

SLADEFIELD INFANT SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

	Date	Minute No.
Reviewed and Approved by <i>Governors</i>	<i>C & GP 21/03/13</i>	<i>5</i>
Reviewed and Approved by <i>Governors</i>	<i>C & GP 26/02/14</i>	<i>6</i>
Reviewed and Approved by <i>Governors</i>	<i>C & GP 22/01/15</i>	<i>16</i>
Reviewed and Approved by <i>Governors</i>	<i>FGB 22/10/15</i>	<i>15</i>
Reviewed and Approved by <i>Governors</i>	<i>C & GP 17/10/16</i>	<i>8</i>
Reviewed and Approved by <i>Governors</i>	<i>C & GP 27/03/17</i>	<i>24</i>
Reviewed and Approved by <i>Governors</i>	<i>FGB 09/04/19</i>	<i>14</i>
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ATTENDANCE POLICY

April 2019

INTRODUCTION

At Sladefield Infant School, we expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy to do so. All children benefit from well-planned sequences of lessons designed to ensure that they make the best possible progress. If they are frequently absent, this learning is disrupted and makes it difficult for progress to be maintained.

Everyone that comes to Sladefield Infant School is expected to aim for 96% attendance. We understand that everyone gets sick from time to time but minor coughs, colds or aches and pains should not stop a child from coming to school.

We do all we can to encourage the children to attend and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all our children. We shall reward children whose attendance is good. We shall also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

The Governing Body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day.

Sladefield Infant School bases its Attendance Policy on the Guidelines set out by Birmingham LA.

RIGHTS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Every member of staff in school is responsible for ensuring good attendance and punctuality of all children.

The Pastoral Team specifically work to improve children's attendance; this includes the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, the Inclusion Manager, and the Learning Mentor. The team also regularly liaise with the school office staff to ensure that attendance concerns are being raised with immediacy.

Parents have a legal duty to send their children to school each day that school is open, and school has a legal duty to monitor and report the attendance of all children. In accordance with Local Authority policy, leave of absence in term time is only granted in exceptional circumstances. Each case is reviewed by the Head Teacher on its merits,

and records of leave are kept for individual children. It is school policy that no holiday or extended holiday absence is authorised under any circumstances.

Whilst parents of children in Reception classes do not have a legal duty to send their children to school until they are five years old, at Sladefield Infant School, we believe that expectations of attendance and behaviour are laid down from a very early age, and will therefore monitor attendance from as soon as a child begins at the school, and endeavour to work with parents to improve it where necessary.

We believe that a partnership approach to attendance is vital: Senior Leaders, Governors and the Pastoral Team will work with parents and pupils, and Support Services where necessary, to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils.

ROLES OF CORE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SCHOOL

Governors

- To monitor progress towards school targets for attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy

Pastoral Team

- To ensure that effective systems are in place to accurately record individual pupil, group and whole school patterns.
- To discuss and disseminate to class teachers the attendance of children whose attendance is causing concern.
- To analyse attendance codes to inform action planning.
- To contact parents and meet with them to discuss how their child's attendance could be improved, providing support for the parent or child where appropriate.
- To ensure that those children with expected attendance, or improving attendance, are rewarded as outlined in the policy.
- To ensure appropriate support and intervention for pupils with low attendance to reduce impact on learning.
- To feedback to Governors and provide information for them to evaluate the success of the policy and practice.

Office Staff

- To prepare, manage and co-ordinate the use of the attendance module in SIMs.
- To prepare attendance reports when requested by the Head Teacher.
- To record names of pupils who arrive late via the Inventory System. Pupils late after 9.30am will receive a 'U' mark meaning they are considered absent for that session.
- To record reasons for absence on the system.

- To send a text message, and then, if necessary, call parents on first day of absence if no reason has been given, ensuring that priority is given firstly to those children considered 'vulnerable'.
- To ask parents for evidence of illness if required and record on pupil's attendance.
- Follow the Local Authority 'Children Missing in Education' guidelines if required.

Class Teacher

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class, completing the register twice daily at the designated time.
- To promote good attendance, which may include questioning children and/or parents/carers as to reasons for absences when the child has known absence concerns
- To notify the Pastoral Team should a child's attendance cause a concern.
- To ensure that children who experience difficulties with attendance and/or punctuality receive targeted support to minimise the impact on their learning.

PROCEDURES

The bell goes for the start of the school day at 8.40am. A second bell is rung at 8.50am to indicate that the doors and gates providing access to the school will be closed. Class teachers register children in class at 8.50am. If a child arrives after the register has been electronically sent, they are marked as late. Children who arrive late or after the register has closed report to the main Reception, where they are signed in by their parents using our electronic system; a reason for their lateness is requested. **Children who are late after 9.30am will receive a 'U' mark, meaning they are considered absent for that session.**

ABSENCE

- Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents) as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised Absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for legitimate reasons and the school has received notification from a parent/carer.

- Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents/Carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences outlined by parents/carers will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carers.

If a child is absent

- Parents/Carers are asked to let the school know if their child is going to be absent. An absence slip is completed for all telephone messages regarding a child's non-attendance at school.
- When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher records the absence on the electronic register. Once the register has been electronically submitted, the register is checked against the absence slips that have been collated in the school Office.
- Where children are absent for registration, and we have not been notified of an absence, parents are sent a text message or telephoned by a designated member of our Office staff to request a reason for absence. All reasons for absence are recorded onto our SIMs system.
- If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher takes immediate action by notifying the school Office. The school then tries to make contact straight away with the parent/carers, in order to check the safety of the child.
- If the school believes there might be a Safeguarding concern regarding a child's absence, the school may carry out a 'safe and well' check at the known address for that child; this is likely to be carried out by at least one Designated Safeguarding Lead alongside another member of staff.
- If there is no response from the 'safe and well' visit, the school may follow any of the following procedures:
 - Contact other Emergency Contact numbers to see if they know of the whereabouts of the child and to request that they try and make contact with the parent/carers and request that they make contact with the school to explain the child's absence
 - Contact the Police and ask for them to carry out a check on the property
 - Contact CASS to outline the situation and request advice
 - Contact the Child Missing in Education Team to outline the situation and request advice, potentially completing a referral to the team.

Requests for Leave of absence/extended leave

- The Governing Body have agreed that holidays will not be permitted during term time.
- Parents/carers should be strongly discouraged from arranging holidays here or abroad, or visits to their country of family origin, during term time. If they do go then they need to provide school with a copy of the tickets for both the outward journey and the return journey, as well as updated contact details for whilst they are abroad, including telephone numbers and addresses for where they will be residing.
- Information regarding this is available to parents in the school prospectus and when a child is admitted into school.

Following new guidelines introduced by Birmingham City Council (from February 2017, updated September 2018) (see Appendix 1), the school will follow procedures whereby parents might be issued with a Penalty Notice should a child's leave of absence reach levels as indicated in the guidelines.

Whole-School Strategies and Procedures (see Appendix 2 for a flow-chart of procedures)

When a child has attendance below 90%, they have 'Persistent Absence' which is a sign of parental neglect. Children with such low attendance are at risk of academic underachievement.

However, it is equally important for the school to identify those children whose attendance is between 90% and 95% as this may easily fall into the 'persistent absence' category. As such, the school includes these children in their monitoring process and procedures.

Our school has clear procedures and triggers for action based upon data analysis and contextual information for attendance.

At the end of each month, each child's attendance is monitored closely and children with attendance concerns are categorised according to their perceived risk:

- 'Low-Risk' pupils are those that are considered to be only a minor concern with regards attendance; they are likely to have attendance between 90% and 95%, or have low attendance due to 'Leave in Term Time' which has affected their attendance. There will be no evidence of patterns emerging in attendance, and previous attendance has been good.
- 'Mid-Risk' pupils are those that the school is more concerned about with regard to attendance; they are likely to have attendance below 90%, and there are regular absences over time. The school may also have spotted patterns

emerging in the days that the child is having off school, or there is evidence of unauthorised absences occurring. It may also have been the case that the child's attendance in previous years had been a cause for concern.

- 'High-Risk' pupils are those who are concerning the school greatly with regards their attendance; they are likely to have attendance below 80% with frequent absences over time. Despite regular conversations being had with the parent/carer of the child, there does not appear to be a rapid increase in attendance. There is often examples where the child has been registered as unauthorised because staff in the school do not acknowledge the reason for absence given as being accurate.

Once it has been identified that a child is at 'Low-Risk', 'Mid-Risk' or 'High-Risk', letters will be sent out to parents/carers outlining the school's concerns.

In certain circumstances, the parents/carers of identified pupils will be requested to attend a meeting with the Head Teacher where the individual child's attendance is discussed and strategies are considered in order to improve the child's attendance.

Failure to attend the meeting, or if pupil attendance doesn't improve, may trigger a range of options.

- New meeting requested.
- Home visit by a member of the SLT or the Learning Mentor.
- The pupil is placed on the 'Fast-Track' programme which may result in legal action (see Appendix 3)
- Referral to Family Support or initiation of an Early Help procedure.
- Referral made to Children's Services.

We follow the Local Authority policy of allowing authorised absence for Religious Observance. The guidelines state, 'A school must treat absences as authorised when it is due to Religious Observance'. Any other days taken for travelling or continuing celebrations will not be authorised by the school.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

In order to maintain the high importance of attendance, throughout the year there are:

- **Weekly reflections** on attendance during SLT-led assemblies.
- **Attendance figures published** in the school newsletter and on the school's electronic noticeboard.
- **Classroom Attendance Displays** - including 'Magic 20' charts.
- **Visits to individual classes by a member of the Pastoral Team** to praise good attendance or encourage improvement.

REWARDS

We use a range of rewards and incentives - a differentiated reward system ensures that every child, every day, has an attendance reward to work towards.

- **'Magic 20'** - an ongoing display chart can be found in each classroom monitoring attendance. When any child attends school for 20 consecutive days, they win a small prize from the Attendance box in each class.
- **'Attendance Golden Ticket'** - All children who have 97%+ attendance in any one term will receive an excellence certificate for attendance, awarded at the end of term assembly. These children will also receive a reward as part of the 'Golden Ticket' initiative.
- **Whole year 100% attendance** - Children who have 100% for the year receive a special award.

In addition to ongoing rewards, incentives and rewards are introduced across the academic year when there is an opportune moment, or when there is a need within a specific cohort. For instance, if it became apparent that there was an attendance concern a specific Year Group, an incentive would be introduced into that Year Group rather than as a whole-school initiative.

WORKING WITH OUR PARENTS

It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to ensure that their child comes to school. We talk to our parents/carers about how they can make sure their children are fit enough to come to school during the Induction meetings at the beginning of term; this session is led by a Nurse Practitioner who outlines how to support their child at home to prevent absence from school, as well as outlining when it might or might not be necessary for a child to be kept off school.

SAFEGUARDING

When a child is not at school there can be Safeguarding risk. The Safeguarding of pupils is one of Sladefield Infant School's highest priorities. Please see the Safeguarding Policy for general safeguarding issues and procedures.

The attendance of all children considered vulnerable or potentially vulnerable will be checked on a daily basis by a nominated member of staff (Pastoral Team/Office Administrator) to safeguard the children and to maintain an up-to-date analysis. If no contact can be made by the school, the DSL will assess if further action is required, this may include making a home visit or contacting external agencies.

When attendance falls below 90% without any reasonable circumstances, or there is a pattern of continual absence on certain days, the case will be referred to the DSL.

All applications for holiday/extended leave will be assessed in terms of safeguarding risks. This particularly includes the risk of FGM (female genital mutilation) or being exposed to radicalisation or extremism (see The Prevent Strategy). Any applications considered high risk would be referred to the DSL.

In certain circumstances there may be a need to contact other agencies without first contacting parents. This decision will be made in partnership between Education Services and Social Care Services and is a legal obligation, not a personal decision.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Absence is monitored daily via text messages or phone calls for all absences where the school has not been notified.

Spreadsheets are in place to track weekly figures for attendance, punctuality and persistent absence.

Weekly overviews are monitored for each class, and individuals within those classes.

Termly analysis is made of data for attendance, punctuality and persistent absence. This includes analysing for different groups including gender, SEN, ethnicity and Pupil Premium children. This analysis will influence future action taken.

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every two years or earlier if deemed necessary.

Policy written by: R Meadows (Head Teacher)

Review April 2021