

# Lawford Mead Primary & Nursery School



## Attendance Policy

**‘Proud of our school, proud of our achievements’**

*Certified as reviewed and approved by the Local Governing Body: 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017*

*Next review date: Summer 2018*

*Lawford Mead Primary & Nursery School is a founding member of the HERA Primary Academy Trust.*

## **Attendance Policy**

### **Relationship to other policies**

- Equality Scheme
- Positive Behaviour
- Child Protection
- Curriculum
- Home/School Agreement
- Inclusion

### **Introduction**

Effective schools convey their positive regard for regular attendance to parents/carers, pupils and teachers. Children quickly pick up the message that their presence is important. The twice-daily requirement to register pupils can and should be perceived as an opportunity for the school to receive children formally from home, and serve as an introduction to the session.

**At Lawford Mead Primary School, we recognise the importance of good attendance. We aim to promote good attendance and have rigorous procedures in place to identify, address and escalate cases of poor attendance.**

### **Attendance**

**It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the Headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

The Isle of Wight v Platt Supreme Court Judgement decreed the word 'regularly' to mean 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'.

Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (Where the school approves pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (Where the school does not approve absence)

If a child is absent, parents/carers must contact the school before 9.15 am on the first and subsequent days of the absence stating a specific/detailed reason (contact can be made by leaving a message on the student absence line 01245 354134 and select option 1 or email [admin@lawfordmead.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admin@lawfordmead.essex.sch.uk)). The school will then decide whether to authorise the absence. Reasons for refusal of authorisation can be found later in this document 'Authorised and Unauthorised Absence'.

If parents/carers fail to contact the school to explain the child's absence, the school will make contact by telephone or text on the initial day. If the school is unable to make contact with emergency contact number 1 we will then attempt to make contact with all other contacts in order of priority. **A record of all attempts are noted in our attendance book and on the child's SIMs record by the office staff.**

If we are unable to make contact with a parent/carer or other family member and have cause for concern we will investigate further. Either a member of staff will visit the home address or we will instigate a 101 police welfare check.

At the end of each half term, the school reviews attendance levels of all pupils and any pupil whose attendance is below 95% is closely scrutinised as to the reasons for non-attendance. Any pupils whose attendance is below 90% are classed as persistent absentees and parents will be called in for an initial meeting to discuss the reasons for their continued absence. This initial meeting will be held with our Family Inclusion Coordinator and will then be monitored carefully over the coming half term. If no improvement is made a further meeting will be held with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

When parents fail to engage with the school to improve their child's attendance a decision will be made as to whether to make a referral to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES).

The school runs a variety of activities to encourage the children to attend punctually. Children with 100% attendance are rewarded by the school each term. Each week the class with the best attendance receives the attendance trophy and gains a reward.

### **Completing the Register**

Registers are important legal documents and are recorded securely online. They can be requested for examination by Ofsted, the Local Authority and MECES. The law requires schools to call the register twice a day. Registers must not be altered. Calling the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by staff, children and parents. When a child is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school, or unauthorised.

When completing electronic registers, staff are advised to use a diagonal line to mark a child present and to leave blank if a child is absent. The office staff will then review and complete all missing marks using the correct codes with information from our Attendance Book.

The following are completed on our database:

- Daily and weekly attendance figures
- Running totals of authorised and unauthorised absence
- Running totals of late attendance.

### **Holidays during Term Time**

Parents are advised in the school prospectus, at induction meetings and at regular intervals throughout the year to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays so that their child's education is not disrupted.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 removed all references to 'family holidays.' Leave of absence may only be granted by headteachers if there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year. Where a family chooses to go on holiday during term time, absences will be coded as unauthorised (G code).

**It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request. All applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing/on the prescribed form provided by the school.**

If leave is not granted but is taken anyway, it is likely that the school will initiate procedures for issuing a penalty notice. Absences will not be authorised and the Missing Education and Child Employment Service may issue a penalty notice to each parent of £60 for each child to be paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale the penalty will increase to £120. If the higher penalty is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority will then institute legal proceedings against the parent(s) in the magistrate's court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure your child attends school regularly.

If parents wish to request an absence from school due to exceptional circumstances, they are asked to complete a leave of absence form (available from the office) and return it with a letter clearly explaining the reason for the request. Written evidence to support the exceptional circumstances will be required. The school will make clear in writing to the parent/carer whether the absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised. The School may request a meeting to discuss further.

All requests for leave must be made at least four weeks in advance where possible.

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which the school and parents/carers must seek to avoid.

### **Lateness**

The school bell will sound at 8.45 am which marks the beginning of the school day and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time. Any child arriving later than 8.45 am should report to the School Office where their arrival time will be logged in the Attendance Book and the child will be issued with a Late Pass for them to give to their Teacher. If accompanied, a parent or carer should give a reason for the lateness, which will be added to the register. The child will then be sent to their classroom.

The register will remain open for 30 minutes (8.45-9.15 am). If children arrive late up to 9.15 am the register will be marked with an 'L' to denote that the child arrived late. Children who arrive after 9.15 am without a valid reason will be marked with a 'U' to denote an unauthorised absence.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Persistent lateness is monitored termly and parents may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the reasons for the lateness and how to improve their child's punctuality.

## **Monitoring of Attendance**

The school takes its responsibilities seriously as any absence both authorised and unauthorised can disrupt continuity of learning. As part of the monitoring process the school will:

- make contact on the first day of absence if notice of absence has not already been received from the parent/carer
- Investigate all unexplained absences
- Contact parents if there are any concerns over attendance
- Involve the MECES if parents fail to support the school in ensuring the fullest possible attendance of their children.

The school monitors each child's attendance for emerging patterns of both authorised and unauthorised absence. Letters will be sent to parents informing them of any concerns the school may have and encourage them to improve their child's attendance rate. Parents may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss attendance and if there is no improvement or engagement then the matter will be referred to the MECES.

If your child has a pattern of continual/repetitive illness (ie sick bug on 6 separate occasions within a term) then you will receive a letter asking for medical evidence for all future occurrences (letter will state acceptable medical evidence). If medical evidence is not produced on the child's return to school then all future occurrences will be unauthorised.

Children's attendance records are shared with parents at Target Sharing Days, as part of the school's Annual Report to parents and at other times throughout the school year as appropriate.

### **What can parents do to help?**

- Let the school know as soon as possible why the child is absent
- Send a note when the child returns to school
- Try to make appointments outside school time
- Do not allow the child to have time off school unless it is really necessary.

### **If absence continues...**

- The school will refer to the MECES.
- Parents/carers may contact the MECES, who will work with them and the school to resolve the situation. (Number available from the School Office)

## **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Absence for the following will be authorised where parents have confirmed the absence with the school:

- Excludable illness (per current NHS guidance)
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstance ie bereavement (a leave of absence form must be completed, where possible, in advance)
- Transport arranged by the local authority (LA) has failed to arrive where the pupil lives beyond the statutory walking distance.

Absence will be recorded as unauthorised when due to:

- Late arrival after the register has closed
- Shopping
- Headlice
- Non excludable illness (per current NHS guidance)
- Tiredness
- Haircuts
- Missed bus
- Slept late
- No uniform
- Looking after brothers or sisters or unwell parents
- Birthdays
- Unapproved holidays
- Family celebration events.

### **Medical Appointments during school time**

For all medical/dental appointments taken during school time, the parent/carer will be asked by the school to provide evidence eg:

- Appointment card/letter
- Medical certificate
- Letter from GP
- Text from Medical provider.

Children are expected to attend school before and after medical appointments (travel time allowed for), failure to attend may result in an unauthorised absence.

### **Child Employment**

Providing the relevant documentation/licence application is received from the Local Authority, the School can authorise absence for up to 2 days per term for the purposes of taking part in a performance or related activity if the child's attendance remains at 95% or above.

### **The Role of the Local Authority and the Government**

The LA is charged in law with enforcing school attendance and must ensure that schools and parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations, including where necessary, the taking of action through the courts. The LA discharges the enforcement obligations through MECES.

Schools are obliged to send termly records of the overall school attendance to the DfE. An annual attendance target is set and monitored by the Local Governing Board and the Trustees.

### **Designated Members of Staff:**

Mrs D Baker  
Mr M Poyton  
Miss H Chittick  
Mrs J Kirby

### **Monitoring and review**

This policy will be formally reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if new guidance becomes available.