

Attendance Policy

Mead Vale Primary Community School

Who is responsible?	Mr J M Nicolaides
Review timescale	Every two years
Last review	December 2018
Date reviewed and by whom	December 2018 by FGB
Signature of chair of governors	<i>Elouise Huxor</i>
Signature of headteacher	
Next review	December 2020

Policy statement on school attendance

This policy sets out the schools expectations on attendance and the strategies the school adopts to encourage good pupil attendance. It explains the statutory framework for attending school, the support available and sanctions in place if expected attendance is not achieved.

Policy principles

- Mead Vale Primary School aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all students are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.
- We aim to achieve 95% attendance or better. Poor attendance is anything below 90%

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below).

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 made provision for Penalty Notices (section 23(1) to be issued in certain cases of unauthorised absence. The Penalty (fine) will require the parent of a child of compulsory school age, whose attendance has been unsatisfactory, to pay £60 (per parent, per pupil) if paid within 21 days or £120 (per parent, per pupil) if paid within 28 days.

Rights and responsibilities

Improving attendance at Mead Vale Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents and all staff.

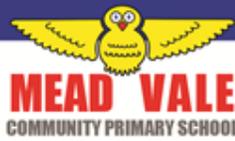
Parents

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are required to notify the school as soon as possible.

Please contact the school's absence line on the first and third day of your child's absence before 10:00am. If you do not advise the school of an absence, then the parents should expect to be contacted by the school.

A pupil's absence from school will be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent.

Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours.



Parents whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication. This will be provided by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), Headteacher or a Learning Mentor/Parent Support Advisor.

Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually.

School staff

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff. The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents/carers. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

Strategies for promoting attendance at Mead Vale School

- Mead Vale Primary School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos will demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupil's needs.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice.
- Pupils whose attendance is a cause of concern will be set targets for improvement. Our Attendance Officer together with the Educational Welfare Officer will monitor and review these targets with the child's parents/carers.
- Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, the school website, parents evenings, etc.) of the importance of good attendance.
- The Headteacher will give written reports throughout the year to the school's governing body on attendance matters/data.
- The Headteacher will, when appropriate and following discussion with the Education Welfare Officer, liaise with other agencies - when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The Headteacher and a Learning Mentor/Parent Support Advisor will have regular meetings with the schools Education Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- At the end of each academic year Certificates and Rewards are issued to children with an excellent record of attendance. In addition Gold, Silver and Improved attendance Certificates are awarded based on excellent attendance at the end of Term 2, Term 4 and Term 6.

School Registration

Registers will be called promptly by 8.55am and by 1.05pm (for KS1) and 1.25pm (for KS2).

Registers will close at 9.00am and at 1.30pm. If a pupil fails to arrive before the registers close, they will be marked as 'absent'. If a pupil arrives after the close of the register the Attendance Officer will amend the register entry to read 'absent/late'.

If a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session. **All late pupils/parents must report to the school office.**

If a pupil is persistently late, a Learning Mentor/Parent Support Advisor or Headteacher will contact the parents.

The Education Welfare Officer will liaise with the school on a termly basis ensuring that correct procedures are being followed; totals are being calculated and entered.

Authorisation of Absence

Mead Vale Primary School will decide on how an absence is to be recorded in accordance with the latest guidance from the Department for Education. There are number of types of absence:

- **Authorised Absence:** an absence agreed by the Headteacher with an explanation from parents/carers
- **Unauthorised Absence:** an absence not agreed or explained
- **Medical:** An appointment such as hospital, doctor or dentist.
- **Illness:** Illness as informed by the parent or on receipt of doctor's/hospital notes if required. (We advise parents that a child must not return to school for 48 hours after a period of sickness or diarrhoea.)

Full guidance on attendance codes is held in the school office.

The Headteacher will send letters home to parent/carers of children whose attendance is less than 90% at the end of Term 2, Term 4 and Term 6.

Mead Vale procedures for following up absence

- If a pupil is absent for more than three consecutive days and if the absentee is a pupil about whom there are already concerns, our Parent Support Advisor will make every effort to contact the parents/carer immediately.
- If a pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer.

Holidays in term time

Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2008 has been amended (as of 1st September 2013) to prohibit the proprietors (Headteacher) of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are **exceptional circumstances** relating to the application.

The expectation of the Local Authority is that term time holidays should not be planned or booked as a matter of course as they are likely to be **unauthorised** and will lead to the issuing of a penalty notice (fine)

Exceptional Circumstances

Are defined as:

- A robust reason (in writing) from employer as to why the holiday has to be taken in term time.
- Forces personnel on leave from a foreign posting
- Exceptional significant family events or circumstances – these will be considered on an individual basis with the Headteacher and family.

The Headteacher will consider every request individually but the **following will not meet the criteria**

- Relatives coming to visit
- Cheaper holidays in England and abroad
- Family day trips
- Visiting family/friends that have different half term holidays and may include refusal to attend family weddings and visits to see family abroad.

Authorised officers have the discretion to issue a penalty notice without warning where the parent has chosen to take the child on leave during term time without authorisation or evidence is subsequently found to suggest a child was away from school with the knowledge of the parent and does not meet the statutory defences mentioned below.

Medical Evidence

For persistent absences not directly related to a child's medical condition you may be required to provide medical evidence to authorise your child's absences, e.g. prescriptions, appointment cards or a medical certificate from the doctors. This is decided between the Attendance Officer and the Educational Welfare Officer at termly reviews.

Statutory defences

The only statutory defences to the offence under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 are:

- The child was absent for medical reasons
- The LEA failed to provide transport when required to do so
- The absences were due to religious observance
- You had permission of the school or there was an unavoidable cause.

Where the school is not satisfied with a reason for absence, it will refer the matter to the Educational Welfare Office. The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 has amended the Education Act 1996 creating a new sub-section 444(A). This allows for Penalty Notices to be issued as a way of dealing with some cases of poor/unauthorised absence. Referrals will be made after 2 separate instances or 3 consecutive days of unauthorised absence.

Penalty Notices

Through section 444A and section 444B of the Education Act 1996, it has become possible that certain cases of unauthorised absence can be dealt with by way of a Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices require **each parent** of a child of compulsory school age, whose attendance has been unsatisfactory, to pay a penalty, currently £60.00 if paid within 21 days or £120.00 if paid within 28 days.

If you do not pay the Penalty Notice you will be automatically summonsed to appear in Court for an offence under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 and can result in a criminal conviction recorded against you.

Courts have a wider range of sentencing options, which could include a maximum fine of up to £1,000.

Good Practice for responding to exceptional leave requests as recommended by North Somerset Council

- Parent submits 'exceptional leave request form' in good time before the leave.
- Headteacher then agrees or disagrees with the request and sends the form back to the parent.
- If holiday is then taken and there are **at least** 10 unauthorised sessions over a 6 months period, Mead Vale school can request a penalty notice through our Educational Welfare Officer.
- North Somerset Council issue the penalty notice and will require a signed attendance certificate from the Headteacher, any warning letters and where possible a copy of the request form submitted by the parent.

- Parent has up to 28 days to pay the fine and if this expires, Educational Welfare Services will contact to see if the case now goes to Magistrates Court, not for the non-payment, but for the unauthorised absences.

It is appreciated that parents might:

- Put in a late request for leave leaving it impossible to issue a warning in time.
- Not inform the school.
- Suggest the child is unwell.

If evidence suggest this and subsequently it is clear a holiday has been taken, fines can still be issued without a warning letter, but is desirable to ensure parents are clearly aware of the consequences. For this reason, the school will clearly publicise this in newsletters, policies, assemblies, etc.