



Morecambe Bay  
Community Primary  
School

Attendance Policy

January 2023

## **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.

## **Why Regular Attendance is so important**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

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;
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates and celebration assemblies;
- Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high 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.
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

## **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 Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- 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
- holidays that exceed the amount agreed by the Headteacher

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)***

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 we will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and parenting contracts.

### ***Absence Procedures***

#### ***If your child is absent you must***

- Contact us before 9.30 a.m or as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- Phone **01524 401002** press option 1 to record a message
- Email **office@morecambabay.lancs.sch.uk**
- Call into school and report to reception.
- Contact school everyday thereafter unless otherwise requested by the school office.

#### ***If your child is absent we will***

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Attempt to contact you via your email address if you have supplied us with one.
- Issue an attendance letter requesting reason for absence.
- If contact has not been made with the school parent/carer must provide prompt and adequate written explanation for the absence of the child on their return. Failure to do so will result in the child receiving an unauthorised absence.

- Any outstanding absence will be marked as unauthorised after a period of 5 days and cannot be changed after that.
- If your child is off for two consecutive days and we have not had any contact from you we may do a home visit and also ask the police to do a welfare check on our behalf.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol. (PAST)

### ***Telephone numbers and Email addresses***

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your up to date contact numbers and email address. If these are not kept up to date something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers and emails throughout the year via data collection sheets.

### ***In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality***

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff 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. This includes:

- Reward/incentive schemes.
- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff, assistant head or deputy head
- Parenting contracts
- Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including PAST the Local Authority School Attendance Team)
- Penalty notices

### ***The Local Authority School Attendance Team***

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). They will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist the case may be referred to the Court Officers, 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 school or the Local Authority.

### ***Lateness***

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

### ***How we manage lateness***

The bell will ring at **8.45 a.m.** and the children will be allowed into school.

The school day starts at **9.00 a.m.** and your child is expected to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **9.00 am** and your child will receive a late mark after this time.

Any child arriving in school after this time **must** report to the school office and sign in on the entry system.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be in school, 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 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.

### ***Fixed Penalty Notices***

#### **When are they issued?**

Lancashire County Council considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that penalty notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs, such as:

- Unauthorised absence
- Truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps) parentally condoned absence without good reason
- Persistent late arrival at school
- Excessive unauthorised holidays in term time
- Excessive delayed return from an extended holiday without prior school permission;

#### ***How much is the fine?***

Your local council can give each parent or (whether they live in the same household or not) a fine of £60, which rises to £120 each if you do not pay within 21 days. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.

#### ***Holidays in Term Time:***

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by trying not to take children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office. **From September 2014 Headteacher's may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

### **Extended Leave in Term Time:**

Only in 'exceptional' circumstances will 'leave' of over 10 days (**but no more than 20 days**) be authorised by the school. In certain circumstances, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date, and readmission cannot be guaranteed. The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010)

Parents may also be asked to attend a meeting to discuss educational opportunities for their child whilst on extended leave.

### **Religious Absence:**

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, **but no more than 3 days in any one academic year**. Parents must request this leave in advance.

### **Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:**

#### **Parents**

- Support/maintain home routines which support their child's health, readiness for learning and attendance/punctuality.
- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually and where possible accompanied by an adult.
- Contact school on 1<sup>st</sup> day of absence before 9.30a.m wherever possible, and everyday thereafter unless otherwise requested by the school office.
- Avoid holidays in term time wherever possible and apply in advance using form.
- Arrange for the collection of their child, on time, at the end of the school day.
- Accept that once their child has left the school grounds responsibility for the welfare of their child rests entirely with the parent or carer.
- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies.
- Recognise that if a child walks out of school grounds, the school will:
  - I. Ring parent or carer concerned
  - II. Ring Police if the parent or carer cannot be contacted.

#### **Pupils**

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

### **School Attendance Mrs Gillon**

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided.
- Ensure that systems are in place to monitor registers and record data onto the SIMS

system daily.

- Send letters to parents informing them and offering further support.
- Pass all relevant attendance/punctuality information to the appropriate members of staff.
- Record attendance concerns on CPOMS
- To ensure reward schemes for positive attendance/punctuality are in place.

### **Assistant head Mrs Capstick**

- Half termly monitor the children that are below 90%.
- For children who are persistently below 90% invite parents in for a meeting to discuss further.
- Coordinate appropriate support with any outside agencies.

### **Other strategies school may initiate**

- Conduct home visits if no appropriate telephone contact can be gathered within 48 hours, (24 hours if deemed a vulnerable family)
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, initiate Parenting Contracts and CAF where appropriate.
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents.
- Arrange and conduct meetings with parents/carers to address persistent attendance/punctuality issues.
- Initiate 'PAST' Referrals where necessary.
- Initiate 'Fixed Penalty Notices'

### **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

### **Governors**

- 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

### **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletter and we ask for your full support.

**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.

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