

# The Mead Infant and Nursery School

## Attendance Policy



**Proud to Belong**

This policy was first presented to The Governing Body in the Summer Term 2012 and is every 3 years .

**Reviewed by:** T. Creasey – Headteacher and Governing Body

**Next Review:** Autumn 1 2024

# **The Mead Infant and Nursery** **School Attendance Policy**

## **Introduction**

The Mead Infant and Nursery School, along with other local schools and Surrey County Council, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. To this end the school will do all it can to encourage parents/carers to ensure their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. Pupils will be expected to achieve 100% attendance but when absence is unavoidable, parents/carers will be required to inform the school at the earliest opportunity.

Parents/carers, whose children are of compulsory school age and are registered at a school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so, they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or to be served with a penalty notice.

## **Why is attendance important?**

- Good attendance ensures that children have the best possible chances in life. This means that they can achieve well both academically and socially
- Children who have poor attendance may have gaps in their learning and find it difficult to catch up
- Statistics show that children who have poor attendance early on in their education are more likely to underachieve at secondary school
- Friendships can be affected by persistent absence too; it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their classmates

## **Parent Responsibility and the Law**

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable- [a] to their age, ability and aptitude and [b] to any special needs they may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes, the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day-to-day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

## **Registers**

Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 (s434) and the Student Registration Regulations 1995 the school must keep an attendance register.

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school].

Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence.

If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

## **Reporting Absences**

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school if a child will be absent for any reason.

Absences should be reported to the school office (via the answer phone) or via email to [attendance@mead.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@mead.surrey.sch.uk) before 9am on the first day of absence and thereafter on a daily basis.

### **Lateness**

The school day begins at 8.50 a.m. and it is expected that children will arrive on time.

Any child arriving after the doors have closed at 9 a.m. should be taken to the school office. Parents/carers are asked to sign their child in giving a brief description of the reason for their child's lateness.

Morning registration will take place at 9 a.m. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes and any child who arrives after the register has been taken but during the 30 minutes will be marked as late (L).

Any pupil who arrives after the registers close at 9.30 a.m. will be marked as 'late after close of registers' (U), which statistically counts as an unauthorised absence. If a reason is given for the late arrival, for example, attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

In cases of persistent late arrivals to school, along with advice from the Inclusion Officer (IO), parents/carers will be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher. The school will work together with parents/carers to put strategies in place to improve promptness. This may include setting targets, follow up calls and further meetings.

## **Dental and medical treatments**

Whilst the school will grant requests for absence for dental and medical treatments, parents/carers are encouraged, whenever possible, to book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day.

When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the school office should be notified in advance in writing, of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected and/or returned to school.

Evidence of the appointment may be requested.

### **Responding to Non-Attendance**

When a child does not attend school, staff will respond by doing one or more of the following

- If no telephone call or email is received from the parent/carer by 9:00, the school will contact the parent/carer or the other emergency contacts held by the school until a response is obtained and staff know that the child is safe
- If there is no response from any of the contacts held by the school, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be informed and this will result in a home visit to ascertain that the child is safe
- If there is no response from a home visit, all efforts will be made to establish the safety and well-being of the child/ren. This may involve working with other agencies e.g. children services and the police
- For any child whose family are known, by the school, to be currently working in partnership with Children's Services an additional phone call to the named Social Worker/Family Support Worker will also be made. Equally, for any children where the school has significant concerns that are not currently working in partnership with Children's Services, an additional phone call into C-SPAR may be made. The school may also seek further advice from the Inclusion Service (IS) and/or any other professional service it feels is appropriate.
- In line with the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, all unexplained absences of 10 consecutive days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority, although the school discuss such an absence sooner with their IO if the absence is unauthorised, parents/carers cannot be contacted or there are other concerns. Schools are required to report all absence figures to the local authority and the DFE and to ensure they are recorded on a child's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by Ofsted as part of a school's inspection.

### **Persistent Absence (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

Any absence of this nature has an impact on a child's educational achievement and the school needs parents' full support and co-operation to address and improve attendance.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. The class teacher will initially inform the parent/carer if their child has been highlighted as having PA. If attendance does not improve parents/carers will be invited into school for a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss how all can work together to improve the child's attendance.

The DfE and the Local Authority monitor the levels of persistent absence in all schools.

### **Exceptional Leave of Absence**

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off during school term-time. Any financial savings that parents/carers think may be made by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to their child's education.

All holiday requests will be considered to be unauthorised leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances, which is determined by the Headteacher. Any appeal will be heard by the Governing Body, whose decision will be final. If a holiday is taken without authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, the Inclusion Service will be notified and the parent/carer may be liable to a Penalty Notice.

All other requests for absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Headteacher and must be for exceptional circumstances. Again, in the case of an appeal, the decision of the Governing Body will be final.

If a family needs to request a leave of absence in term-time, then an absence request form must be submitted to the Headteacher and preferably with at least two weeks' notice. All adults with parental responsibility must be aware of the request being submitted.

### **Penalty Notices**

The issuing of a Penalty Notice for poor attendance may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Unauthorised absences OR late arrival after the close of registration, on 7 occasions in any six week period (not including school closures) where the child's attendance falls below 90%. The lateness will be recorded in accordance with the 'Registration and Lateness' section of this policy
- Unauthorised leave of absence in term time (5 days/10 sessions or more within a 3 month period – these do not need to be consecutive) without the authorisation of the school.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 states that the Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time EXCEPT where an application has been made in ADVANCE AND the circumstances are deemed exceptional. The Headteacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school IF leave is granted.

- The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council, may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Please note that each parent/carer is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must consider a prosecution against the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.
- Parents/carers who fail to secure their child's regular school attendance and fail to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Inclusion Officer. This will be considered if the attendance is below 90% and there are 7 or more unauthorised sessions in the previous 6 school weeks, which may include a child arriving late after close of registration.
- If parents/carers believe at any stage that their child's absence from school may leave them liable to receive a Penalty Notice, it is extremely important that they take action without delay to secure their child's regular attendance. If parents/carers have any questions or require further support to achieve an improvement, they should contact the school or the Inclusion Officer.

## **Improving Attendance**

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 resolved between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful if parents/carers cover up their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

The Inclusion Officer (IO) meets with school staff on a regular basis to discuss attendance concerns.

In cases where a child begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parents/carers by:

1. A phone call to the parent/carer by the Class Teacher and issues discussed with the child within school
2. A letter sent to the parent/carers stating concerns
3. Meeting at school with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss how all can work together to improve attendance
4. If following this, the school is unsuccessful in resolving any attendance issues it will refer families to the IO for support

## **Rewards**

Certificates will be awarded to children who have had for 100% attendance at the end of each term

## **Inclusion Service**

The Inclusion Service (IS) is provided by the Local Authority and supports schools, parents and young people and deals with non-attendance. The aim of the IS is for every child to have an equal opportunity to access educational provision and ensure parents/carers meet their parental responsibilities under the various Education Acts. Education Welfare monitors the attendance of all children on a regular basis. The IO will work with school staff and parents/carers to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence.

If attendance problems cannot be resolved by the school, then it will make a referral to the IS. The IO will try to resolve the situation but if attempts to improve attendance have failed and unauthorised absence persists, the IO can use sanctions such as parenting contracts, penalty notices and prosecution or consider an Education Supervision Order.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance, under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, to a fine not exceeding £2500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months, or both.

## **Local Authority Truancy Patrols**

When a family comes to the notice of a Truancy Patrol either via the IO or through local patrols, the child's pattern of school attendance is investigated. If there are unauthorised absences in the preceding 4 months, a warning letter may be sent to the parents/carers. If there are further unauthorised absences during the subsequent 15 school days, a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent/carer.

The Penalty Notice fines are as follows:

- £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the local authority is then obliged to consider a prosecution against the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

All staff should encourage good attendance and punctuality through:

- Providing a caring and welcoming learning environment.
- Reporting late and attendance information to parents/carers on parents' evening and in the annual school report.
- Raising any concerns regarding attendance of lateness to a member of the SLT
- By celebrating regular attendance every term.
- Regular communication with parents/carers and children.
- Ensuring accurate and punctual completion of registers.
- Attend meetings between the IO and Head teacher if necessary

Attendance Officer:

- Ensures morning and afternoon registers are taken and are up to date.
- Contacts parents and requests reasons for absence.

- Collates daily attendance records and, together with the attendance lead, puts in place agreed procedures to monitor and respond to poor attendance and punctuality.
- Attend regular meetings between the IO and Headteacher

#### Headteacher:

- Monitors and reviews the attendance policy on an annual basis.
- Monitors and reviews the attendance procedures and works with the Attendance office and IO to ensure reasons for absence are identified and interventions are put in place.
- Deals with applications for leave of absence
- Identifies and monitors attendance of PA students.
- Promotes the attendance policy within the school and ensures that it is implemented effectively.
- Reports attendance to the Governing body through HT reports

#### Parents/carers:

- encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and have completed any homework they have been given
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

#### Children:

- attend school regularly
- attend school punctually
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day

#### **Links with other policies and documents**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Behaviour Policy

Anti-Bullying

Well-being Policy

Equality Policy

Parental Concerns/Complaints.

Staff Behaviour Policy / Code of Conduct