

KIRK MERRINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Statement of Intent

At Kirk Merrington Primary School we believe that regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is vital to a good education. Securing it must therefore be a high priority of the school, governors, parents and the pupils themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils lessen the impact of the education provided for them. Pupil absence may seriously disrupt the continuity of teaching for themselves and others.

The aim of Kirk Merrington Primary School is to facilitate our pupils' regular and sustained attendance at school by providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils.

Parents have a vital role to play and there is a strong emphasis on maintaining home-school links and good communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

2. School Attendance – The Statutory Framework

Education Act 1944 – Establishes the duty of parents to ensure regular attendance of pupils.

Education Act 1996 – Establishes the duty of LAs to enforce school attendance (Section 444). The Act states that “The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law”.

Pupil's Registration Regulations 1986 – Establishes the criteria for the maintenance of Attendance Registers.

The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1991.

Framework for the Inspection of Schools (Ofsted) – 2012.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997 (amended) provides the new registration categories of Approved Educational Activity. (Amending Regulation 3 (2), (3), (5) of the Education Regulations 1995).

Pupil Registration Regulations 1995 (Amended) gives schools discretionary powers to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term time.

Education Act 2002 (Section 53) enables an overall absence target to be set, covering authorised and unauthorised absence, supporting school improvement and raising community awareness of the issue (September 2003)

Pupil Registration Regulations 2006, revokes previous Regulations of 1995 and the subsequent amendments of 1997 and 2001 (England only). It places a requirement on schools to put pupils on the admissions and attendance registers on the first day that they are expected to attend not, as previously, when they first attend.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

3. Registration

3.1 There is a legal requirement upon schools to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon sessions, pupils are marked present or absent. The Education (Pupils Attendance Record) Regulations 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised. This is shown on our computer records.

3.2 Staff, pupils and parents should see the taking of registers as an integral part of the school day, as was indeed intended in law. Particular attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers.

3.3 Monitoring and encouraging attendance is an integral part of the Head teacher's role. Head teachers have primary responsibility for monitoring the attendance of pupils' in the class groups and for contacting home with concerns about attendance and punctuality also ensuring that school gathers reasons for absences and maintains an accurate register of attendance.

3.4 In accordance with current legislation, each class in school has an attendance register. It is school policy that registers are completed by 9:05am and 1:05pm on the electronic SIMs system.

It is our policy at Kirk Merrington Primary School to record a late mark for children who arrive at school after class registration has taken place or whom enter school through the main office because the playground gates have been shut.

3.5 We believe that pupils arriving late seriously disrupt their work and that of others. Our policy is to encourage punctuality. Five minutes will be allocated for registration purposes at the beginning of each session. Children will be recorded as being late once registration has taken place. Registers close at our school at 9:10am, children arriving at school after

this time will be recorded as absent in the register and an unauthorised registration code entered in the child's register (U).

4. Absence

- 4.1 It is the parent's responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence. We ask that parents telephone the school office before 9am each morning their child is absent to discuss the reason for the absence. Upon returning to school medical evidence should be presented to the office (e.g. prescription/ appointment card) where applicable.
- 4.2 It is a fact that parentally-condoned, unjustified absence is a serious problem in some schools. This can be every bit as damaging as the more traditional forms of truancy.

Only the head teacher of the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or where no explanation is forthcoming at all the absence must be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil, school will involve the Attendance Officer at an early opportunity.

- 4.3 An excessive amount of authorised absence can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection. We must be alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence. We may authorise absence retrospectively where we are satisfied as to the explanation offered. Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided will be treated as unauthorised and school attendance procedures followed.
- 4.4 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 provides that no offence is committed where a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness. If school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence will be treated as authorised.
- 4.5 Where we have reason to doubt the validity of an explanation offered in respect of a particular absence, further information will be requested by the school from the child's parents. If the school continues to be dissatisfied then the absence will be treated as unauthorised
- 4.6 Where there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, School will seek the advice and support of the School Health Service or may wish to seek permission from the child's parent to consult with their GP. If a pupil is absent for a prolonged period or the school notices a pattern emerging, early contact will be made with the Attendance Officer and/or the School Health Service.

- 4.7 We encourage, where possible, parents to only take children out of school for dental and medical appointments where this is an emergency or essential (i.e. planned hospital appointment). Leave for medical or dental appointments will be given (i.e. the absence will be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parent (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or on production of an appointment card. To minimise absence from school, parents are requested to ensure children are at school before or after if possible.
- 4.8 We will not authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday apart from in the most exceptional of circumstances. Any leave of absence request that is declined may result in the head teacher issuing a parent with a Warning Letter and subsequent unauthorised absence may result in a referral to the Local Authority for the issue of a Penalty Notice. A Penalty Notice will be issued when children are taken out of school for an unauthorised holiday of more than 7 days.

5. Reporting of Absence Procedure

- 5.1 Once we receive a reason for an absence, we may authorise that absence by inserting the correct symbol on the computer records.

Reporting reasons for absence by telephone, verbally to a member of staff or a note are all acceptable. We expect that parents will contact the school and report the reason for absence on the first day of absence before 9am. Kirk Merrington Primary School operates a first day calling system. If we have not received a reason for absence by 9am on the first day of absence, a member of school staff will contact the home contact number to try to ascertain the reason for absence. If the absence continues to the second day then all contact information will be used to attempt to discuss the absence with the parent. Where concerns continue and no contact is made a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance and Exclusion Team under children missing education/ attendance procedures.

5.2

Where a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment, the school need take no action beyond recording the fact that (for the purpose of emergency evacuation) the pupil, although registered, is not physically present. Similarly the school must note the presence of a pupil (again for purposes of emergency evacuation) who was not there when the register was being taken but returns later from an appointment.

6. Leave of absence in Term Time

The Pupil Registration Regulations 2013 state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence except in exceptional circumstances.

Parents do not have an automatic right to take their children out of school for holidays in term time.

Parents are strongly urged to avoid making requests for leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time due to the disruption and impact of the missed education on the child.

If parents feel that exceptional circumstances apply then they should complete a Leave of Absence form, which they may obtain from the main office. It should be completed and returned to the school office for the attention of the head teacher for individual consideration. The parent will be written to by the head teacher with the confirmation as to whether the leave has been granted under the exceptional circumstance criteria. Where the leave of absence is not agreed refer to section 4.8.

7. Categorising Absence

Our policy deals in general with the categories of absence and cannot cover every eventuality. It will be necessary on occasion to exercise reasonable discretion when investigating some absences.

Some Key points: -

- registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school;
- whilst it is right that schools should recognise that individual pupils and families have problems the aim should always be to expect regular attendance;
- lateness should be actively discouraged;
- where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming (for whatever reason) it must be treated as unauthorised and the register recorded accordingly;
- schools are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered;
- explanations such as minding the house, looking after other children, or shopping trips within school hours will not normally be acceptable reasons for absence;
- parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that, as of right, schools will agree to family holidays during term time.
- even where absence is authorised, schools should be alerted to emerging patterns of absence, which may seriously disrupt continuity of learning.

- in promoting regular attendance, schools should work closely with the Local Authority Attendance and Exclusion Team.

8. Punctuality

- 8.1 It is Kirk Merrington Primary School's policy to actively discourage late arrival. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather or occasional public transport difficulties), we may keep registers open for a reasonable period.
- 8.2 For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line must be taken on late arrivals. To do otherwise undermines the whole purpose of registration and may serve to encourage other pupils to arrive late. Particular attention will be paid to emerging patterns of late arrival.
- 8.3 Where a pupil does arrive late and misses registration, his or her presence on site will still need to be noted for purposes of emergency evacuation. Anyone arriving late must report to the main office.
- 8.4 In responding to lateness, we will of course need to take account of the individual circumstances of each case. In some instances enquiries may reveal that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances. Teachers of pupils who persistently fail to arrive on time with valid reason need to keep the Head teacher informed. Further action may be taken if there is no valid reason for this lateness.

9. Attendance Procedures

Intervention at School Level

Stage 1 – Monitor

This section describes the role of school in relation to improving attendance.

- 9.1 The Class Teacher has primary responsibility for monitoring attendance of the pupils in the class group, maintaining an accurate register and informing the Head teacher with concerns about attendance and punctuality.
- 9.2 Kirk Merrington Primary School operates a first day response to absence system and where this has failed to make contact with the parent of the absent child a home visit will be the next step.

Stage 2 – Attendance Concerns

- 9.3 Home is contacted by phone if no reason for absence is received by the school office by 9am

- 9.4 A record is kept by the school of all contacts and conversations relating to reasons for absence from school.
- 9.5 Parents/ carers are encouraged to visit the school to discuss attendance and strategies for improvement.
- 9.6 The Head teacher discusses the pupil with the Class teacher. The parent will be invited in to meet with the head teacher. It is important to establish the reason for poor attendance, the general health of the pupil, home circumstances etc. The parent will then be given a target for the pupil's attendance, which is higher than their normal attendance rate to be achieved over an agreed timescale. All pupils with less than 95% attendance are regularly monitored.
- 9.7 Attendance of pupils calculated at 96% and under is reviewed regularly (every 2-3 weeks and at the end of each half term) and appropriate action taken if attendance remains a concern.
- 9.8 If attendance has improved, then a letter of commendation is sent home and the pupil returns to stage 1.
- 9.9 If attendance has not improved then options include:
- (i) Contact home to discuss attendance either by letter or phone. If contacted by phone or in person areas of concern should be discussed with the parent and appropriate advice and support offered. For example, if the parent reports absence to be due to a recurring medical condition such as asthma the school could offer assistance by putting the parent in touch with the School Health Service and suggesting a referral be made.
 - (ii) Referral to the Local Authority Attendance Officer
- 9.10 The Head teacher will prioritise the list of pupils to be referred to the Council Attendance Officer. These circumstances include:
- (i) When Kirk Merrington Primary School, despite several attempts by phone and also by letter, is unable to make contact with the parent.
 - (ii) If attendance has fallen below 90% and the absence is unauthorised.
 - (iii) When school has offered all support available but attendance fails to improve.
 - (iv) When the school has reason not to accept the parents' justification for absence on a regular basis.
 - (v) Where the unauthorised leave of absence for the purpose of a

family holiday exceeds 10 sessions (5 school days).

10. The Role of the Attendance Officer

10.1 The role of our designated Attendance Officer is to:

- liaise, where appropriate, between home and school;
- investigate irregular attendance or lateness which may give rise to concerns that a child may be at risk;
- complete a regular register check and provide school with advice on strategies to improve attendance;
- provide advice and support to parents through the initiation of attendance procedures;
- work with children who are experiencing problems with attendance and/or punctuality and/or are preparing to transfer to secondary school;
- assist school in setting attendance targets;

10.2 Referral to the Attendance Officer

Referral to the Attendance Officer will be made in the following circumstances:

- the absence is regular and/or repeated and therefore affecting the child's education;
- when a pupil has been absent for two consecutive weeks and the absence is unauthorised;
- the intervention by the school has failed to secure a pupil's regular attendance.

Referrals can only be made through the Head teacher. A referral form will be completed for each pupil and given to the Attendance Officer.

The Attendance Officer will meet with the head teacher fortnightly and progress reports on referrals made reviewed and discussed.

11. Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality

11.1 As well as taking appropriate action against parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their children, we will take steps to reward good attendance and punctuality at Kirk Merrington Primary School.

Attendance is discussed with the whole school in assembly at the end of

each week.

Attendance and punctuality is also rewarded through class and individual rewards.

12. School Targets

To enable school to achieve targets, systems have been set in place to :

- Provide and interpret detailed and robust data on school attendance.
- Develop a strategic target setting culture.
- Develop a monitoring mechanism to ensure targets both on a school and individual pupil's level are being met.
- Publish targets and achievement around school

Appendices

Kirk Merrington Absence and Punctuality Procedures

	What ...	Leading to ...
Daily	Register check; Parents of absent children contacted; if not contactable by telephone, a home visit will be made and a card put through the door; Late reports completed; parents contacted where necessary;	Letters generated; Home visits; Meetings in school;
Weekly	Class attendance calculated; School attendance calculated: board updated ; Under 96%, under 90% and under 85% reports run and interrogated; Tracking of focus pupils updated and further actions as necessary;	Attendance shared; with children; Letters generated; Home visits; Meetings in school; Well done phone calls/letters;
Half termly	Punctuality analysed – late 2 or more times in half term identified;	Letters sent;
Half Termly	100% attendance and punctuality reward;	
Annually	100% annual attendance reward;	

Letters – template letters set out below are adapted where appropriate to include relevant information to the family concerned.

Absence	
Letter 1	Sent initially when attendance falls below 95%.
Letter 2a	Sent when attendance is not improving above 95% or there are other concerns regarding patterns of absence. Discuss with HT. From this point, no further absence will be authorised without evidence being presented to explain the reason for absence.
Letter 2b	Sent when attendance is between 90% and 95% and LA intervention is deemed appropriate. Discuss with HT.
Letter 3	Sent when attendance is below 90%
Letter 4	Sent following a meeting where parents do not attend.
Letter 5	Sent following an absence and no reason has been provided.

Punctuality	
Letter 1	Sent out in final week of each half term to every child who has been late 2 or more times that half term. Minutes late is included in the letter.

Letter 1: Attendance
Concern

Date

Dear

I am writing to express my concern regarding’s level of attendance at school.

Regular school attendance has a positive impact upon your child’s educational and social development, hence we would normally expect to see your child at school every day that it is open.

When checking the register I noted that has an attendance rate of%. This level of attendance is unsatisfactory and I must inform you that it is the duty of those with parental responsibility to secure the regular attendance of their child at school, failure to do so is an offence under the Education Act 1996.

I would request that you do all that you can to ensure that attends school on a regular basis thus enabling him/her to make the most of his/her opportunities at school.

If your child has an ongoing medical problem, which contributes to their attendance difficulties, would you please contact me on the above number so that we can see if there is any support or advice school can offer.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Murray
Headteacher

Letter 2a: Meeting with HT

Date

Dear

Re:

I am writing to advise you that despite previous correspondence,’s attendance remains unsatisfactory.

It is the duty of those with parental responsibility to secure the regular attendance of their child at school, failure to do so is an offence under the Education Act 1996.

I would like to invite you to a meeting in school on atam/pm. The purpose of the meeting is to put together a plan to support and improve’s school attendance.

If this date/time is not convenient, please telephone me on 01642 to re-arrange.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Murray
Headteacher

Date

Dear

child's name and dob

You have been advised in previous correspondence it is your duty to secure the regular attendance of your child at school. May I remind you that failure to do so is an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

As you are aware your child has accumulated a significant level of absence. It is now necessary to hold a meeting in school. This will take place at Kirk Merrington Primary School, on at It is very important that you co-operate with the Local Authority and the school and you attend this meeting.

Also invited to attend this meeting to give their views and support are, Local Authority Attendance Officer, who will chair the meeting and is expected to be in attendance at school as normal and if the meeting agrees that it is important that she attendswill be brought from lessons to attend. You may wish to bring along a friend or family member for support if you feel this necessary.

If you are unable to attend please contact Mrs Smith at the school office so that it may be possible to arrange a date convenient to you. If you fail to attend this meeting without a valid reason the meeting will proceed in your absence.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Murray
Headteacher

Date

Dear

child's name and dob

You have been advised in previous correspondence it is your duty to secure the regular attendance of your child at school. May I remind you that failure to do so is an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

As you are aware your child has accumulated a significant level of unauthorised absence and the matter has now been referred to the Local Authority. It is now necessary to hold an Attendance Case Conference. This will take place at School, on 2012 at am/pm. It is very important that you co-operate with the Local Authority and the school and you attend this meeting.

Also invited to attend this meeting to give their views and support are (school rep and title), (school governor), (any other agency name and title), (IO/Manager) who will chair the meeting and myself. (Child's name) is expected to be in attendance at school as normal and if the meeting agrees that it is important that they attend they will be brought from lessons to attend. You may wish to bring along a friend or family member for support if you feel this necessary.

Please be aware that as legal proceedings may be issued the meeting will take place in accordance with the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, (PACE).

If you are unable to attend please contact Attendance/Inclusion Officer, on Tel: at the above office when it may be possible to arrange a date convenient to you. If you fail to attend this meeting without a valid reason the meeting will proceed in your absence.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Murray
Headteacher

Date

Dear

Re: Joe Bloggs d.ob. 26/06/1999

I am sorry that you were unable to attend the meeting today regarding’s attendance at school.

It is the duty of those with parental responsibility to secure the regular attendance of their child at school, failure to do so is an offence under the Education Act 1996.

.....’s attendance will be closely monitored in school and will be reviewed on If’s has further unauthorised absences from school we may refer to the Attendance & Exclusion Team to commence legal proceedings.

If your child is experiencing any problems in school or medical issues affecting their attendance I would be grateful if you could contact me on 01642 so I can offer my support and advice.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Murray
Headteacher

Reason for Absence Letter

Date

Dear

Re: Joe Bloggs d.ob. 26/06/1999

We note from our records that was absent from school on

Please return the slip below or contact school as soon as possible to provide a reason for this absence. If no reason is given the absence will be unauthorised which may lead to a referral to the local authority attendance officer for further investigation.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Murray
Headteacher

.....
.....

Reply Slip

I have received your letter regarding absence from school.

The reason for the absence is:

Signed _____ Parent/Guardian

BEFORE COMPLETING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM PARENTS/CARERS ARE REQUESTED

TO NOTE THE INFORMATION BELOW

Parents are required under the Education Act (1996) to ensure their child attends school regularly. There is no automatic right to take a child out of school during term time but the law allows Head Teachers to consider individual requests to authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

All such requests **must** be made on this form. Letters will not be accepted.

The Head Teacher must be satisfied that the exceptional circumstances justify an authorised absence and it is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient information and evidence in order to establish this fact.

The request for an authorised leave of absence must be made in advance and the Head Teacher may contact the parent to discuss the request before a decision is made.

If the circumstances relating to a request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the Head Teacher, the expectation is that the child's attendance will be of a satisfactory level both prior to and after the date covered by the request.

If the request for leave of absence is refused and the absence is subsequently recorded as unauthorised, the Head Teacher may refer the matter to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued against you.

A Penalty Notice is £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if the notice is paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 days period the Local Authority may prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies.

Where there is more than one child, each parent may be issued with a penalty Notice in respect of each child.

As a parent/carer you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason. Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed, which may ultimately affect exam and test results.

Work will not be provided for any leave of absence.