
Meadowhead School Academy Trust

Attendance Policy



**This is a policy of Meadowhead School Academy Trust.
Meadowhead School is a Foundation School
and a member of the
Meadowhead Community Learning Trust**

'Engage, Enjoy and Aspire'

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Policy Statement

Meadowhead School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive a full-time education which will maximise the opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential.

The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure. School staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. To meet these objectives, Meadowhead School will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Whole-School Policy for School Attendance

Meadowhead School aims to:

- improve the overall percentage of pupils at school to 95% or higher
- make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and Governors
- develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
- provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils
- develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance-related data
- further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- implement a system of rewards and sanctions
- promote effective partnerships with external services and agencies
- recognise the needs and support of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence

The Law

The 1996 Education Act requires that:

- all pupils of compulsory school age receive suitable full-time education by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- the Local Authority must provide school places to parents who wish their children to be educated at school
- the school must complete attendance registers at the beginning of the morning session and during the afternoon session
- the school must report to the Local Authority pupils who fail to attend regularly or are absent for more than ten days without explanation
- the Local Authority has a duty to ensure that parents fulfil their legal responsibilities
- failure by parents to ensure the regular attendance at school of a registered pupil is an offence punishable by law

Partnership

What the school expects of pupils

- That pupils attend regularly, on time and ready to learn. We expect a pupil's attendance to be 95% or higher
- That pupils are prepared for the day with appropriate equipment e.g. PE kit, pen, pencil, ruler, calculator, and in full school uniform
- To have a discussion with a school EWO and provide a reason for lateness to school if arriving between 8:35am and 9:00am
- To report to main reception should they arrive after 9:00 am and obtain a late slip to be given to their class teacher
- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school

What the school expects of parents/carers

- To fulfil their legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly, on time and prepared for the day
- To contact school on the **first day** their child is absent for any reason and then on **all** subsequent days.
- To arrange medical and dental appointments out of school times whenever possible, if this is not possible your child needs to obtain permission from their Pastoral Manager to leave school for their appointment and collect an Authorised Absence Pass from Student Reception before exiting the building
- To **avoid** taking holidays in term time
- To speak to relevant members of staff if they know of any problem which may prevent their child from attending school
- To provide evidence to support all absences such as an appointment card/letter, a copy of a prescription slip with name and date visible or medication packaging with name and date visible. Alternatively if none of the above are available a note, signed by the parent/carer, school explaining the reason for absence. This will be filed and may be produced if requested by the Local Authority to support legal proceedings
- Any student with attendance of 93% or below will be required to provide medical evidence for every absence so the absence may be authorised. Failure to provide suitable medical evidence will mean that the absence remains unauthorised.

What parents/carers and pupils can expect from school

- A broad, balanced education that is dependent upon regular attendance at school
- Promotion of good attendance and punctuality at school, and regular encouragement and rewards
- Efficient and accurate recording and monitoring of absence
- First-day contact with parents/carers when absence is unexplained
- Prompt action when a problem has been identified
- Liaison with officers from the Local Authority to assist and support families where needed
- Regular communication with parents/carers

Procedures

Registers are a legal document; great care must be taken to ensure registers are marked accurately and on time. Attendance of all pupils is monitored and evaluated regularly using the following procedures.

Registration

All pupils should be on site by 8:30am and in their Form rooms for an 8:35am registration on the class charts system. They should not leave the school site before 2:45pm unless they have specific written permission (given by the Head of Year or Pastoral Manager in response to a written request by parents/carers).

Throughout the day pupils will be registered on five other occasions, by each subject teacher. Period 4 acts as afternoon registration and marks taken then drop back into the pm registration slot.

Absences

If a child is absent from school it is expected that the parent/carer contacts the school as soon as possible and speaks to/leaves a message for the attendance team (they will be directed by the school's telephone messaging service).

On return to school, the child should also bring a written note from the parent/carer to cover the absence, and where available the relevant evidence, as indicated on page 3 of this policy.

Acceptable reasons for being absent from school, set by the Department for Education:

- the child is too ill to leave the house
- the child has a hospital appointment
- the child has toothache and has an emergency appointment
- a day of religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent/carer belongs
- the pupil is prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause
- there is a close family bereavement

Unacceptable reasons for keeping a child away from school are:

- to mind the house
- to look after brothers and sisters
- to go shopping
- to celebrate a birthday
- sleeping in
- one child is ill, so all are kept off school
- minor ailments such as a tummy ache or headache
- because it is the end of the week or term

Leave of absence may not be given to enable a pupil to undertake employment during school hours unless it is to engage in work experience arranged through school, or to take part in a performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority.

If a pupil is absent for two working weeks, without schools prior notice or approval and without communication from home we will inform the Local Authority's 'Children Missing in Education' team. They will investigate the absence further and this may result in your child losing their place at the school.

In – school procedures

We are keen to identify attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity to give parents/carers, students and the school the ability to intervene early and prevent further decline. We will do this by following the procedures outlined below;

- letters may be sent home to parents/cares when attendance is below 95%. This early notification is intended to share our concerns with you and give you the opportunity to intervene/contact the school so that early support/intervention can be put in to place, if needed.
- should attendance decline to 90% or below parents/carers will be invited to attend an Attendance meeting with their child, either the Head of Year or PM and the EWO. This meeting is an opportunity to discuss in detail the issues/barriers that are impacting your child's attendance to school. We will address the main issues and agree targets and support actions to help improve your child's attendance.
- We will monitor and review your child's attendance over the following weeks to identify any significant improvement in their attendance. If this has been achieved then no further intervention/action will be taken at this stage. Should attendance not improve, or decline further we will implement the next step, as agreed at the previous Attendance meeting.

Lates

If a pupil arrives between 8:35am and 9:00 am they will be greeted at the main reception by a school EWO who will discuss with them their reason for being late and make suggestions to facilitate non-recurrence.

If a pupil arrives after 9:00 am must go straight to main reception to provide their reason for lateness and collect a late slip to give to their class teacher. Arrival after 9:00 am is classed as significantly late and it is therefore likely that parent/carers may have been contacted via text message to inform them that their child is absent from school.

Ensuring a child arrives to school on time is the responsibility of the parent/carer and while they are supposed to be in school a pupil's safeguarding is a school priority. We therefore reserve the right to contact parents daily if their child is not attending school on time.

Any pupil who is late to school or lessons on 3 or more occasions will receive a next day 30 minute C3 detention.

Holidays

Government legislation does not permit parents/carers to take their child/ren out of school during term time as this can have a detrimental effect on their academic progress.

Holidays **will not be authorised** in school time parents/carers wishing to apply for exceptional circumstances need to complete a *Request for Exceptional Term Time Leave* form at least 20 school days prior to the absence and give to your child's Pastoral Manager. Upon receipt of a *Request for Exceptional Term Time Leave* a decision will be made, (the Headteachers decision is final), and parents will be notified only if leave is to be granted. If

this request is not agreed the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and you may receive a Holiday Penalty Notice (fine) from the Local Authority.

A copy of this form can be downloaded on the Meadowhead School website, in the Policy section, under Attendance, by contacting the year group Pastoral Manger or Mrs Lewis or Mrs Newman (EWOs).

Leaving School Early

If a pupil has to leave school during the school day they should bring written notification of this from home and present it to their Pastoral Manager who will issue them with a duplicated 'Out of School' slip (page 14), completed with date, time and reason. The pupil should present this to their appropriate subject teacher who will let them leave the lesson at the correct time. The pupil should then take the slip to the Student Reception.

Reception will take one copy of the slip, letting the child keep the other copy. This should be handed back in if they return to school during that same day. The pupil will also be issued with a Police Pass (page 14) for use if they should be stopped when off site.

If a pupil is ill in school, parents/carers will be contacted by the Student Reception Office and then cared for until they can be collected. Once the child has left the school, the Year Office will be informed and the Pastoral Manager will enter the details onto the SIMS system.

Truancy

Truancy occurs when:

- a pupil misses school without permission, **or**
- a pupil registers and then does not attend lessons

If a pupil is caught truanting, parents/carers will be informed and pupils may be placed on an Attendance Report which will need to be signed by subject teachers each and every lesson.

This will be monitored by the Year Team and parents/carers. They will also serve a C3 detention.

Monitoring Absence

Monitoring absence is the main responsibility of the Year Team Pastoral Manager and the school's Education Welfare Officers (EWO). Pastoral Managers/EWO will check registers during Period 1 and listen to absence calls that have been recorded from incoming phone messages.

If a child is deemed to be absent without reason, a text message will be sent to the parent/carer. This will be duplicated by e-mail if we have been supplied with an e-mail address. These messages will hopefully elicit a quick response from parents/carers.

Appropriate codes for absence will be entered for both am and pm registration once the reason for absence has been established.

The SIMS/class charts registration/lesson monitor provides the school with a permanent record of attendance and communication with families. In the event of any legal proceeding your child's attendance certificate will be submitted to the Local Authority as evidence.

Problem Attendance

A yearly attendance target is set for the school. All year teams, Form Tutors, pupils and families should endeavour to reach this target and beyond. All pupils should be aiming for at least **95%** attendance.

We regularly produce attendance data reports from the SIMS system to monitor:

- Individual pupils
- Form Tutor groups
- Year Teams
- Whole school

These reports highlight any concerns and pinpoint where action needs to be taken.

Action

Daily action:

- Text and e-mail messaging for first day absence

Weekly action:

- Phone calls home for lates after registration or truancy
- Missing marks pursued by EWO and Pastoral Managers
- Phone contact for any missing marks (letter to parents/carers if no phone contact possible)
- Telephone calls home
- Home visits from EWO and/or Pastoral Manager
- Letters sent home for absence without reason

Half termly:

- Letter 1 – Attendance Concern letter (under 95%) - sent out after each five weekly data analysis
- Letter 2 - invitation to an Attendance Meeting with 'School Action' agreed
- Letter 3 - referral to Education Welfare Officer (or issue of a Penalty Notice Warning Letter - PNWL)

Attendance and Inclusion Service

The school has 2 Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) who has regular meetings with the Pastoral Managers to discuss attendance concerns.

The EWOs works in conjunction with the Local Authority's Advanced Practitioner for Attendance and Inclusion and will visit families, talking to children and their parents. Any pupil on the EWOs caseload cannot have any absence authorised unless evidence is received of an appointment or medication prescribed from a GP, pharmacist or specialist.

The EWOs provides the school with regular written updates on pupil attendance and progress, should attendance show significant signs of improvement they are taken off the caseload, however if attendance continues to remain at 90% or below after support the EWO will issue a Penalty Notice Warning Letter (PNWL) or the case may be fast tracked to court.

Children with exceptionally low attendance or who are non-attenders will be referred to other appropriate agencies and to Children Missing from Education.

Responding to Absence

Criteria for Referral to the Education Welfare Officer:

- home/school contact has not prompted an improvement in attendance
- patterns of absence
- poor overall attendance (e.g. below 90%)

Pupil's with an attendance of 90% or below over a period of time are discussed and appropriate action taken. This may include referral to the EWO, MAST a Penalty Notice Warning Letter being issued, or referral to other agencies, if deemed appropriate.

Children Missing from Education

Pupils who have not attended school for ten school days without communication from parent/carer, and cannot be located after three attempted home visits by the school will be considered missing. The school has a statutory responsibility to inform the Local Authority, Missing from Education team (M.F.E) who will pursue the matter in accordance with Local Authority procedures. This may result in your child losing their place at Meadowhead School.

Children in Public Care

Looked-after children will be monitored closely by both the school and the Local Authority 'Looked-after Children' team. Pupils who cause particular concern will be monitored daily by the team then escorted into school if appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the Governors is to:

- maintain an overview of attendance through reports provided by the Headteacher via the Headteacher's Report
- attend School Attendance meetings if necessary

The role of the Headteacher is to:

- have overall responsibility for attendance within school

The role of the Deputy Head (Inclusion) is to:

- provide advice and support to school staff regarding attendance and punctuality issues
- implement targets, review statistics and amend policy as necessary
- have responsibility for monitoring the progress of children Looked After by the Local Authority
- maintain an overview of attendance and manage the day-to-day implementation of attendance plans and strategies

The role of the Heads of Year is to:

- liaise with the Deputy Head (Inclusion/Support) and their Pastoral Manager regarding attendance and punctuality
- lead developments to improve attendance
- oversee the procedures undertaken to improve attendance and punctuality within their year group
- identify appropriate target groups using attendance data
- attend meetings with the EWO as necessary
- develop systems of rewards for good attendance and punctuality
- ensure that all pupils recognise the links between good attendance and raised attainment
- attend Attendance meetings, where necessary

The role of the Pastoral Managers is to:

- liaise with the Deputy Head (Inclusion/Support) and their Head of Year regarding attendance and punctuality
- monitor registers and update SIMS on a weekly basis
- meet five weekly with the EWO to discuss individual pupils whose attendance is of concern (e.g. below 90%) and agree action as necessary
- attend meetings with the EWO and other professionals as necessary
- provide certificates and other rewards for pupils in their year group who attend well
- update lates daily
- provide details needed for referral to EWO
- provide details and prepare paperwork for Attendance meetings

The role of the Form Tutor and class teachers is to:

- **accurately** mark registers and lesson monitor, using the appropriate codes, throughout the day
- report any issues or problems which may affect the attendance or punctuality of a pupil
- promote good attendance and punctuality within the classroom and the school
- report on attendance and punctuality in yearly reviews and reports
- check in with any pupil who has been absent from school on the first day that they return. Pass on any concerns to pastoral or safeguarding teams as required.

The role of the Education Welfare Officer is to:

- provide advice and support to school staff regarding attendance and punctuality issues
- have responsibility for investigating and, where necessary, reporting incidents of children who are Missing from Education to the Local Authority
- liaise with the Local Authority regarding requests from parents/carers to electively home educate their child/ren
- liaise with the school Data Team to produce and evaluate attendance data
- meet with the Pastoral Managers to discuss individual pupils whose attendance is of concern (e.g. below 90%) and agree action as necessary
- liaise with school staff and external professionals regarding attendance and punctuality of identified pupils, agree interventions and support
- make contact with parents/carers where concern is raised regarding pupil's attendance
- discuss issues affecting attendance and punctuality with parents/carers and clearly outline legal responsibilities and requirements
- record and maintain accurate pupil records following contact
- feedback to school staff within the agreed timescale
- work with school staff, parents/carers and pupils to promote good attendance and punctuality
- take part in initiatives to promote attendance and punctuality e.g. Attendance Meetings
- meet with the Local Authority's Attendance and Inclusion specialist, half termly to discuss cases for legal action, prepare and submit legal paperwork where necessary

Rewards

Pupils who attend regularly should be rewarded:

- half-termly - certificates for 95% or higher attendance and SIV vouchers
- yearly - certificates and a letter of commendation of 100% attendance and a Gold Phoenix Award

In Year 8 and Year 9, pupils are invited to go to Alton Towers only if their attendance is more 95% or higher and no more than 3 C3's.

Summary

Meadowhead School encourages all of its pupils to attend school regularly and on time. It encourages parents/carers to fulfil their legal responsibilities in sending their children to school every day and on time.

The school will liaise with parents/carers and listen to any concerns. Any issues causing a child to miss school or lessons should be discussed in full and at the earliest opportunity.

Meadowhead School will do all that it can to provide a positive, supportive and understanding learning environment, accessible and acceptable to all.

Failure to attend school will result in procedures being put into place as outlined in this document.

Penalty Notices

Provisions have been made within the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 to tackle the issues of truancy and irregular school attendance. These include Penalty Notices and Parenting Contracts.

Sheffield Local Authority officers will abide by the following Code of Conduct and government guidance set out in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 when administering Penalty Notices.

When a Penalty Notice may be administered

Sheffield Local Authority officers may administer a Penalty Notice in the following circumstances:

Phase 1

- as a result of a term time holiday that a Headteacher has not authorised and for extended periods of absence

Phase 2

- where there is an unacceptable reason for the child being absent from school and they are with their parent/carer

Phase 3

- as an alternative to court prosecution by Sheffield City Council
1. Where a child is attending school less than 90%, of which at least 20% of the absence is unauthorised without statutory defence.
 2. Where the parent/carer is judged capable of making sure their child attends regularly, but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so
 3. Penalty Notices will be used at an earlier stage than a court prosecution, before attendance problems become severe.

In all of the above phases, the child must also have an attendance record of less than 90%, with at least 10% of the absence being unauthorised.

When considering the use of a Penalty Notice, **school's first response will be in the form of a formal written warning.** In exceptional circumstances, however, a Penalty may be used as a first response. This could be where the unauthorised absence was for an extended period and condoned by the parent, for example where the parent has chosen to take their child on holiday during term time without authorisation.

Further information is available in guidance notes, a copy of which is held in school titled **Education Related Provisions included in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003, Penalty Notice.**