



Attendance Policy 2023 -24

This policy applies to The Meadows School's whole workforce.

Approved by:	IEB	Date: 23 rd October 2023
Signed by:	Bridget Watt	(Chair)
Last reviewed on:	23 rd October 2023	
Next review due by:	23 rd October 2024	

Contents

1. Expectations
2. Attendance data
3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance
4. Facilitate support
5. Formalise support
6. Enforce
7. Appendix 1
8. Appendix 2

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

The Meadows School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

We understand the significance of embedding attendance into the school's ethos and culture. To ensure that attendance is a central part of our vision, values and ethos we have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for improving attendance; Andrew McGarry Acting Head Teacher takes a lead on this area supported by Bridget Watt (Chair of Interim Executive Board) and Clare Nicholls (IEB member). We recognise that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues.

Improving attendance is highlighted in our school improvement priorities and we regularly review our approach to improving attendance.

All staff receive appropriate training and understand the importance of good attendance. We share our expectations for attendance of pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents. We aim to promote and visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

Here's what the data shows:

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

We review attendance data regularly to both identify and then provide support to pupils or cohorts that need it.

We have an external audit each year to support our thinking looking at historic and emerging patterns across the school and to develop strategies to address these

We monitor weekly patterns of attendance and deliver targeted support to pupils and families. We provide regular attendance reports to tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils

There are, thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends and we look to benchmark your data against local, regional and national levels to identify areas for improvement.

We use our data analysis to devise specific strategies to address poor attendance and monitor the impact of these strategies.

We focusing our analysis on the needs of particular pupil cohorts and those with particular needs.

Data and reports are shared and reviewed to support the work of the governing board.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 (KCSIE)

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked. Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

2. Attendance data

We contact parents/carers each day to review attendance which is then reviewed on a weekly basis. Therefore seeking to respond to any emerging patterns.

We review attendance data regularly to both identify and then provide support to pupils or cohorts that need it.

We have an external audit each year to support our thinking looking at historic and emerging patterns across the school and to develop strategies to address these.

We monitor weekly patterns of attendance and deliver targeted support to pupils and families. We provide regular attendance reports to tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils.

There are thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends and we look to benchmark your data against local, regional and national levels to identify areas for improvement.

We use our data analysis to devise specific strategies to address poor attendance and monitor the impact of these strategies.

We focusing our analysis on the needs of particular pupil cohorts and those with particular needs.

Data and reports are shared and reviewed to support the work of the governing board.

3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

We contact parents on the first day of absence where a reason has not been provided and continue doing so where needed to ensure safeguarding.

We review absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents to find out the reason why, and when the pupil will return.

We regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels and hold regular meetings with parents of pupils considered to be vulnerable or those that are persistently or severely absent.

We aim to understand the barriers to attending and to support parent and pupils to overcome these issues and improve attendance.

We aim to use data to target attendance for pupils setting shared agreed targets with parent and young people.

4. Facilitate support

In the first instance we aim to work together to understand and address any in-school barriers to attendance through meeting with those at risk of persistent or severe absence and agreeing actions or interventions to improve the situation.

We make referrals to services and organisations that can provide support accessing wider support through multi agency working where barriers are complex and multi-faceted.

5. Formalise support

Where absence intensifies, we provide additional support, such as holding more formal conversations with the parents and pupils and through working with our local authority (LA) and other relevant partners.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or not been engaged with, we would work with the LA to put formal support in place for example:

A parenting contract or an education supervision order

Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe

6. Enforce

If, following the schools 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 is required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action.

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

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 does 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.

Leave of Absence in Term Time:

Head teachers 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; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head Teacher's discretion. 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.

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

Promoting good attendance and punctuality:

Tutor groups have attendance information each week so that groups can see how they are doing in comparison to others and to celebrate good attendance and improving attendance. Pupils who achieve 99-100% attendance over each half term will receive a certificate and prize. The success of pupils with 95 -100% are noted on a display in school. Attendance percentages will be shared with parents on request and through review meetings.

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 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.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body:

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.

School Leadership Team:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the leadership team 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.
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to Governors each term on attendance records, data and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

Teachers and support staff:

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.

Parents / Carers:

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 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.

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 concern 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.

If a pupil's absence is a concern we will contact parents /carers to discuss and problem solve. If after this a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an outside agency to offer support.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

We will contact if a pupil is absent without reason and provide information and feedback.

All pupils

Daily – text / telephone

Half termly most improved positive postcard.

Termly attendance information for parents

At risk of persistent absenteeism pupils

September update from previous year

October half term

Below 92% letter, parents/ carers discussion with key staff. The discussion will focus on ways forward and support required.

Followed by a 6 week update.

December

Further absence - letter and meeting with parents/ carers with key staff

Followed by weekly feedback and 6 week review.

March

Further absence - involvement of Education Welfare Service with parents/ carers

Followed by weekly feedback and 4 week formal review.

General / frequently asked questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's head teacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Attendance and absence management

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

Tutor groups have attendance information each week so that groups can see how they are doing in comparison to others and to celebrate good attendance and improving attendance. Pupils who achieve 99-100% attendance over each half term will receive a certificate and prize. The success of pupils with 95-100% are noted on a display in school. Attendance percentages will be shared with parents on request and through review meetings.

Communication

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will 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, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's

attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

On the first day of absence

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Doctors and dentist's 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.

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, the school will contact the second contact to follow up and to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.**

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support 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 **9.15 am** at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. 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 more formal action being considered).

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). This is most often related to taxi/transport issues.

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

We will inform you of concerns and meet with you to explain issues.

Help and Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact the school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. 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.

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

Pupils with specific needs

All of our pupils have identified Special Educational Needs and therefore we are mindful of individual needs and make reasonable adjustments where needed.

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**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Please see key contact list and details at the start of this document.

Appendix 1

The school and all partners will work together to



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.



Appendix 2: Attendance Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance

S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Code		
Definition		
Scenario		
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Electronic File Pathway:

Pathway:	GDrive Policy Folder\September 2023\
Version Number:	2023

Document History Log:

Author of document:	DCC/AMcGarry	Job role:	Acting Head teacher
Date document created:	Review September 2023	Approval by Governing Body:	

Annual Review History:

Task	Date Reviewed	Reviewed by	Date Adopted	Review Date
First document review	September 21	Sarah Took	October 21	September 2022
2 nd Review				
3 rd Review				
4 th Review				

Attendance Policy

The Meadows School

Document History Log:

Author of document:		Job role:	
Date document created:	November 2023	Approval by Governing Body:	

Annual Review History:

Task	Date Reviewed	Reviewed by	Signatories
First document review			
2 nd Review			
3 rd Review			
4 th Review			

Revisions Log:

Revision	Date of revision	Reason for revision	Resulting version number	Signatories

Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Andrew McGarry	Acting Head Teacher Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	01388 811178

Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Luke Gillespie	Tutor	
Jamie Kelly	Tutor	
Alex Stephens	Tutor	
Tom Abbott	Tutor	
Justin Burns	Tutor	
Michael Ritson	Tutor	