifications of Pupils who Fail to Attend** - All schools must agree with the relevant local authority, the regular interval that the school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. In Lancashire primary schools, this can be done via referral to the Pupil Attendance Support Team or a request for a Penalty Notice. Any other notifications not so covered can be submitted on an individual basis to the local authority.
- **Children at Risk of Missing Education** - Local authorities have a duty to put in place arrangements for identifying (as far as it is possible) those children of compulsory school age in their area who are not school registered or receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Local authorities should trace those children and ensure that they receive full-time education. Schools must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the local authority, before deleting a pupil's name from the register if the whereabouts of the child are unknown. In these cases, school will undertake a home visit themselves, or request a home visit from PAST prior to a referral being made to the local authority Children Missing Education team.

Communication of Attendance & Punctuality Policy and Procedure

We will communicate our Attendance & Punctuality Policy to all the stakeholders by:

- Publishing the policy on our school website.
- Sharing procedures with new parents as part of the new parent induction process.
- Referencing leave of absence and holiday requests with term dates sent out annually.
- Including responsibilities in the Home School Agreement.
- Outlining staff responsibilities in the staff handbook.
- Ensuring the headteacher / attendance leader has up to date training regarding their responsibilities in relation to attendance and punctuality.
- Informing governors termly of attendance and punctuality levels and actions taken to improve.
- Ensuring parents understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Informing parents of attendance and punctuality levels through the newsletter and website.

Government Guidance

This policy has been written with regard to DfE guidance published September 2018 which states that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.

Monitoring and Review

Monitoring is the responsibility of the Headteacher and Governors. The policy will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed by the Leader:	Approved by Governors:	Next review date:
Summer 2019	Summer 2019	Summer 2020