

Attendance Policy

Policy Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy is effective for North Mead Primary Academy.

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Revision History:

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes:
0.1	January 2014	TG	Due for review
0.2	September 2016	JH	To reflect Academy status
0.3	October 2018	JH	To reflect Trust name change Updated to list new incentives for pupils
0.4	September 2020	AC	Governors changed to academy councillors
0.5	September 2021	AC	Changes to gate opening times in light of covid-19 Wording changed for precision Rewards updated Leave of absence in term time section amended

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. North Mead Primary Academy fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time; therefore, having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. It is the Attendance Officer's responsibility to work with staff, Academy Councillors, pupils and their families to monitor, consolidate and improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Aims and Objectives

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and Academy Councillors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy, we aim:

- to reach a target set by the school and Education Welfare Service, of 96% average attendance over the school year
- to help each pupil to achieve 'above average' attendance
- to reduce the number of 'persistent absentees' and to work with those families to address the issues affecting attendance
- to provide children with a lifelong, positive attitudes to school that begin with good attendance
- to establish good habits ready for the next phase in education and the future
- to closely monitor the attendance of every child and challenge parents who do not ensure their child attends regularly
- work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.

Principles

We believe that attendance has a huge impact on the attitudes and attainment of children. When children miss time at school they miss sections of learning, particularly if there is an introduction to a subject or a new topic. Missing time can be very disruptive for the child and for the teacher and the rest of the class.

We will emphasise the importance of good attendance as soon as children start school. If a child who has a place in Nursery has not attended for 5 consecutive sessions, without reasonable explanation, they will receive a letter to explain that their attendance is a concern. If there are a further 5 absences, then that place may be offered to someone else on the waiting list.

If a child has more than 20 continuous days of absence and parents are not able to provide medical evidence or a reasonable justification, the parent risks their child being removed from roll in line with council procedures and Safeguarding legislation. Parents will then need to reapply through the admissions process if they wish their child to return to North Mead Primary Academy.

Monitoring

Teachers will take responsibility for the daily monitoring of attendance of the children in their class. The attendance officer will make a first day communication via email or text message, followed by a phone call if no response is received, to request a reason for absence for any child who is not marked as present on the register. We will provide training for new staff completing registers so that they are completed accurately and consistently to assist with the monitoring process. It is the responsibility of the Principal to examine data on absences supplied by the Attendance Officer weekly. The Attendance Officer and the Principal will work closely together and update the Academy Council regularly. Poor attendance (below 95%) will be followed up in person, by telephone or by letter. We will also make clear that we expect an explanation for absences on each occasion and for every effort to be made when getting children to school. We will always endeavour to help parents / carers who are having difficulties in getting children to school and have a school based Family Support Worker to support with this.

Any absences that continue to cause concern and that cannot be explained by the parents / carers will be referred to the Educational Welfare Service. Cases are also referred to the EWO where attendance has been authorised but is still a cause for concern; for example, when a child is regularly ill on a Monday or a Friday, or when a phone call is made to say a child is ill but they are seen out and about. The Academy Council will receive a report on attendance at their termly meetings and will be made aware of systems and initiatives that are taking place to raise the profile of good attendance.

Attendance Bands

At North Mead Primary Academy, we strive for all children to achieve their full academic potential and aim for 100% attendance. Our clarification of the different attendance bands are as follows:

- 100% - Outstanding
- 98.01%-99.9% (with no unauthorised absence) – Excellent
- 96.01%-98% (with no unauthorised absence) – Good
- 90%-96% - Concerns/requires improvement (acknowledge where attendance is improving)
- 90% and below - Persistent absentee (acknowledge where attendance is close to 90% and improving)

Keeping Children Safe in Education

At North Mead Primary Academy, it is our legal responsibility to ensure that every child is safe and receives a suitable education. If we have not received a reasonable explanation for a child's absence, have reasonable grounds to doubt an explanation received or have been unable to contact a parent or carer to explain an absence, a 'safe and well' check will be carried out to the child's home address. This will be undertaken by our Family Support Worker or Attendance officer accompanied by another staff member; or by the Education Welfare Officer or member of the Police.

It is our legal responsibility to ensure that no children are missing from education under the guidance of the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' legislation. Through regular and effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authority, we will strive to ensure that all children are accounted for and receiving a suitable education.

Persistent absentees

Persistent Absentees are defined as children with an attendance percentage below 90%. This is equivalent to having one day off every two weeks. Persistent Absentees miss significant amounts of their education and are in danger of falling behind academically, socially and emotionally. These children will be monitored at least monthly by the EWO and Attendance Officer to ensure support and strategies are put into place to help improve their attendance. The Family Support Worker will be contacted where support is required.

Often, children are identified as persistent absentees because their attendance has dipped due to travel during term-time. It is important to remember that there are only 39 weeks of the school year and we must make each of these count. Whilst we appreciate that Covid-19 restrictions have made travelling abroad more challenging in recent times, we remind parents that planned visits must not be made during term time.

Authorised versus Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is when a child is genuinely ill enough to not be able to attend school. Parents will be asked to provide evidence of illness once a child has been away for more than two days. Evidence will usually be an appropriate prescription (for that child with the correct date). We do not expect a letter from a doctor. Medical appointments that cannot be made outside school hours (e.g. hospital) are also authorised – school will request a copy of the appointment letter. We expect parents to bring children to school before or after an appointment where possible. We expect parents to make routine doctor and dentist appointments outside the school day. The school may also take account of and authorise other significant and infrequent absences; such as, bereavements or religious festivals.

Keeping your child off for any other reason is unauthorised. We will not authorise absences that could have been avoided and are unnecessary.

Punctuality

It is vital that children arrive to school on time each day. Children are expected to arrive between 8:30 and 9:00am, when the gates will be closed and locked for safeguarding purposes. Any children arriving after this time must report to the school office and sign in on the sign in app; this will record latecomers and ask for a reason for absence. An L code will be marked on the register. Children arriving after 9:20am will receive a U code and given an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

Leave of absence in term time

Holidays in term time with not be authorised. We follow government legislation with regards to absence requests for children in term time. The legal reference states that schools should not authorise leave of absence unless both of the following apply:

1. The Principal considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application **AND**
2. An application has been made in advance by the parent

Where a child has a sustained leave of absence for a holiday or has a pattern of unauthorised absence, parents may be issued with a Penalty Notice of £120 per parent per child (reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days), or your case could be referred by the Leicester City Council directly to the Magistrates' Court.

Requests for compassionate leave will be judged on an individual case basis. Parents / carers must request permission for any leave of absence and complete the request form prior to any leave taking place. If any member of staff believes that a child is absent because of a holiday, our Family Support worker or EWO will be asked to make a home visit. A suspected holiday may also incur a penalty notice and it will be up to the parents / carers to prove otherwise once the penalty notice is issued.

Incentives

At North Mead, we recognise the importance of building good habits of attendance and support the children in doing so. To raise the profile of good attendance we offer several rewards and incentives:

- Every week at the Friday badge assembly, we present the top class in each Phase with stickers and an extra playtime. The classes with the most awards at the end of term are presented with a special class reward or treat.
- 100% attendance treats are awarded on a class basis when they are achieved.
- Each year, we offer incentives and rewards to children who attend school 96% of the time e.g. DVD afternoon, disco, picnic and play.
- Teachers are informed weekly of their class's percentage and reminded to use the whole school Dojo points system to reward good attendance.

Lead staff responsible for Attendance

Principal - Alex Curran

Attendance Officer - Zainab Meman

Family Support Worker - Jill Hurst