



The Meadow Community  
Primary School and Pre-School

# Attendance Policy

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Adopted by The Meadow Community Primary School on:	Date: 19 <sup>th</sup> August 2024
This policy will be reviewed	As policies, procedures and regulations are updated.
Version	August 2024

*This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and draws from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance. This legislation is:*

Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

### **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

The Meadow Community Primary School looks to ensure that all their pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their full potential. For pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually. Any absence causes disruption to learn and should be avoided if possible. Improving attendance at The Meadow Community Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in our community – pupils, parents, governors, and staff.

#### **Aims**

- To encourage and assist all pupils to achieve excellent levels of attendance of above 97%
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- To maximise attendance across the school population and reduce persistent absenteeism (below 90%).
- To work together with parents/carers in both a supportive and challenging role to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Days missed</b>
<b>Outstanding</b>	Attendance is 97% or higher	0-6 days of school missed
<b>Good</b>	Attendance is 95% or higher	6-10 days missed
<b>Requires improvement</b>	Attendance is below 95%	10-19 days missed
<b>Cause for concern (Persistent absence)</b>	Attendance is below 90%	20+ days missed

#### **1. Expectations for Attendance**

We expect all children at The Meadow to maintain a **95% attendance rate** on an annual basis. All attendance below this threshold will be monitored and those children with lower than 90% attendance will have their attendance challenged.

### **Why good Attendance is important**

Good attendance is essential for students to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. Research shows that the students with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 have higher rates of attendance compared to those with the lowest attainment.

### **PUPILS**

All pupils are expected to:

- Attend school regularly and to arrive on time.
- Come to school properly equipped and prepared to learn.
- Talk to a member of staff if there is a problem causing them to miss school.

### **PARENTS/CARERS**

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance at school in accordance with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. They should ensure that:

- Their child attends regularly and is punctual, properly dressed, equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- They inform the school of the reason for any absence by via Weduc. The school will then make the decision to either authorise or unauthorise the absence. If no reason is given, the absence will be automatically unauthorised.
- They know that they will **not** have holidays authorised during term time.
- They make medical and dental appointments outside school time whenever possible. Where this is not possible, parents/carers should get the school's agreement in advance and ensure the pupil is out of school for a minimum amount of time necessary.
- They give the school up to date information (and evidence when requested) regarding diagnosed medical conditions which may affect attendance.
- They provide the school with up-to-date contact details.

### **The Meadow Community Primary School and Pre-School**

The school will:

- Strive to provide a welcoming, calm, orderly, safe and caring environment whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.
- Provide a sympathetic response to any child's parent/carer's concerns.
- Establish an effective system of incentives and rewards to recognise the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping.
- Challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give a low priority to attendance and punctuality.
- Recognise all young people who fall below the DfE threshold of 90% attendance as Persistent Absentees and will treat them as a vulnerable group of pupils who warrant additional support.
- Share key reminders of our Attendance Policy at the start of each academic year and with children who join the school on mid-term transfers from another setting.
- Track attendance on an individual and cohort level.

### Governors

- The Governing Body handles monitoring attendance figures for the whole school at least once a term. It also holds the headteacher(s) to account for this policy's implementation.

### Procedures regarding absence from school

1. Parents are requested to inform school of their child's absence (due to illness, appointment, or other non-prearranged reasons) each day, before 9am. The office staff will contact parents if no such contact is made. We do this as part of our Safeguarding agenda.
2. A reason for absence is marked in the attendance register in accordance with the administrative codes.
3. In case of absence for a dentist or doctor's appointment, parents have a responsibility to inform school in advance, by a letter/email, Weduc or a phone call to the office, so that the absence can be coded as 'medical.' In the absence of such information, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised.'

### Understanding Types of Absence

Students are expected to attend the school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised absence:** this is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. See Appendix 2 for examples of authorised absences other than illness or medical/dental appointments.

- **Unauthorised absence:** this is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence following a parent's request.

### Absence Examples:

Authorised absences	Unauthorised absences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- genuine illness of the pupil; hospital/dental/doctor appointment for the pupil;</li> <li>- major religious observances</li> <li>- visits to prospective new schools</li> <li>- external exams or educational assessments</li> </ul> <p><i>For further examples see Appendix 1</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- shopping /day trip / visit to a theme park;</li> <li>- birthday treats;</li> <li>- oversleeping due to a late night;</li> <li>- looking after other children / other family member;</li> <li>- appointments for other family members</li> <li>- holidays during term time</li> </ul>

***The school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence that they have been on holiday.***

***If the authenticity of an illness is in doubt, the school may ask the child's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.***

### **4. Monitoring and Evaluation of Attendance**

If children do not arrive in school and school has not received any notification of absence by Weduc or by telephone, admin staff will then contact parents or carers, until we get a response.

Contact will be made by telephone to each contact we have on our system, in order of priority.

Attendance is recorded each day and then collated and monitored on a daily, half termly, termly and yearly basis by Louise Allen (Co-headteacher) and an action plan is drawn up to support parents/carers of children who are persistently absent (with the exception of where a plan of support is not appropriate e.g. term time holidays).

The DfE definition of Persistent Absence is attendance below 90%. Children who fall below the 90% attendance threshold will receive a letter from the school highlighting their poor attendance and offering support/targets for improvement. If attendance does not improve, a follow-up letter will be sent, requesting evidence of the reasons for absence e.g. proof of medical appointments.

If poor attendance continues, cases may be escalated through the Attendance Officer at County Hall and fines may be issued– see '**Penalty Notices**' section.

In some extreme cases, legal action will be taken.

### **Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTISA)**

From August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024, WTISA aims are statutory. New regulations came into force about unauthorised leave of absence from school. The aims of the changes are explained by DfE as follows:

- Make penalty notices more effective by ensuring they are only used in cases where they are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance.
- Prioritise the support first approach by expecting support to be used in cases where it is appropriate and using penalty notices in cases where support is not appropriate (e.g., a term time holiday) or support has not been engaged with.
- Improve consistency in the use of penalty notices across England by introducing a new national threshold of 5 days of unauthorised absences in a 10-week period. **Please note that this is the equivalent of 10 sessions, a morning and afternoon count as 2 sessions and they do not need to run consecutively.**
- Improve the deterrent effect of a penalty notice by increasing the amount of the fine and introducing a new national limit of 2 penalty notices within a 3-year period to break cycles of repeat offending.

### **Safeguarding**

Where a child is not attending school, cannot be traced/contact cannot be made with the parents or has moved without a forwarding address, we are required to inform the local authority that the child is missing. The school may carry out a home visit and refer the family to social care and the police to ensure any

concerns for the child's welfare have been thoroughly investigated. Pupils will not be removed from the school roll until notified by the Local Authority that their enquiries are complete.

If we cannot get a response from any contact on our system and this is a family/child who has social care involvement, we would contact the social worker. If the family is not known to social care but they are a family we are monitoring for safeguarding concerns, we would contact the inclusion team and then carry out a home visit.

A referral will be made to the Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point the child will be deemed to be 'missing in education'.

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. The Meadow Community Primary School and Pre-School recognises that children missing in education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse as well as child sexual and criminal exploitation. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always needed.

### **Requests for Leave of Absence / Holidays**

The Meadow Community Primary School and Pre-School believes that any absence from school disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress and is best avoided. Any requests for time off for a holiday will **not** be authorised.

However, we do recognise that there may be times when a pupil needs exceptional leave during term time for short periods of time (e.g., attending a close family funeral or wedding. See Appendix 1 for further examples). In these circumstances, a 'leave of absence' form should be completed. This application should be completed by the parent with whom the child normally lives. The headteacher(s) will then formally respond to this request in writing. Prior and current attendance will influence the ultimate school response and decision and if leave of absence is granted, the headteacher(s) will decide the length of time a pupil can have away from school.

If parents/carers still choose to remove their child/ren for a family holiday, parents must inform the school in writing in advance. Depending upon the following criteria the Inclusion Team may become involved, and a penalty notice may be issued if:

1. A child has poor attendance below the 90% threshold (e.g. a

- number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year or one-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission)
2. A child is already subject to attendance improvement support from the school and have Inclusion Team involvement.
  3. This is the second unauthorised holiday absence within a 6-month period.
  4. When the total of five days holiday is reached within an academic year, the headteacher(s) will inform the Local Authority who will in turn fine **each parent** for **each child** absent. See '**Penalty Notices**' section below for more details.

### **Penalty Notices**

For unauthorised leave of absence from August 2024, Penalty Notices will increase to £160 per parent per child (discounted to £80 if paid within 21 days). If there is occasion to issue a second Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence within a rolling 3-year period, it will be issued at the higher rate of £160 per parent per child, with no opportunity to pay at the lower level. A Penalty Notice cannot be issued if there is a third occasion of unauthorised leave of absence in the rolling 3-year period and it is highly likely that the local authority will take direct prosecution action in the Magistrates' Court.

### **Monitoring and evaluation of 'Lateness'**

If children miss the beginning of the school day, they are likely to miss important instructions that are key to learning, cause disruption to the lesson for others and it can be embarrassing for them.

The school SIMS computer system can identify children who often arrive at school late. This is also checked by the headteachers(s).

Registers close 30 minutes after the start of the school day so this consequently differs depending on whether the children are in Foundation Stage, key stage 1 or 2. Any time after this will be recorded as an 'unauthorised absence' on the registers for the morning session. ***This is a DfE requirement on schools and will be monitored in the same way as any other unauthorised absence.***

Persistent lateness, below 90%, will be challenged and referred to the inclusion team. A standard letter will be sent home to parents/carers highlighting frequent late arrival to school and its impact upon learning. Occasionally, this conversation might be verbal, for example at parents evenings' or on a more formal basis.

Persistent lateness will be discussed if an improvement is not seen and an action plan put into place with steps taken to address this if no improvement is observed.



This might be via support for the family e.g. a discussion around the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved.

Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absences and a referral to the Inclusion Team may be made if no progress is seen following discussions with parents and because of supportive measures put into place. This will also be recorded in bi-annual reports and passed to future schools.

### **How we support good attendance and punctuality**

At The Meadow Community Primary School and Pre-School, we use a range of strategies to support attendance:

- Working together with parents to address any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners will work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need (e.g. meeting with pupils and parents and agreeing an action plan).
- Where the needs are wider and the whole family response is more appropriate, this may include a voluntary referral to Early Help for assessment.
- Individual attendance figures are reported to parents at parents' evenings and at the end of the year in school reports. Whole school attendance figures are reported to the Governors termly
- Systems and rewards are used when appropriate.

### **My child is trying to avoid coming to the school. What should I do?**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best tackled through partnership with the school, parents/carers and of course, in discussion with the child. If a child is reluctant to attend school, excusing their absence or giving in to pressure from them to be excused from school, is rarely a long-term solution. On the contrary, this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make school avoidance more of a problem.

Contact your child's teacher immediately and be open about your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, friendship issues, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional such as a doctor, Early Help or the school counsellor. If you feel any of these services would be of help, please contact Louise Allen (Co-Headteacher).

### **What can I do to encourage punctuality and good attendance?**

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that they leave home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest and the way that you talk about school, that you value their education.

### **SEND Children and those with Medical Needs / Behaviour sanctions**

The Meadow Community Primary School and Pre-School recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. This can include children whose needs have been shown on an Educational Health Care Plan, those with long-term medical conditions or those who have special education needs and disabilities. School will deal with attendance sensitively, put reasonable adjustments into place and consider whether added support is needed. If a pupil's attendance becomes a cause for concern, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence to substantiate their reasons before any absence can be authorised.

### **Part-time timetables**

Should a child struggle to cope with the demands of a full-time timetable, a part-time timetable may be implemented. This is agreed with outside agencies such as Oakfield, Birkett House, or the Educational Psychologist. This is the responsibility of the SENCO, in liaison with the headteacher(s), educational professionals and the class teacher. The Inclusion Team at County Hall will then be informed.

### **Mid-year moves**

Should a child leave school mid-year e.g., due to family relocation, it is the school's responsibility to inform the Inclusion Team.

### **Suspensions and Exclusions**

In line with our Behaviour Policy, should a child's behaviour result in Level 3/4: Final Sanctions, they may be subject to temporary suspension. This could be for lunchtimes only or a fixed one-day suspension (this would then be extended to two or three days, should further suspensions occur). Permanent exclusion could then follow.

It is the responsibility of the headteacher(s) to authorise a suspension or exclusion or a member of SLT in her absence. The person who authorises the suspension

or exclusion contacts the Inclusion Team. and informs the school office (so that the absence can be logged on SIMS).

NB The process of suspension and exclusion that all schools must follow is based on guidance *DfE Exclusion from maintained schools, Academies, and pupil referral units in England. A guide for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusions (updated 10 February 2015)*.

## **Appendix 1: Other Types of Absence**

### **Religious observance**

Where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

### **Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television-work and modelling**

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from the school for their child to take part in a performance. Authorisation will be at the Head's discretion, and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

### **Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport**

Parents of able athletes can seek leave of absence from the school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events, and competitions. Authorisation will be at the discretion of the headteacher(s), and they will then discuss the nature and frequency of the absence with you and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher(s) and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

### **Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families**

The absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T

code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

**This policy has been updated following the new guidance DFE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' August 2024.**