



Attendance Policy

Mission Grove Primary School

This Policy has been written for and adopted by the Governing Body of Mission Grove Primary School.

VISION STATEMENT

For the children at Mission Grove to become well rounded individuals who have drive, passion and the confidence to do their best. Who leave with the skills to succeed and flourish in life. Staff have high expectations of themselves and others and are reflective practitioners. Mission Grove provides security, opportunities and enjoyment for all.

Approved by Governing Body

Date : September 2018

Introduction

At Mission Grove Primary School, our aim is that children become well rounded individuals who have drive, passion and the confidence to do their best and leave with the skills to succeed and flourish in life.

The key principles which underpin the school's procedures for managing attendance are that regular and punctual attendance is key to academic and social development. This will improve the life chances of children and young people; children and young people who attend school regularly and punctually are less likely to be at risk, both in terms of engaging in anti social behaviour and in terms of their own health and safety and welfare.

This attendance policy is aimed to support the school to build on our capacity to improve regular attendance and attendance practised within our school.

The underpinning principles are to :

Challenge / interrogate our own data to identify patterns and vulnerable groups / pupils;

Embed good attendance practice within school, at all levels involving stakeholders and Governors;

Work with individual pupils and their families to assess and respond to their educational needs and to ensure that young people do not remain disenfranchised from the education system;

Engage with other agencies, both statutory and voluntary, to ensure that the welfare and protection of all young people remains paramount;

Ensure that all young people have access to educational provision suitable to age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have;

Respond to the educational needs of vulnerable groups and ensure that the safeguarding of all pupils remains at the forefront of all considerations;

Use resources provided to support pupil attendance.

These attendance procedures set out the requirements for our school for the management of pupil attendance and absence. They reflect statutory requirements and the most recent guidance from the Dfe.

Regular school attendance is crucial if a child is to achieve their full potential. It is important for a child to attend school regularly. If they are not in school they are unlikely to be learning and gaining the maximum benefit from their education. Research shows that raising pupil attendance in schools will contribute to raising achievement.

We expect all our children to attend school, on time every day, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Children with known irregular school attendance prior to starting at Mission Grove Primary School have this issue discussed with them and their parents when they are first invited to visit the school.

Parents / Carers and Pupils

Parents / Carers of children of compulsory school age are legally required to ensure that they receive a full time education. Parents and Carers are also responsible for informing the school of any absence as soon as possible, which should be on the first day of absence. This can be done by telephoning the school, by personal contact to the school office or by note or letter. They should state the reason for absence and when the child is expected to return to school. Pupils are expected to attend school regularly and to arrive at school punctually. Persistent lateness can be seen as absence and is managed in the same way as poor attendance by the school. Parents and Carers should ensure that children arrive at school prepared to take part in the school day.

It is the Parents / Carers legal responsibility to ensure that their children receive full time education. This extends beyond ensuring regular and punctual attendance and requires that the child is in a fit state to learn. It is the Head Teacher and Governors, not the parents, who can determine what constitutes authorised absence. A parent may submit a note or other notification in relation to a particular absence, but this does not oblige the school to accept it as a valid reason for absence. If doubt remains, the absence will be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil the local authority may be notified.

Mission Grove Primary School may authorise absences for appointments during the school day, retrospectively where it is satisfied as to the explanation offered but is required to treat absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided as unauthorised.

In addition, excessive amounts of authorised absence are recognised as seriously disrupting the continuity of learning and encouraging disaffection at a later stage. Any patterns for individual pupils or families emerging during monitoring will be investigated.

The school will generally do everything it can to encourage good attendance, but the prime responsibility remains with the Parent / Carer.

At the admission interview, Parents / Carers sign the Home School Agreement agreeing to contact the school if their child is absent and reply to school correspondence regarding attendance, also to ensure their child attends school regularly, is on time for school in the morning and is collected on time at the end of the school day.

First Day of Absence Calling

Mission Grove Primary School expects all parents and carers to ensure that they advise the school on the first day of absence either by leaving a message (Option One) via telephone or using the forms section on the App. In the instances where parents and carers fail to do so, Mission Grove will attempt to contact the parent or carer by telephone. If contact cannot be made after several attempts, Mission Grove Primary School will write to the parent or carer reminding them of their responsibility to inform the school and a reason for any absence.

Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community at Mission Grove.

If a child is absent from school, the absence category will be either authorised or unauthorised. Only Mission Grove Primary School can authorise an absence, not the parents or carers.

Governors

The Governing Body of Mission Grove Primary School has a responsibility for attendance. This is delegated on a daily basis through the Head Teacher to the Senior Leadership Team, Attendance and Admissions Officers and the

Educational Welfare Service. The Governing Body regularly monitors the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy and practice.

School Attendance Team

The Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team, Attendance and Admissions Officers, Educational Welfare Officer are responsible for reducing absence at Mission Grove Primary School. The Governing Body regularly monitors the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy and practice.

Attendance Thresholds

Thresholds	The following actions are undertaken at each threshold :
100% Attendance	Reward 100% attendance termly
Below 95%	Pupils with attendance at, or below, 95% For each absence, a designated member of staff (Attendance Officer) makes a telephone call to the Parent / Carer Unless a satisfactory explanation has been received, a letter is sent to the parent asking for an explanation for every session missed Continue to monitor and act as appropriate
Below 90% (Persistent Absence)	Pupils deteriorating to 90% Make telephone call (as above) – this is referred to as Persistent Absence Maintain the approaches set out at the previous thresholds. The relevant Assistant Headteacher / Headteacher or Education Welfare Officer should be involved and should add weight to any interventions already in place. Send a standard letter to parent pointing out the deterioration in attendance levels. Ask parents to attend a school based meeting with the Assistant Headteacher. This meeting should determine why the pupil has not been attending regularly. Discuss detrimental effect on learning. If the concern remains, consideration will be given to holding a formal School Attendance Panel Meeting. Reach agreements for rapid improvements over the next half term. Remind the parent that full attendance is the aim and that anything less than 96% will cause concern. Monitor attendance and keep in regular contact with the parent, either to praise improving attendance levels or to show ongoing concern.
Below 85%	As above Meeting with Parents / Carers to share concerns and set attendance targets and monitoring period. Monitoring of attendance by Attendance and Admissions Officers. If attendance does not improve convene a School Attendance Panel with the Education Welfare Officer and Court Welfare Officer with a view to legal action.

Authorised Absence

This is defined as :

- When a child is absent as a result of illness and an acceptable explanation has been received
- Religious Observance (as defined in the exemptions list)
- When a child has had a fixed term exclusion from school

Medical / dental appointments (proof of appointment should be requested). Parents should be informed that medical / dental appointments should be made outside of school hours wherever possible and the minimum amount of time should be taken. Parents / Carers will be informed at the Admissions Interview.
Exceptional circumstances (unavoidable absence)

Unauthorised Absence

An unauthorised absence is where Mission Grove Primary School does not consider the absence to be reasonable has been given.

If a child is not present at the start of the day and the school has not been notified of this beforehand the Attendance Officers will telephone the child's home immediately to ascertain the reason for absence.

If an absence is not due to sickness or some other circumstance (i.e. it is unauthorised absence) the Attendance Officers will monitor future attendance. If unauthorised absence is persistent the Education Welfare Officer will contact the parents.

All absence by children who are currently on a Child Protection Plan / school cause for concern list will be counted as unauthorised and investigated by the Education Welfare Officer who will take necessary action.

Prolonged absence (more than five days) for medical reasons, where there is a history of prolonged absence, will require medical evidence (in addition to parental notes) for example an appointment card, hospital letter, medical certificate or a copy of the prescription. Over the counter medicines will not be sufficient proof.

Where attendance has fallen to 90% and below Mission Grove Primary school can request that the medical proof (see above) is provided so that the absence can be authorised. Failure to provide medical proof could result in the absence being unauthorised.

The criteria that the school will apply to determine "exceptional" is a circumstance that has unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another; each individual request will be considered on its merits.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time need to put the request in writing, addressed to the Headteacher at least one term in advance. A decision will be given if the leave of absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher will only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. If the child's attendance is below 96% the period of leave will not be granted. If the child is still taken out of school the period of absence will be marked as unauthorised and may lead to a fine.

No authorisation for leave of absence will be given retrospectively, which means that permission must always be sought beforehand.

In the event that there is an absence immediately before or after a school closure, Mission Grove will require proof, in the terms of medical evidence or flight delay. A decision will then be made as to the period of absence being authorised or unauthorised.

In the event that leave for exceptional absence is granted, any further days of absence will be regarded as unauthorised. Mission Grove Primary School must be informed in all instances and where the cause is sickness a doctor's certificate must be produced. Failure to advise the school may result in their name being removed from the school roll and the local authority will be informed.

Request for absence during term time process :

Parent will put request in writing addressed to the Headteacher

The Headteacher will consider the request for absence, confirming current attendance percentage

The Headteacher will make the final decision and respond to the parent in writing

All decisions regarding leave being classified as authorised or unauthorised, in line with pupil regulations means the Headteacher's decision is final.

Sanctions for an Unauthorised Absence without Permission

Governors have agreed that in circumstances where parents / carers are disregarding school policy regarding absence in term time unrelated to illness and either :

Their children have either extended unauthorised absence for three school days or more; or

Where there is a repeated unauthorised absence in similar circumstances

They will be issued with a fixed penalty notice.

If a child's attendance falls below 96% in any term without good reason or the Headteacher has not authorised the absence request as detailed above, a parent may (subject to individual circumstance) receive a Penalty Notice or prosecution under the Education Act 1996 Section 444.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, local authorities are required to issue penalty notices to the Parent / Carer of a child who has irregular attendance, where the absence is unauthorised by the school.

A fixed penalty notice will be issued by the Education Welfare Officer for unauthorised leave of absence following discussions with the Headteacher.

This will incur a fine per child per parent being imposed, if paid within twenty one days of receipt of the notice. The cost of the fine will rise if paid after twenty one days, but within twenty eight days of receipt.

Court Proceedings

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the twenty eight days, the local authority may prosecute and the Parent / Carer may receive a criminal record. This prosecution is for the offence of failing to secure attendance at school. Prosecutions are brought under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

The Education Welfare Officer can also make an application to the local magistrates court to action court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2,500 and / or three months imprisonment.

Registers

Registers are to be completed each day by the class teacher.

Registration periods at the start of morning and afternoon sessions will be between the times of 8.55am and 9.00am and within five minutes of the start of the afternoon session (various dependent upon year group).

Any pupil arriving after 9.00am (North Site) and 8.45am (South Site) and after the start of the afternoon session will need to report to the office. If a child arrives between 9.00am and 9.15am (North Site) and 8.50 to 9.05am (South Site) they will be marked late (L) in the register. If a child arrives after 9.15am (North Site) and 9.05am (South Site) they will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U) in the register.

All messages received regarding absence will be recorded, verbal and telephone messages are acceptable. The messages will be recorded on SchoolPod. Where a child is sent home ill by authorisation of the Headteacher / SLT or admin qualified first aider this will be recorded as "I" and noted in the register.

The Attendance / Admissions Officers will contact parents from 9.15am each morning if their child(ren) have not arrived at Mission Grove and no message has been received. Where children who come to school alone and attend an early morning club, this will be noted on the register and the club leader will notify the Admin Team of any child failing to attend.

Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality

At the end of each term attendance certificates will be awarded to children achieving 100% attendance. Attendance is regularly reported in the Newsletter with praise for high achieving classes.

Punctuality

Good punctuality is essential for children in order to achieve high attainment and improved behaviour.

Attendance / Admissions Officers will keep accurate records of lateness and contact parents and carers regarding lateness, stressing the importance of children being punctual for school each day. Dependent upon the Parent / Carer circumstances offers could be made to join the walking bus or the child may be given a place at Breakfast Club.

Continued Poor Punctuality

Assistant Headteacher, Headteacher and eventually the Education Welfare Officer will be informed of children whose lateness is causing concern

Parents / carers will be contacted via telephone by the Assistant Headteacher and / or be invited into school to meet with the Assistant Headteacher to discuss the issue. Should there be no improvement a home visit will be made.

If no improvement made, the Education Welfare Officer will be involved

Where unauthorised lateness continues, a Notification of Parental Responsibility is issued and parents / carers could be at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Attendance – September 2020 addendum

Attendance expectations

It is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends school regularly
- we will record attendance and follow up absence
- the school may issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

The majority of pupils will be able to return to school in September 2020. However we note that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent.
- some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we will offer access to remote education.

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, please contact the school to discuss your concerns and the measures we have put in place to reduce the risk of infection.