

Medlock Primary School



Supporting Pupil Attendance Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Medlock Primary School believes that regular school attendance is essential if children are to maximise the educational opportunities, become emotionally resilient; build their confidence and achieve their full potential.
- 1.2 Medlock values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.
- 1.3 Medlock recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school life and is therefore supported by our policies on SEND, safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

2. Legal Framework

- 2.1 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- 2.2 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June if they are 16 by the end of the summer holidays.
- 2.3 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- 2.4 The Education (Pupil Registration - England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.
- 2.5 The school register must record whether the pupil was:
 - present;
 - absent;
 - present at approved educational activity; or
 - unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. Categorising absence

- 3.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

- 3.2 Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received. All decisions made by the headteacher are made in line with official guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Local Authority.
- 3.3 Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of an absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. Evidence supporting the parents / carers explanation for the absence should be provided where appropriate.
- 3.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:
1. Illness Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the head teacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.
 2. Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should only be absent for the time of the appointment and the travel time to and from the appointment. Parents must show the appointment card to school.
 3. Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.
 4. Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher/form tutor/Head of Year will make arrangements for work to be sent home.
- 3.5 Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the headteacher. Evidence should be provided to support the request. All decisions made by the headteacher are made in line with official guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Local Authority.
- Retrospective requests will only be considered if it can be proved that it was not possible to inform the school prior to or during the absence. If it is found that a request could be made ahead of the absence the absence would then be categorised as **unauthorised**.
- 3.6. All requests for leave of absence that are granted will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of the leave granted.
- 3.7 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

- 3.8 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases this results in the local authority issuing a Penalty Notice. Other legal sanctions (including prosecution in the magistrates court) may result.
- 3.9 **Religious Observance** Medlock acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends. Where this occurs, parents may request leave of absence only for dates 'exclusively set apart by the religious body', meaning requests will only be granted for the day the festival is being observed. It can not be granted on days around the festival for travel etc. In responding to a request, Medlock Primary School may consult SACRE or other official bodies to confirm the legitimacy of a request.
- 3.10 **Late Arrival** Registration begins at **8.45am** and closes at **8.55am** pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (code L). The register will close at **9.10am** pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, (code U) this is not authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

On arrival after the close of the register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure the register is amended. This is for health and safety purposes as well as logging the late attendance.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

Evidence to support such explanations is routinely sought.

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

- 3.11 **Unauthorised absence** - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the headteacher.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping (including shopping for school items like uniform or shoes)
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Family holiday

- 3.12 **Traveller Absence** It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Medlock will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 12 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at Medlock will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Medlock can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Medlock will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.

4. Deletions from the Register

4.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration - England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on an School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed

- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

Medlock will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Medlock believes that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as the shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.
As such, the **Governing Body** will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters (as part of Safeguarding)
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named member of staff in the school office to monitor, report and action support on attendance,
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

5.2 The **Leadership Team** will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure the school office is able to put the resources in place for daily 'first day of absence' calling in which the office telephones the homes of all absent children on the first day of absence (and in some cases subsequent days of absence) to ascertain the nature and length of the absence.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and half termly tracking
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

5.3 **Class Teachers** will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Contribute to the analysis of attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

5.4 Request that **Parents** will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a written explanation.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bedtimes, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances send a written leave request to the headteacher.

6. **What Support Can Look Like**

Supporting families to ensure their children come to school every day can take many forms. Medlock Primary School will work with families on a range of strategies including but not only:

- home visits
- regular calls
- subsidised access to breakfast club
- link support staff
- Parental incentives
- Child incentives and rewards

7. **Using Attendance Data**

7.1 Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

7.2 The Attendance Lead (based in the school office) will monitor attendance. Half termly reports are produced to track groups in order for targeted action. Reports are then presented at Governors Meetings alongside actions for discussion. In conjunction with class teachers, individual pupils are identified and bespoke support is initiated at the earliest opportunity.

- 7.3 Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.
- 7.4 Medlock will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the local authority as required.
- 7.5 All information shared will be done so in accordance with GDPR legislation.

8. Support Systems

- 8.1 School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and / or their behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.
- 8.2 Medlock also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children (LAC).
- 8.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used could include (but are not limited to):
- Discussion with parents and pupils
 - Attendance panels
 - Parenting contracts
 - Referrals to support agencies
 - Pupil Voice Activities
 - Pastoral support - staff or peer delivered
 - Taught session on attendance (whole class / small group / individual / assembly)
 - Reward systems
 - Additional learning support
 - Home visits
 - Community support
 - Paired parent support
 - Reintegration support packages

- 8.4 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.
- 8.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Medlock will consider the use of legal sanctions.

9. Legal Sanctions

- 9.1 **Prosecution** Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the

Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

9.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

9.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and / or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

9.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

9.2 **Parenting Contracts** (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

9.3 **Penalty Notices** (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the headteacher.

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

Appendix 1

Escalation of Attendance Interventions

Pupils with attendance between 97 to 95%

Class teacher will speak to the pupil to:

- Confirm with the pupil the reason for any absences and offer any support that may be required
- Update the pupil on other work they have missed and support any catch up required
- Liaising with home and attendance lead, set an individual attendance target for the pupil using sessions rather than percentages that will see the pupil move to the band above

In addition, where unauthorised absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review with the pupil, a letter will be sent to parents advising of concern and outlining the parents' responsibilities

Where improvement has not occurred following this intervention, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- All parties confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve.
- Parenting contract agreed
- Penalty Notice 15 school day monitoring period commences
- Agree a review date

Where parents fail to attend the meeting without a satisfactory reason and unauthorised absence has occurred, the penalty notice monitoring period will automatically commence.

The class teacher will be responsible for all action at this level. Class teachers will liaise with attendance lead to ensure whole school approach. Actions and outcomes to be recorded.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

Pupils with attendance below 95%

Attendance lead will liaise with home to:

- Identify underlying home / school issues that may be causing the pupil's absence
- Review the pupil's academic progress and make links to the pupil's attendance eg. If you attended all your classes you could achieve...

- Make arrangements for the pupil to catch up on work they have missed
- Implement a Pastoral Support Plan or review other existing pupil plan to include support to improve attendance
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil using sessions rather than percentages that will see the pupil move to the band above
- Agree a review date

In addition, where unauthorised absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review with the pupil, a letter will be sent to parents advising of concern and outlining the parents' responsibilities.

If improvement has not occurred following this intervention, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- All parties confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve.
- Parenting contract agreed
- Penalty Notice 15 school day monitoring period commences
- Agree a review date

Where parents fail to attend the meeting without a satisfactory reason and unauthorised absence has occurred, the penalty notice monitoring period will automatically commence.

Where these interventions have already been implemented and have had unsatisfactory impact, the parent will be invited to an Attendance Panel where the possible outcomes will be:

- Early Help referral
- Refer to the Local Authority to initiate legal proceedings

Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without providing a satisfactory reason, a minimum of two home visits with the purpose to engage with the parent will be carried out prior to referral to the Local Authority.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

Pupils with attendance below 90%

Pupils who have attendance below 90% are considered to be persistently absent from school. The Attendance lead will then:

- Ensure that the pupil has already spoken to a member of staff at the stages proceeding intervention.
- Obtain records of previous contact and interventions as set out in AMBER and escalate accordingly.
- Ensure that weekly contact occurs with the pupil either individually or within a small group to address themed issues.

- Ensure that weekly contact with the parents to discuss any arising issues and to provide feedback on their child's attendance, behaviour and academic progress.
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil that will see the pupil move to the band above.
- Review existing plans and co-ordinate school resources to support the pupil's attendance and any additional needs.
- Be the key contact person for any external agency working with the pupil

Attendance will be a standing item on the agenda of the Senior Leadership Team, Safeguarding Team and Governing Body where pupils causing concern are discussed alongside actions taken.