



“Love to Learn”



ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

EFFECTIVE: JULY 2018

REVIEW: JULY 2019

**Malcolm Sargent Primary School
Empingham Road
Stamford PE9 2SR**

1. MISSION STATEMENT

Malcolm Sargent Primary School (the Academy) is committed to providing a high quality and effective education for all pupils. The Academy believes sincerely that all pupils benefit from the education it provides and therefore from regular school attendance. To this end the Academy will do as much as it can to ensure that all its pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems affecting attendance will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

2. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

This procedure was agreed by the Principal on 1 November 2016. The review should be carried out every two years or earlier if required. **A review, with amendments, was carried out in July 2018 by the Vice-Principal.**

3. AIMS

It is recognised that:

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the legal responsibility of parents to ensure attendance at school.
- Many pupils and their parents may need to be supported at some stage to meet their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents may impact on attendance. The Academy will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend the Academy to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

4. EXPECTATIONS

(See also the Home/School Agreement)

A) The Academy expects its pupils to:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time.
- Be appropriately prepared for the day.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

B) The Academy expects its parents to:

- Ensure that their children attend school regularly.
- Ensure that their children arrive on time. Registration commences at 0850 and a child is considered late if he/she arrives after 0900 when registers have closed. A child arriving after 0930 will be marked as absent from the morning session. The Academy operates a drift-in procedure to ease congestion. Gates are opened at 0840 and parents can drop off children at the gates or cloakroom doors with the Academy's Meet & Greet team any time up to 0900.
- Contact the Academy before 0830 whenever their child is absent giving details of the reason or the absence and the length of time the child will be away. If the school is closed the parent may leave a message on the answerphone.
- Help their children prepare for the school day by ensuring that homework has been done and that their children have everything required for the day ahead.
- Attend Parents' Consultation Evenings to discuss progress or problems and talk to the staff if there are problems or changes in family circumstances which may affect their children.
- Contact the Academy if problems arise which may keep their children away from school, so that the Academy can help.
- Avoid taking family holidays in term-time. Term time absences, especially during SATs and examination periods, will seriously risk the progress of their child.

C) The Academy will:

- Maintain an attendance register on which pupils are marked present, absent or late.
- Ensure that its staff adhere to the rules regarding the registration period which is 10 minutes in length at the beginning of the morning session and 5 minutes in length at the beginning of the afternoon session.
- Ensure that registration across the whole school commences at 0850 and finishes at 0900. Registers will be closed at this point and sent back to the office.
- Registers will be closed for the afternoon sessions at 1250 for FS/1/3/4 and 1350 for 2/5/6.
- Ensure that absences are left blank in the register by the teacher unless they know the exact reason for the absence and the correct symbol; if unknown the register will be left blank or "N" entered
- Ensure that absences are checked daily by a member of the office staff. Those parents who have not provided a reason for absence will be contacted. At that point the registers will be updated so that every child has an attendance or absence mark against them for both sessions daily.
- Ensure that attendance registers are kept for a minimum of 3 years from the date that the last entries were made.
- Ensure that Pupil Premium funding is used to support vulnerable pupils with poor attendance if this becomes a barrier to their achievement in school. It may also be used to support them academically and/or socially.
- Follow the protocol established for maintaining the confidentiality of data under the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 which places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the regulations. The Academy has a Data Protection Policy which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in legislation prevents the Academy sharing

information with the police or social services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

5. ATTENDANCE SYSTEMS

A) Symbols to be used in Registers (Categories)

- Only the Academy, in the context of the law, can authorise absence. A note or explanation from parents does not guarantee authorisation. If a class teacher or member of the office staff does not accept the explanation offered for absence as a valid reason, then the matter must be referred to one of the Academy's Lead Behaviour Professionals (LBPs).
- Emerging patterns of authorised absence should be reported to the LBPs.
- Reasons for absence should be entered in the register by the appropriate code symbol.

B) Authorised or Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the Academy has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as unauthorised.

The following reasons may be considered as authorised absences:

- Illness.
- Family bereavements.
- Medical and dental appointments.
- Days of religious observance.
- Fixed term exclusion.
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or reinstated.

Absences should not be authorised under the following circumstances:

- Shopping trips.
- Holidays in term time.
- Minding the house or looking after siblings.
- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation.
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified.
- No reason given.
- Academy staff have cause to believe that the information provided is not genuine or not valid.

C) Family Holidays

Parents should not take pupils on holiday during the academy term. Parents have 14 weeks each year when their children are not required to be in school. Holidays during term time can significantly disrupt both the academic and social development of the child. The Academy will not endorse and therefore not authorise holidays during term time.

When monitoring attendance, the Academy may take further action if a child is removed from school for a family holiday during term time.

D) Resolving Disagreements

Where there is a lack of agreement between the Academy and the Local Education Authority (LEA) as to the appropriateness of issuing a penalty warning letter or a penalty notice, the matter will be referred to the County Legal Proceedings Panel whose decision shall be final.

E) Approved Educational Activity

Where pupils are away from the Academy but are undertaking an approved educational activity, this should be marked in the usual way, but the children are counted as present. To avoid confusion in emergency situations, pupils who are off-site for field trips and educational visits both in this country and overseas should not be marked as present.

Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the LBP to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered. Further advice is available in DfES Circular No. 10/99.

F) Lateness

The Academy will actively discourage late arrival by asking parents whose children arrive late to provide a written explanation. A child entering school up to 30 minutes after the registers have closed is marked as late and the letter U is entered into the register to indicate that they are on site. A child entering school 30 minutes after the beginning of the morning or afternoon session are marked as absent from the entire session. Where a pupil arrives during the period when the register is open they may be marked present.

G) Removal from the School Roll

Removal from the school roll under circumstances other than those detailed below is illegal.

- Where the Academy has been notified that the pupil has been registered as a pupil at another school.
- Where a pupil has ceased to attend the Academy and the parents have satisfied the LEA that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than by attendance at school.
- Where the Academy has been notified by the School Medical Officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state to attend school before becoming legally exempt from the obligation to attend school.
- Where the pupil has been absent without reasonable cause for four academic weeks and the LBP has failed, after reasonable enquiry and consultation with the Education Welfare Service (EWS), to obtain information on the cause of the absence.
- Where the Academy has been notified that the pupil has died.

- Where the pupil has ceased to attend the Academy and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the Academy.
- Where a pupil has not returned to the Academy within ten school days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term time.
- Where the pupil has been permanently excluded and this decision has been confirmed by the Pupil Discipline Committee.

H) Ensuring Pupil Information Is Up To Date

The Academy will ensure, as far as possible, that the information it holds on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies can be actioned effectively. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states 'Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'.

I) Pupils Who Are Missing

Where it is believed that a pupil has left the area and enquiries have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil, the Common Transfer File should be completed and uploaded to the DfE National Missing Pupils Database.

See also the Academy's Pupil Missing Education Policy for further information.

J) Pupils Who Fail to Attend

When a pupil does not attend, the Academy needs to respond effectively:

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents, the parents will be contacted on the first day of absence by telephone.
- Where there is no response, the register is marked as 'no reason provided for absence'.
- Parents will be contacted on every day the child is still not in school, until the day the child returns. Parents will then be asked to explain the absence.
- On the sixth school day of an unexplained absence, the family will be contacted by any means possible, including home visits and an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be contacted. This may, in appropriate cases, result in a referral to the EWS.
- After 10 school days of non-attendance, unless other action is planned, the parents will be invited to attend a meeting in the Academy. This meeting will include the appropriate staff, EWO, parent and pupil and will aim to identify and solve the problems that are preventing the pupil from attending the Academy.
- If there is no improvement, then the case will be discussed again with the EWO with a view to a formal referral being made to the EWS, if one has not already been made at an earlier stage. If a referral had already been made then the case will be reviewed and further action planned.

K) Reintegration

The return to school for a pupil after long-term absence requires special planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme as detailed in the DfE document "Social Inclusion: Pupil Support Guidance (Circular 10/99)".

Designated staff should be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme. All staff need to be aware that this is a difficult process that will require careful handling and that any problems should be notified to the responsible staff member as soon as possible. Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual need and may involve phased, part-time re-entry with support in class as appropriate. Support from the SEN Co-ordinator may be required. The success of the Pastoral Support Programme will require the involvement of appropriate academy staff, other agencies, the young person and parents. Programmes should be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary. Staff will be notified of the return of the long-term absentees.

L) When A Pupil's Attendance Falls Below 95%

The Academy will follow the Attendance Flow Chart, taking appropriate action at each stage (see Appendix).

M) Guidance On The Issue Of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) And/Or Prosecution From The Children's Services Manager, Education Support, Lincolnshire County Council Dated 20 June 2016

Schools should continue to make decisions on family holiday requests on a case by case basis in line with their policy. A family holiday alone does not constitute an exceptional circumstance and should be recorded as unauthorised. The offence to go to court on is 'failure to ensure regular attendance' (not that a holiday was taken) so **irregular attendance** is where the focus should be, not family holiday chasing.

LA examples that are consistent with the current code of conduct could include:

- 4.5 **unauthorised** days or more in a 6 week period for reasons other than family holiday = FPN.
- 4.5 **unauthorised** days or more in a 6 week period where some is unauthorised family holiday **and** some is for **other authorised** = FPN.
- 4.5 days of unauthorised holiday or more in a 6 week period = no FPN. The LA considers this a weak case in view of the Platt decision.
- 3 weeks of unauthorised holiday or more in a 6 week period = FPN. The LA would be prepared to go to court on this (less than 3 weeks and the risk increases which the LA is not prepared to accept at this point in time).
- In any six month continuous period of time (which does not have to be in the same school year) there are 2 x 4.5 days of family holiday unauthorised in 2 x 6 week periods = FPN. The LA recognises the risk of this case, if in the last six months, there were other non-family holiday **unauthorised** absence then the strength of the case improves markedly.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education. In addition there are specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff:

Principal:

- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy.

- To regularly report progress on attendance to governors, pupils and parents.
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence

Vice/Assistant Principal (Lead Behaviour Professionals):

- To oversee the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- To oversee the work of administrative staff.
- To produce the attendance profile for the whole school.
- To report to the Principal on attendance issues.
- To liaise with EWO.
- To direct Pupil Premium funding to support attendance, where this becomes a barrier to reaching potential for those children in vulnerable groups.

Teachers:

- To report attendance issues and discussions with parents regarding attendance to the administration staff and LBP.
- To hold initial discussions with parents about attendance concerns, look for solutions where possible, and signpost support and services where necessary.
- To provide catch-up work and ongoing support for the pupil to be educated at home in the case of long term authorised absence and known medical conditions that impact on regular attendance. (The Academy will not support holidays taken during term time by providing homework.)

Governors:

Governors may become actively involved in monitoring attendance in the Academy in any or all of the following ways:

- By being given a specific role in monitoring attendance and/or policies.
- By representation at school attendance panels, parents evenings etc.
- By requesting regular attendance progress reports for Governors' Meetings.

Education Welfare Service:

The EWS can assist the Academy in improving attendance by:

- Liaising with identified academy staff.
- Undertaking home visits, either pre-arranged or without notice as considered necessary.
- Working with identified groups of pupils.
- Instigating legal proceedings on behalf of the LEA including parental prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court and applying for Education Supervision Orders through the Family Court.
- Accepting referrals that meet the EWS referral criteria, initiating contact with parents or carers and undertaking assessments.
- Planning and reviewing casework.
- Providing feedback to schools.
- Offering strategic/policy advice and support in relation to matters of attendance, the employment of young people and young people involved in performing.

- Supporting schools and academies in the establishment and management of school attendance panels.
- Supporting schools and academies in the use of penalty notices and parenting contracts within the provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

Office Staff:

Office staff will:

- Produce updates from weekly registers, error sheets, absence code sheets, weekly attendance percentage information.
- Maintain registers with updated absence information.
- Maintain pupil signing-in/out books for when pupils arrive after registers have closed and/or for when pupils leave before the end of the school day.

7 LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

Other agencies may be used where appropriate in individual cases:

- Educational Behavioural and Support Services.
- Educational Psychologists.
- Special Educational Needs Service.
- Social Care.
- Local police.

APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS REGARDING THE ISSUE OF FIXED PENALTY NOTICES (AS PER LCC ADVICE, JUNE 2018)

Date

Address

Dear Mr (one letter to each parent)

Dear Mrs

Childs Name

DOB

I am writing to inform you that The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 have been amended and came into force from 1st September 2013. The amendments remove references to 'holiday' from school and extended leave of absence as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. (i.e the previous arrangement whereby schools could grant up to 10 days authorised holiday/absence).

As a result, a request for leave of absence will not be granted for the purpose of a holiday **unless deemed to be exceptional circumstances.**

If you wish to seek approval for any request of absence for your child(ren) from School, then you must apply in writing to the Head Teacher/Principle, at least four weeks in advance of the requested for absence. You should only then remove your child(ren) if the absence has been authorised, and notified to you in writing by the School. Any exceptional circumstances must be clearly set out in the written request to the Head Teacher/Principle who will consider each case upon its merits.

If you then choose to take your child out of school during term time and it is **not** deemed to be exceptional circumstances and/or has not been approved by the School, then this will be coded as an unauthorised absence and a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued for the period of absence. Failure to pay the Fixed Penalty may result in further legal action being taken against you.

A Fixed Penalty Notice is a strategy used by schools to address the unacceptable levels of attendance of children at their school under the following legislation:

- **Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise**
- **Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act**
- **In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of either £60.00 or £120.00.**

Please note: A Fixed Penalty Notice can also be issued if your child is seen in a public place within the first 5 days of an exclusion from their school.

- **Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 makes it a duty for parents in relation to pupils subject to a fixed period or permanent exclusion to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of any such exclusion. If a child is present in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion during school hours the parent may be guilty of an offence for which they can be prosecuted by the LA before a magistrates' court or issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for £60.00 or £120.00.**

If you have any concerns regarding this please contact:, we appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Principal/Head

APPENDIX 2

Attendance Cycle – Pupils Less Than 95% (June 2018) (Led by LBPs)

