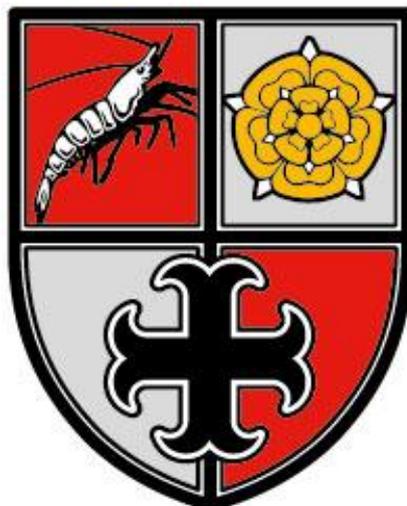


MARSHSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Attendance Policy (Guidance from Sefton LA)

Autumn 2019

Date reviewed by sub-committee: PDB & W 15/10/2019

Date Approved by Full Governing Body 19/11/2019

Chair: Andrew Brown _____

Headteacher: Katharine Hall _____

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EQUALITY STATEMENT

Our school recognises children's diverse circumstances and is committed to its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Each child regardless of their background could be a victim of child abuse and is therefore entitled to the same degree of protection and support.

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school.

Introduction.

Regular and punctual attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities provide for them by law.

Marshside Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all pupils registered at this school and this policy is made available on our school website to all parents and carers of pupils registered at this school.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from Sefton Local Authority.

Parents and carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance. However the Headteacher and Governors at our school are committed to working closely with parents, other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

Definition of parent: Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 – A parent in relation to any child or young person, includes any person:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- who is not a parent, but who has parental responsibility for him / her; or
- who has care of him / her.

Principles of this policy.

The Governing body of Marshside Primary school places a high priority on achieving standards and feel that excellent pupil attendance and punctuality are essential. They undertake this role by:

- Monitoring whole school attendance termly and take appropriate action should it affect standards;
- Nominate a named Governor for attendance.

The named Governor for attendance is: Mrs Colette Vaianella

Marshside Primary School aims to provide the best possible education for all pupils. In order to achieve this we will take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may affect full attendance, are acted on as quickly as possible.

In order for pupils to achieve their potential, they must be highly motivated to learn and keen and eager to attend school. Regular and punctual attendance will establish good habits. We aim to work with parents to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly and on time. Helping to promote a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

The school will:

- Record and monitor attendance in accordance with statutory requirements;
- Teachers mark the register at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions;
- School registers open at 8:45am, deemed late after 8.55am, deemed absent after register closes 9.30am;
- Check the registers weekly to monitor lateness and absence;
- Emergency Contact and First Day Calling Procedures (p4) will be initiated if school has not heard from parents/carers;
- Monitor the Exceptional Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances;
- Set targets for reducing absence;
- Celebrate pupils' attendance by giving termly certificates to those children whose attendance is above 97% on a termly basis;
- Give parents/carers feedback on attendance in newsletters, Headteacher' reports and on our website;
- Inform parents / carers if attendance falls below 95% on a termly basis;
- Refer to the Attendance and Welfare Service pupils who have unauthorised absence for penalty Notice Proceedings;

- Refer pupils who have 10% or more unauthorised absence to the Attendance and Welfare Service;
- Monitor punctuality and inform parents if this is a persistent problem;
- Work with Sefton's Attendance Officer allocated to our school.

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis.

Parents/carers will:

- Ensure their child is in school by 8.55am each day;
- Ensure that their child is collected or goes home alone promptly at the end of school;
- Contact school early on the first morning by 8.30am of absence by phone, email or in person stating the reason for the absence;
- Arrange dental, doctor or hospital appointments outside the school day except in an emergency;
- Provide evidence of dental, doctor or hospital appointments if during the school day;
- Only ask for leave of absence for their child in exceptional circumstances;
- Ensure any leave is requested four weeks before the required time or as soon as possible.

If parents/carers do not ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time the school will:

- Contact parents/carers to discuss the reasons and plan for improvement;
- Monitor the attendance plan and celebrate the improvements. If parents/carers persist in not ensuring their child attends school regularly and on time the school will unauthorise the absence;
- Undertake Absence Review Meetings to discuss attendance & punctuality;
- Refer their child if they have 10% or more unauthorised absence to the Attendance and Welfare Service Education Welfare Office. The Education Welfare Officer [EWO] will contact parents to find reasons and plan for improvement;
- Refer to the Attendance and Welfare Service to set up penalty notice proceedings;
- Not take their children out of school during term time, and realize that if they do they are at risk of damaging their child's education, and risk being given a penalty notice by Sefton Council

The Role of the Governing Body

The governing body:

- must ensure that school registers are kept; one for admissions and one for attendance;
- will agree the annual attendance target for the school;
- will review attendance information on a termly basis;
- will consider any challenges to the issuing of penalty notices.

Understanding types of absence.

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why the cause of absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which are unavoidable, sporting events, music exams and these are coded accordingly.

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- Leave of absence which has not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the pupil. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family.

Persistent Absentees (PA)

A pupil is deemed to be a Persistent Absentee if they have missed 10% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing harm to your child's educational prospects and therefore support from parents is needed to tackle this.

We monitor absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that has reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards the PA threshold is given priority and parents / carers will be notified in writing.

Punctuality

If a child arrives at school 15 minutes late each day they lose almost 2 weeks of education a year!

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they are missing work and do not spend time with the class and their class teacher getting important information about the day. Late arriving pupils can also disrupt lessons, be embarrassing for the pupil and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital skill which will help our pupils as they progress through their school life and into the wider world.

The school day starts at 8:55am and all teachers are ready to receive the children in the classroom from 8:45am. This ensures a smooth and settled start to the day. The main gates and class doors will be closed at 8:55am and pupils will have to enter school through the main entrance. The time of their arrival will be logged by office staff.

Pupils with persistent lateness will be monitored closely and parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem.

EMERGENCY CONTACT AND FIRST DAY CALLING PROCEDURES.

- Registers completed by teachers at 8:55am;
- Register and absence list sent to the office;
- Late children checked against the absence register and recorded;
- Absence calls listened to and recorded;
- If school have not received a reason for absence a First day text is sent to both parents named on Parentmail within half an hour of school start time asking for a response;
- If no response to text the Headteacher or their deputy will be informed that a child is absent and no contact has been made within an hour of school start time;
- A call will be made initially to the first name on the contact list, and if necessary the second name;
- Any external agencies involved with the family will be contacted and a home visit made if appropriate;
- Complete a risk assessment.

No risk – There is no apparent danger to either the child or the family. This may be appropriate for children who we believe are absent from school but not at harm due to previous pattern of behaviour or information from other people e.g. child has gone on holiday. School will continue to try and contact the family, but it would not be proportionate to contact the police at this stage.

Low / Medium risk – The risk of harm is assessed as possible but minimal. This may be relevant for those children where there are no vulnerabilities, however school has minimal contact information and making parental contact is often difficult. The police would be contacted on 101.

High risk – The risk of serious harm is assessed as very likely. This is relevant for children already considered as vulnerable. This may be due to a number of factors. This is also relevant for those children where the absence and lack of ability to make contact is highly unusual. There is a need for an immediate response so the police are to be contacted on 999.

This procedure is in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children and families.

Action for low attendance.

Non-attendance 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. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what strategies to apply. In every case early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents / carers keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.

Prior to the engagement of Sefton's Attendance and Welfare Officer, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within the school regarding a pupil's absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for the officer's involvement.

Promoting Regular Attendance and Punctuality.

Creating a pattern of regular attendance is everyone's responsibility.

To promote regular attendance we will:

- Include class attendance percentages on our newsletters;
- Upload weekly attendance figures onto our website;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class attendance figures;
- Reward the class with the best attendance for the week with an extra 15 minutes playtime;
- Give termly reward to those pupils with attendance above 97%;
- Report to parents biannually their child's attendance;
- Contact parents when their child's attendance or punctuality meet the threshold causing concern;
- Celebrate improvements in attendance and punctuality.

Summary of time lost

Average percentage attendance	Weeks and days lost in 1 year	Time lost over time at primary school (7 years)	
		In weeks	In terms
100%	0	0	0
95%	1 week 4 days	12 weeks	1 term
90%	3 weeks 4 days	26 weeks	Over half a year
85%	5 weeks 3 days	39 weeks	Almost 1 year
80%	7 weeks 3 days	53 weeks	1 year and 1 term

Leave of Absence during term time

Holidays during term time will not be authorised. Any leave of absence during term time will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you do consider a leave of absence in term time please take note of the following:

- A written request must be submitted by the Parent/Carer in advance to the Head-Teacher who will send a written response.
- Any unauthorised leave of absence may result in a Penalty Notice of up to £120 per parent. Fines can be followed up by prosecution if attendance does not improve.

Appendix 1 The Legal Foundation of this policy is found in Education Act 1996

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Section 444 further 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. An offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that the:

- pupil was absent with leave agreed by school staff; (authorised absence);
- pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause;
- absence was on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs;
- school is not within walking distance of the child's home and the LA has made no suitable arrangements for: $\frac{3}{4}$ the child's transport to and from school; ("walking distance" is defined in section 444(5) of the Education Act 1996).

The law relating to 'walking distance' effectively is defined as two miles for pupils under age eight and three miles for all other pupils. 5.21 Since March 2001 there has been a more serious offence where a parent who, knowing that his child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him to attend (Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). This amendment was introduced to provide another, more serious offence, which requires proof that the parent knew of their child's non-attendance and failed to act. Under the higher offence a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court. Prosecution under section 444(1A) can lead to a custodial sentence.

Appendix 2

Parental responsibility

The term 'parent' refers to one parent, both parents, or the child's carer.

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise (the parent can elect to educate their child at home).

*The expression "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for him or her, or who has the day to day care of the child. Compulsory school age is defined as beginning from age five when a child should attend school from the start of the term commencing on or after his fifth birthday. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

Appendix 3 – First Day Contact Guidelines

- First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The correct procedure at Marshside Primary School is as follows:
- As soon as the registers are returned to the office, staff check absentees against messages received;
- For other pupils for whom no message has been received, staff will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity;
- When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the parent will be informed that the absence will not be authorised;
- In the case of minor ailments, the parent will be encouraged to send the child in with an assurance that school will keep a close eye on him/her. (NB – if there has been a spate of certain symptoms in the school or community, such minor illnesses may be treated as a valid reason for absence);
- Where no contact is made, a message should be left asking the parent to contact the school;
- Reasons for absence are then added to the register.

Logs of attempted contact are made. See **EMERGENCY CONTACT AND FIRST DAY CALLING PROCEDURES.**

Appendix 4

The Government expects schools and local authorities to:

- Reduce absence including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and
- Act early to address patterns of absence;
- Parents to perform their legal duty to by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend early; and
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons and attend school regularly.

Legal Enforcement by Sefton Council

As part of promoting good attendance and punctuality Sefton Council will use its legal powers to enforce school attendance where this becomes problematic, including powers to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (Section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

Education Supervision Orders The local authority must consider applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) before prosecuting parents. A local authority may apply for an ESO instead of or as well as prosecuting parents. The order is placed on the child and the local authority is appointed by the court to supervise that child's education either at a school or at home for a specified period of time.

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance. Parents or carers who take their children out of school without school's permission or are late returning from a leave of absence that has been granted during term time as there are exceptional circumstances may receive a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per child, which must be paid within 21 days. If payment is made after 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty is increased to £120. Where a fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter will be referred to the Attendance and Welfare Service, who will consider instigating criminal proceedings. Please note that Penalty Notices can be issued after 12 unauthorised absences in a term or 20 in two consecutive terms. Children who are late without good reason after registration closes also receive an unauthorised absence mark.

In addition, a penalty notice and may also be issued where parents allow their children to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 sets out the details of how the penalty notice scheme must operate. Sefton Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices will be made available for schools, parents/carers and other interested parties.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 currently allow headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Sefton Council will also be conducting Pre Court Panel meetings in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984.

Leave of absence in exceptional circumstance

Headteachers may only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. The following are examples of agreed exceptional circumstances to guide Headteachers when considering leave of absence requests.

Before deciding whether to authorise leave of absence Headteachers will consider

- The impact on the student's academic progress of any absence
- The pupil's attendance over the academic year
- Whether the leave falls within any key stage national tests or exams.

Examples of exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time:

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – Headteachers should use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence - up to a maximum of 3 days.
- Serious illness of a close relative – only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
- Teenage parents responsible for the care of their own child – at the Headteacher's discretion.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement
- Time-off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by Education Social Work Service
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs". This would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions. Headteachers may specify that only one day will be authorised at a time.
- Weddings of parents and siblings – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however, we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use their discretion in granting leave, for example where natural parents are separated, and in new relationships and it may cause a child further difficulties, if they are excluded from a wedding. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account, the overall welfare of the child.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Pilgrimages by parents (eg. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days).
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitment.

Appendix 6 – Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE’s guidance on school attendance.

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
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