



Red Marsh School

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WHOLE-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Red Marsh School

Introduction:

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

All members of our school, understand that our pupils maybe absent due to medical reasons such as seizures, operations and low immunity. When this is the case the school will support the child and their family and make reasons know to the local authority attendance team.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- Celebrate high attendance by sending home certificates;
- Report to you regularly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality; (to be discussed is this appropriate for our school)



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- Work with parents, carers, health professionals and social care to help increase attendance.
- Develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- **Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school**
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the local authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- **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 holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- **days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher**

It is the policy of the school to request an appointment card or letter, in order for an absence to be authorised. If there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence is authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription, appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.



Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

From September 2015 a pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be prioritised and parents will be informed of this promptly.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with monitoring progress towards individual targets.

For all pupils who are identified as PA the school has identified individual actions matched to the needs of the pupils and their family. Due to the serious nature of persistent absence, school will always consider requesting support from the local authority attendance team in order to address the matter. School will also consider requesting that the local authority issue penalty notices, or use other sanctions, as a means of improving attendance. If the reason for your child's absence is severe illness, seizure related or due to hospitalisation and recuperation the school will ensure the attendance team are aware of the circumstances and only supportive action will be taken.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone **or you can call into school and report to reception**

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you,
- Discuss the situation with the headteacher
- **We may ring you, send a letter or invite you in to discuss the situation, if absences persist.**
- Consider using parenting contracts or panel meetings in order to identify barriers to regular attendance and agree targets for improvement,
- **Refer the matter to the local authority school attendance team, where appropriate,**
- **Consider requesting that the local authority issue penalty notices in accordance with LCC's Code of Conduct, or use other legal sanctions, as appropriate, in order to improve attendance**



Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality (see appendix):

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with us in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

- Meetings between school parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the head teacher,
- Use of parenting contracts,
- Use of the common assessment framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the local authority school attendance team),
- Use of attendance panels,
- Use of penalty notices
- Referrals for legal action

The Local Authority School Attendance Service:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). PAST will also support school in trying to resolve the situation by agreement and will work to support school and parents in achieving improved levels of attendance.

Use of Legal Measures:

Red Marsh School defines irregular attendance in line with the thresholds set out for the use of penalty notices within the Local Authorities Code of Conduct.

If other ways of trying to improve the attendance of an individual pupil fail, and we consider attendance to be irregular, where absences are unauthorised the case may be referred to the School Attendance Legal Team (SALT), who can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the magistrates' court.

Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the local authority.



Lateness which is not the result of health issues, medical appointments or LCC transport issues:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable unless there is a valid reason such as an agreed late start due to health issues or LCC transport issues. **Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence.** If your child misses the start of the day their routines are disrupted and this can lead to difficulties settling into classes. **Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.**

How we manage lateness:

At **9.30am/1.15pm** the registers will be closed. In accordance with regulation, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a penalty notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the head teacher and/or a member of the pastoral support team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave in Term Time:

It is important that parents understand that leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.

All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form, available from the school office

Exceptional circumstances are **'one off events that would not occur on an annual basis', i.e a wedding, a funeral and a graduation.**

If you are granted an exceptional holiday wish provided by a charity it is important that you have evidence that you have requested the holiday is taken during school holiday time. If you are granted a wish outside of this time you will need to provide evidence of this to share with the school.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess



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of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised.

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').

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:

- **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)**

Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons:

A key element of the work of our school is reducing the amount of time missed by pupils who are unwell; whether their condition is short or long term. The school will continue to work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health.



Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence
- Avoid any leave in term time, but apply in advance using form if the reason for leave is unavoidable/exceptional
- Attendance at meetings in school
- Participation and cooperation in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Attend school when you are in good health.

Headteacher / (School Attendance Lead):

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision
- Where there is ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided and log this information accordingly
- Input and update the attendance registers
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- **Communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents**
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance.

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- **To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all school staff**
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures



Governors

- **Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended**
- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- **Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures**
- **Authorise the head teacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.**
- Work with the head teacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

Expectations regarding regular attendance:

As a school, we aim **whenever possible** to have all of our pupils in school every day. We recognise that pupils may have absences at times due to illness and other unavoidable cause, such as hospital appointments we aim to reduce unauthorised absence and to work with parents and pupils to minimise absence where possible.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. **As stated previously, school defines irregular attendance in line with the thresholds set out for the use of penalty notices within the Local Authorities Code of Conduct. Good attendance is considered to be above 96%.**

Children missing from school Red Marsh Procedures

The Teacher /TA3s responsibility is to take the register each morning and afternoon. If they know the reason for a child being absent inform the school office, this will be recorded in the absence folder.

Teachers will be made aware of reason for child's absence if known by the school office. If they are not made aware of reasons for absence teacher/TAs should continue to ask.

Identified office staff, look at the registers each morning and identify children with an absent mark.

Office staff look in the pupil absent folder to see if there is a reason for the absence, if no recorded reason identified staff call the home number to speak to a parent/carer to identify a reason for absence.

If first contact number cannot be reached after three attempts other contact numbers will be rung.



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Where a child may have been absent from school for two days without contact and school have tried and failed to locate the child's whereabouts, school will follow safeguarding procedures e.g. go out to visit the house, contact a social worker, social care or the police.

If the above procedures have not been successful, after three days school will make contact with the CME Officer for their locality who will attempt to locate the child using their links and networks. A PAST referral and/or a CME1 form will be completed within 6-10 days.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Date of Policy: Autumn 2018

Date Review Due: Autumn 2019

¹In some instances, more urgent notification to the local authority may be appropriate if contact with parents/carers is problematic e.g.

- Children Looked After – schools should notify the CLA Service Manager
- Children subject to a Child Protection plan – schools should notify the named social worker
- Children in situations of known domestic violence – schools should consider whether safeguarding/child protection procedures should be followed.