



A Safeguarding Policy

Attendance Policy

Policy approved: October 2022

Headteacher: Lindsay Coates

Chair of Governors: Richard Welsby

Introduction

Middleton-in-Teesdale Primary School seeks to ensure that all pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities and enables them to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all pupils benefit from the education we provide and, therefore, from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils.

All staff will work with pupils and their families to support parents/carers in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their child/children attends school regularly and on time. A whole school and Local Authority attendance target of 96% has been set for the academic year 2022/2023 and various measures will be put in place to help work towards this.

The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in line with the DFE's statutory guidance 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015) and non-statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' (September 2022).

Aims

- To maintain high standards of attendance of pupils registered at the school;
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school, including pupils, parents/carers, staff and Governors.
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks;
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils;
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data;
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and the school;
- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority's (LA) Attendance Team and with other services and agencies;
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence; and
- To reduce the number of pupils who have more than 3% overall absence;
- To reduce the number of persistent absentees, that is those whose attendance falls below 90%.

Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Suspensions and Exclusions Policy
- Children Missing in Education

Attendance and Attainment

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and attainment of our pupils is inextricably linked.

Regular attendance at school is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring the attendance policy is adhered to.

Promoting Regular Attendance

To ensure that parents/carers are aware of the school's attendance procedures and their parental responsibility for their child's attendance and punctuality the school will:

- Give information on attendance and punctuality on the school's website and the Parental Guides 'Fixed Penalty Notices' and 'Holidays in School Time';
- Involve parents/carers from the earliest stage of poor attendance;
- Ensure parents/carers are contacted on the first day of absence if the school has not been informed of the absence.

To ensure that pupils are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality the school will:

- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality;
- Relate attendance issues directly to the school's values, ethos, and curriculum;
- Reward good attendance.

The Law

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school 'regularly' means attending in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not 'sufficiently frequent attendance'. This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so and failure to do this may lead to the committing of an offence.

The school will offer help and support if there is a problem with attendance. If attendance does not improve or the parent does not accept the help and support offered, the LA may issue the parent with a Penalty Notice or prosecute the parent in accordance with Section 444 of The Education Act 1996.

If a child is absent without authorisation, then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1000. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act, then the parent is guilty of an aggravated offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2500 and a prison sentence of up to three months.

Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from the school must be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. It is not the responsibility of parents/carers to classify an absence, only the Headteacher is able to authorise an absence from school.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the school for a good reason such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time. Other exceptional

circumstances that warrant an authorised leave of absence will be considered on an individual basis considering the specific facts and circumstances.

Unauthorised absence are mornings or afternoons away from the school for reasons which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the LA using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absence codes are entered in line with statutory guidance.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time).

Periods of extended absence

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received then the school will contact home to verify the absence.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time).

If your child is absent from school more than they should be:

At the end of each half term the School Office will use its computer system to analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to frequent hospital appointments and/or long term medical needs).

Help & Support:

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you talk to the school about the issues as soon as possible. You may need to attend a meeting in school to talk about the problems and to put a plan in place to help. Sometimes, school may need to involve other services to help.

Communication:

The school will always try to communicate with you regarding your child's attendance if it declines. This communication may involve explaining that attendance is a cause for concerns by letter, making telephone calls to you, and inviting you to attend a meeting in school depending on the circumstances. The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve the situation.

Enforcement Action:

If, following the school's attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or you have not co-operated with the school's attempts to improve the situation the school are required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action.

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. If your child misses school a lot because of illness, or if school do not know of any serious health

issue that would mean your child could miss school a lot, the school may ask you to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Punctuality:

Registration time is at **8:45-8:50am** and **12:45-12:50pm**. The pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance if they arrive after 8:50am. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 15 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 15 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to a fixed penalty notice being issued).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs).

1. If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions;

A letter will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Head will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to pupils e.g. improving their punctuality over 2 weeks to earn a school alarm clock.

2. If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason;

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with Head Teacher or deputy head for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality.

3. If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality;

Then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

The law states that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of the school for holidays during term time other than in exceptional circumstances.

Headteachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; considering the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought and any key events taking place in the school at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be submitted at least two weeks in advance via a form which is available from the school/Local Authority website or in person from the school reception. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion (or in the absence of the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher is the person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school). Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from the school. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to

the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances. Unauthorised leave of absence may lead to a referral to the LA who will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice if the criteria is met.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Response to Absences

When a pupil is absent for no apparent reason it is the duty of all staff to consider possible causes. When considering reasons, they should bear in mind factors that could relate to Child Protection, Behaviour and Discipline and Anti-Bullying policies. The class teacher will have a role in identifying reasons for absence and addressing such issues, with the support of the whole school staff.

If a child is regularly late for school or is often absent, the class teacher will contact the parent concerned to have an informal discussion about this. If this persists then the teacher registers their concern with the deputy Headteacher who will then work out patterns of absence and lateness and if necessary, contact the school's educational welfare officer.

Children Missing from Education:

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

School Ethos

Middleton-in-Teesdale Primary School is committed to providing an effective and efficient education for all pupils.

We believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell. We will endeavour to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that impede full attendance are identified and acted upon as soon as possible.

Attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, school places great emphasis on this in our partnership with parents/carers.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Carers:

The school wishes to work with parents/carers to achieve good attendance. The minimum target attendance for all pupils is 96%.

Our Home-School Agreement emphasises the importance of attendance and punctuality and the expectations of parents and children in supporting the school's policy.

Regular attendance includes children being punctual.

Parents/carers should contact the school on the morning of the first day of a pupil's absence, **before 8:50am**. They should state the reason for their child's absence and also the date they are expected to return to school. Information from parents/carers regarding absences are received in good faith. Only the Headteacher has the power to authorise the absence.

Doctors and dentists appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to. When an appointment has been made during school time, the appointment card should be shown in advance to at the school office.

Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents/carers upon admission and throughout the school year. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.

At the pre-school induction meeting held each year for children about to enter the Reception class the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only ones left.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset children which mean they become unhappy and may not want to come to school. Parents need to be aware of this.

Children are also admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Headteacher. At this meeting the importance of regular attendance is always stated along with other school routines.

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents / carers will:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc so that the child is used to consistency and the school becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.

Pupils:

Pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually and be appropriately prepared for lessons. The target attendance for all pupils is a minimum 96%.

Governing Body:

The Governing Body has responsibility for school attendance and will be familiar with current legislation.

They will be acquainted with the registration system in the school.

They will request the Headteacher to report on attendance at each termly governing body meeting in order to monitor attendance.

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents and staff.
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure regular meetings of the behaviour and attendance sub-committee take place and they will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance. The governor's meetings will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site.

The Headteacher:

The Headteacher has the day-to-day responsibility for attendance and will ensure that the school meets the legal requirements for all aspects of school attendance, set required targets for attendance, reduce unauthorised absences and will publish attendance figures.

The Headteacher will ensure that parents/carers and pupils are aware of their responsibilities regarding attendance and punctuality at the point of admission. This will be supported in the signing of the Home-School Agreement.

Deputy Headteacher:

The Deputy Headteacher has a specific attendance role of 'Attendance Champion' and will take responsibility for overseeing registration procedures, monitoring overall attendance, collation and reporting of attendance information. They will be responsible for ensuring that class teachers keep registers in a correct manner, will meet regularly with the education welfare officer and will discuss attendance issues highlighted by the school's monitoring system. They will also be responsible for supporting class teachers in following up all attendance issues.

Teachers and Support Staff:

Class teachers have a vital role to play in raising the attendance and punctuality in school. They will notify senior leaders of any attendance concerns after their efforts have failed to achieve an improvement.

Class teachers will be responsible for welcoming pupils back to school following their return from absence. They will also notify other staff members if a pupil is experiencing difficulties, allowing for confidentiality.

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their

parents.

- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents, carers, students and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each lesson and session.

Enforcement Action/Formal Attendance Procedures

If, following the school's attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or parents/carers have not co-operated with attempts to improve the situation the school are required to consider referring the matter to the LA.

The High Court has confirmed that the Headteacher authorises absences. If your child is absent from school a lot because of illness, or if the school do not know of any serious health issue that would mean your child could miss school frequently, the school may ask you to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they receive the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Attendance Review

The school office manager will process attendance data and provide up-to-date information on class and individual returns. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will be informed of any subsequent findings.

Rewards

The school officer manager will provide the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher with weekly class attendance data and the Headteacher will reward the class with the best overall attendance each week.

Children who achieve good attendance will be rewarded at the end of every term at a special presentation assembly. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will analyse the attendance data provided by the school office manager and reward those children with attendance rates of 95% and above. Children who achieve attendance of 95%-97% will receive a bronze award, children with 97.1%-99.9% silver, and children with 100% gold.

Truancy

All staff are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness. Although it is a very rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a concern that a child might be truanting then action is taken straight away.

If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher is notified, who then contacts the parent and the educational welfare officer. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. In the event of not being able to talk to the parent then the Headteacher talks to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these are discussed with the class teacher and appropriate action is taken.

Partnerships

At Middleton-in-Teesdale Primary School we will discuss pupils and contact parents if there are concerns, likewise within the partnership that we have with parents and pupils, we expect to be contacted by parents if they have any concerns about their child's attendance, or any other matters. The school will arrange to meet with parents who have concerns as a matter of priority and work with them in the interest of their child.