



## **Attendance Policy**

### **Foreword**

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential.

Our expectation is that every child who is on roll should attend school every day, when the school is in session as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is developing of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each pupils:

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

Non attendance at school is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

- a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance; they are reminded of this duty in the School Prospectus and the Home School Agreement.
- b) Prior to the engagement of the EWO, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupil's attendance. It is hoped that a quick response and change in level of absence will prevent the need for EWO involvement.

## **Arrival and Registration**

All children are welcomed into school at 8.50am, to encourage a calm start to the day.

The register is taken twice a day. A day counts as 2 sessions. Morning registration is between 9am-9.15am. If a child arrives after 9am, he/she must be signed in at the school office and will be marked in as 'Late'.

Arrival after 9.30am is recorded as an unauthorised late mark ('Late After Register Closed'), which counts as a full session of absence.

## **Illness and Medical Appointments**

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.30am on the first day of absence, informing the school of the reason for absence.

As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the Family Outreach Officer will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

- ✚ Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- ✚ An appointment card or verification by the doctors/ dentist/hospital may be required. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for an appointment, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

## **School Responsibility - THE LAW and School Attendance**

The Headteacher holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the Family Outreach Officer and, where appropriate, the Inclusion Manager.

Where school attendance problems occur, the school will endeavour to work with parents in the interests of the child to achieve a resolution.

Attendance is recorded and data is stored and analysed using the SIMS Attendance module.

It is a statutory duty for class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class Teachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session.

The Headteacher, not parents, authorises absence; Lowerplace Primary School adhere to the DfE guidelines in authorising absence. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged.

Absence known to be for the following reasons would normally be authorised:

- ✚ Illness
- ✚ Religious observance
- ✚ Attendance at medical appointments which can not be made outside school hours, for example consultants, hospital etc.

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. *The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'*.

When it has become necessary to make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer [EWO], all further absences will be unauthorised pending investigation. The EWO liaises with the school regarding absences following contact with the parents.

### **Term Time Holidays and Extended Leave**

The Governors recognise that pupil absence during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning. Lowerplace Primary School operates a 'zero-tolerance' policy with regards to Term Time Holidays **Parents are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time**, as the absence will be Unauthorised.

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday.

Parents must, by law, notify the school in advance of taking a holiday. In some circumstances, where they leave the country during a school holiday due to an emergency, this will not be possible. However it is their responsibility to ensure that school are notified.

Parents will be required to meet with the Attendance Panel (the Headteacher, Education Welfare Officer and Family Outreach Officer) to discuss any Term Time Holidays in further detail.

Term Time Holidays of 5 or more school days are referred to the Education Welfare Service, and **will** result in a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine for each parent.

If a child does not return to school within 20 school days (Extended Leave), a warning letter will be sent to parents explaining that they are at risk of losing their school place.

If they still do not return, the child will be removed from the school roll. Each case for removing a child from the school roll will be reviewed independently with the Education Welfare Service and the Children Missing Education Team.

If the parent then wishes for their child to return to Lowerplace, they will have to apply to the Council for a school place as per the Local Authority's Admissions Policy.

## **Definitions**

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone.

### ***Authorised Absence***

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised.

### ***Unauthorised Absence***

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation' has been given. This includes:

- + Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- + Truancy before or during the school day.
- + Absences that have never been properly explained.
- + Holidays not agreed.

**Penalty notices** for absence from school can be issued by the Education Welfare Service based on requests from schools and the police.

The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- + Truancy, including truancy sweeps
- + Parentally-condoned absences
- + Excessive holidays in term time
- + Excessive delayed return from extended holidays
- + Persistent lateness after the register has closed

A pupil has to be absent from school in one or more of these circumstances for at least 20 sessions in any 12 week period before the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice can be considered.

Following a request by the school for the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice, a check is made by the Education Welfare Service that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct. A warning letter will then be sent to parents explaining that unless their child attends full time for the next 15 days a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued. Where a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, each parent is required to pay a fine to the Local Authority.

## **Rewards**

The prime benefit derived from regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured.

### ***Weekly Incentives***

In weekly assemblies the 3 classes with the best attendance for that week are awarded a certificate, and the Attendance Trophy is sent to their Classrooms for the duration of the week. There is also an Attendance Leader Board in the corridor of each building to track who is winning.

Punctuality Awards are also given out each week.

### ***Termly Incentives***

Certificates are awarded at the end of each term for 100% attendance. This is celebrated in the final whole school assembly.

The children with 100% Attendance take part in a special reward activity (Cinema Day, Circus Skills, and a Visit from a Birds of Prey handler being a few examples).

### ***Annual Incentives***

Children who achieve 100% Attendance over the course of a whole year are awarded a Certificate and a Gift Voucher for a local retailer.

### ***Individual Incentives.***

Where positive impact is required, all staff in contact with the child must take extra care to welcome the child each morning, praise punctual attendance and acknowledge the effort the child has made. It is also appropriate to recognise the effort the parent has made to secure the child's attendance.

Individual sticker reward-charts are sometimes employed as an additional incentive where appropriate; these are designed according to the child's particular need.

**This policy will be reviewed according to the schedule for policy review.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_