

Mercia Primary Academy Trust

**Lark Hall Infant & Nursery Academy
Flax Hill Junior Academy**

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Mercia Primary Academy Trust follows all DFE and Local Authority advice regarding Attendance and any information from them runs in concurrence with the below.

The schools in Mercia Primary Academy trust set a minimum attendance target of 97%

This policy aims to raise the profile of attendance by encouraging and promoting a positive attitude in order that all children can achieve a good rate of attendance throughout their time at school. Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The school will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance and behaviour by pupils will be recognised appropriately.

All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open. Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carer.

The attendance and behaviour policy must include procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 20 sessions (10 days) or more over a 12 week period where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/carer, their child or have general concerns about the absence. Schools will refer to the Education Welfare Service (Local Support Team) and you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. Only school can authorise the absence, not the parent/carer. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to receive a mark

Parents/carers whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. Our Attendance Officer and Senior Family Support Worker will work with parents/carers to resolve problems which may affect the child's attendance. We may involve representatives of other agencies that work within the school i.e. the School Nurse, the Local Support Team etc. where required in order to ensure all children benefit from consistently good punctuality and attendance. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school will refer the child to an Education Welfare Worker (Local Support Team), who may issue Penalty Notices or instigate court proceedings.

School Attendance and the Law

Under Section 44 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to discharge this duty may result in the LA prosecuting the parents/carers.

This policy reflects the most up to date legal powers and duties that govern school attendance in accordance with The Education Act 1996 and subsequent regulations and amendments.

- **Authorised absence** means that the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be absent from school.
- **Unauthorised absence** is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Authority to decide whether to authorise an absence can only be given by the Headteacher or a person acting in the absence of the Headteacher. This is to agree that there was a legitimate reason for a child not to be in school.

Illness

Parents/carers are required to notify the school on the first day the child is absent due to illness. We will request medical evidence to support any illness. This can be provided by hospital letters, appointment cards from GP/Dental surgeries. The school will record the absence as unauthorised if they are not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness.

Pre-booked Medical or dental appointments

Where appointments are unable to be made out of school hours the pupil should only be out of school for the required time for the appointment. Authorisation of the appointment will be marked with an 'M' where medical evidence is provided. If no medical evidence is provided the child will be marked with a 'U' (Late after registration has closed) or 'O' (an unauthorised absence) if the child does not attend school for the whole session or full day.

Religious observance

The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Advice is sought from parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. The Headteacher may request proof that the child will be attending a religious observance.

Leave of absence authorised by the school

Each request will be considered individually taking into account the circumstances, i.e. the nature of the event for which leave is requested; the frequency of the request; whether advance notice has been given by the parent/carer; pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to keep up to date with missed schooling.

Holiday authorised by the school

Leave of absence will not be granted by the Headteacher unless in exceptional circumstances. To make a request the parent must complete a Request for Leave Form, and this must be signed by both parents/legal guardians who hold parental responsibility and anyone who has day to day responsibility for the child. This request must be made in advance. The Headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances to warrant granting the leave of absence. If a leave of absence is approved, the Headteacher will determine the number of days the pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Holiday not authorised by the School or in excess of the period determined by the Headteacher

Where the Headteacher has not authorised a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday and the parents/carers still take the child out of school or extend the agreed leave of absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the register. Regulations do not allow for retrospective approval.

Leave of absence will also be recorded as unauthorised where parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance. The maximum authorised leave that the Headteacher can grant is 20 sessions (10 days) over the academic year.

Elective Home Education

If a school receives written notification from parents/carers that they wish to home educate their child then the school will inform the Local Authority of the parents/carers decision to remove their child's name from the admissions register. Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents/carers from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record.

Penalty Notice

If your child has 20 sessions (10 days) unauthorised absences or is late 10 times over a 12 week period, you may receive a Penalty Warning Notice, and potentially a fine.

Additionally, after completing a Request for Leave Form regarding holidays, should the schools decide not to grant leave of absence, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may also lead to a Penalty Warning Notice, and potentially a fine.

If a child is still obtaining unauthorised marks and a parent/legal guardian still choose to take their child out of school, this may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent/legal guardian* per child. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings. Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of a penalty notice and will trigger the fast track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1) of the Education act 1996.

*Generally the DfE states that parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.

The Code of Conduct

The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 set out the details of how the penalty notice scheme must operate. This includes a requirement that every local authority must draw up and publish a Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices, after consulting all schools, including academies, and the police. The code should set out the criteria that will be used to trigger the use of a penalty notice.

Please see Appendix 1 for Staffordshire Local Authority Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices September 2017. www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education

Dealing with late arrivals

Flax Hill Junior Academy

- The school gates are opened at 8.30 am to allow pupils to go directly to their classroom.
- At 8.40 am the school gate is closed and any pupils arriving after this time will need to enter school using the main school entrance.
- At 8.50 am the register is taken in class by the Teacher and any pupils not in class will be recorded as 'N' and the school office will contact parents to ascertain the reason for the pupil's absence.
- Any pupils arriving after 8.50 am will need to sign the 'late book' on arrival.
- A late mark will be recorded in the SIMs class register, and this includes the amount of minutes lost in any one session. (Please refer to the SCC Code of Conduct regarding fines issued to parents whose child is persistently late).
- The register will be monitored regularly by the Attendance Officer/Senior Family Support Worker and reported on to the Headteacher.
- Once a child has accumulated 10 late marks 'U' or unauthorised marks 'O' a fine may be issued.
- Children will be classed as late if they arrive at school between 8.50 am – 9.20 am and this will be recorded as 'L'. The late book will need to be completed in the school foyer with reason for lateness.

- Any child arriving after 9.20 am will be recorded as late after register has closed 'U' (unauthorised mark).
- Registers are taken at 1.15 pm in the class by the Teacher.

Lark Hall Infant & Nursery Academy

- The school gates are opened at 8.50 am to allow pupils to go directly to their classroom.
- At 9.00 am the school gate is closed and any pupils arriving after this time will need to enter school using the main school entrance.
- At 9.00 am the register is taken in class by the Teacher and any pupils not in class will be recorded as 'N' and the school office will contact parents to ascertain the reason for the pupil's absence.
- Any pupils arriving after 9.00 am will need to sign the 'late book' on arrival.
- A late mark will be recorded in the SIMs class register, this includes the amount of minutes lost in any one session. (Please refer to the SCC Code of Conduct regarding fines issued to parents whose child is persistently late).
- The register will be monitored regularly by the Attendance Officer/Senior Family Support Worker and reported on to the Headteacher.
- Once a child has accumulated 10 late marks 'U' or unauthorised marks 'O' a fine may be issued.
- Children will be classed as late if they arrive at school between 9.00 am – 9.30 am and this will be recorded as 'L'. The late book will need to be completed in the school foyer with reason for lateness.
- Any child arriving after 9.30 am will be recorded as late after register has closed 'U' (unauthorised mark).
- Registers are taken at 1.00 pm in the class by the teacher.

Dealing with unauthorised absence

- Until a legitimate reason is provided, all absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Parents/carers are expected to provide a reason for absence by phoning or emailing the school before 9.00 am on the first day of absence.
- In the first instance a text will be sent requesting a reason for absence. If no reply is received from the text message this will be followed up with a phone call for parents/carers to provide reason for absence. Parents/carers will be requested to provide proof of absence in all instances.
- If no response is received from the parent to our attempts to contact you, your child will receive an unauthorised absence mark in the register.
- The LA regularly monitors attendance figures.
- Please see SCC Code of Conduct for issuing fines for any unauthorised absence.

Register Code List

/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration
E	Excluded
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interviews
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
#	Planned whole or partial school closure
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend / No mark recorded

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Where possible we use the child's attendance from last year as our starting point when calculating any child's attendance, especially during the first term of a new academic year.

Parents whose children have an attendance rate below 90% will be asked to provide GP appointment cards etc. for every absence. If these are not forthcoming the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 95% in any term without good reason, a referral may be made for the parent to meet with the Senior Leadership Team/Senior Family Support Worker, to discuss any individual issues and how the school can support the improvement in their child's attendance.

Following investigation, any unresolved issues may result in a referral to the Local Support Team / Education Welfare Worker. This may result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 Section 444.

Parents/carers are informed by text between 9.30am and 10.00 am if their child is absent from school and no reason has been given. By contacting the parent/carers, both schools hope to ensure that the parent/carer is aware their child is not in school, enabling the parent/carer where necessary to establish their child is safe.

Each school has an Attendance Officer. It is their responsibility with the support of the Senior Family Support Worker to ensure that these policies and procedures contained within this document are followed.

Rewards and incentives for attendance

Parents/carers are informed by letter three times a year - Autumn half term, Spring Half term, Summer Half term of their child's attendance using a set template letter - appendix (2). Attendance certificates are given at the end of each half term. At the end of the Academic year 100% attending children have a special assembly to celebrate their success.

Those children who achieve an attendance percentage of 100% at the end of each half term will have their names entered into a raffle. At the end of the school year, names will be pulled out and the winners will receive a prize. To celebrate success, if the whole school achieves 100% attendance on three set 100% attendance days we will hold a non-uniform day and these will be specified days throughout the three terms.

Best attending classes receive a weekly cup and additional playtime. Attendance is mentioned on the newsletter on a bi weekly basis.

Summary

The schools have a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. All staff are committed to working with parents/carers to support a high level of attendance throughout both schools.

Signed

Director, Mercia Primary Academy Trust

Version Control

Version	Date Approved	Changes	Reasons for Alterations

Appendix

Appendix 1 Staffordshire County Council's Code of Conduct (01.01.2018)

Appendix 2 Traffic Light letters

Appendix 3 Education Act 1996 – School Attendance

Appendix 3 Request for Leave

Appendix 4 Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time