



ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE POLICY

Adopted by the Governing Body of Steeple
Morden Primary School

This policy is to be reviewed: Annually

The next review date is: Summer 2024

Review is the responsibility of: Headteacher / Governing Body

REVIEW HISTORY

Review ratified: 19th July 2018

Review ratified: 23rd May 2019

Review ratified: 15th July 2021

Review ratified: 18th May 2022

Review ratified: October 2023

Signed: *Mark Arnold*
Chair of Governors

Dated: 12/11/2023

Signed: *[Signature]*
Headteacher

Dated: 12/11/2023

AIMS

At Steeple Morden Primary School we believe that children should attend school every day when the school is in session. We do all that we can to encourage children to achieve good attendance. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is a positive ethos and culture that promotes a love of learning. In order to achieve this aim, we work hard to make our school a happy and rewarding environment for all. We also ensure that children who are unable to attend school, due to ill-health, are supported as appropriate.

All parents/carers are responsible for making sure that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. Children are expected to attend school for 190 days each year. One day counts as a morning and an afternoon session, a total of 380 sessions per year.

ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

Under the Education Regulations 1995, the Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that the school keeps accurate attendance registers. At Steeple Morden Primary School, attendance registers record the attendance of children who are present at the start of both the morning and afternoon session each day. They also record whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

PUNCTUALITY, ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION

The school gates are open and supervised from 8.40am to 8.55am.

Children in KS2 enter school through the carpark gate and are supervised walking around the building and into class via the playground doors. KS1 children enter through the pedestrian gate and into the building through one of the two front doors. Reception children enter their classroom via the front, blue door. Morning registration starts at 8.45 and closes after 10 minutes. If a child arrives after registration he/she will be marked as late (L).

It is important that children attend school on time each day; this is the parent/carer's responsibility. As well as being distressing for a child to enter a lesson late, it is also very disruptive for the class and the teacher. Any child arriving after registration must be signed in by a parent at the school office giving the time of arrival and reason for lateness. School cannot accept a reason for lateness from a child.

After 9.30am, unless a late mark has been recorded, any absence becomes an Unauthorised Absence (U) for that session. The afternoon register is taken in the same way between 12.30pm and 1.30pm depending on the class' lunchtime.

Parents/carers are required to provide a satisfactory explanation as to why their child is absent or late before an absence code can be changed. If no satisfactory explanation is received from a parent after the period of one week, any absence will permanently remain as an unauthorised absence. Not all explanations for an absence given by parents/carers can be considered appropriate for an absence to be authorised, in which case, the mark given originally will remain on a child's attendance record.

AUTHORISED ABSENCES

The school cannot legally authorise **any** leave of absence unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The Department for Education (DfE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for **authorised** or **justified** absences:

- a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- days of religious observance, notified in advance;
- absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

Illness

If a child is ill, parents/carers should notify school before 9.30am on the first day of absence and before 9.30am on each morning during the illness. This is the parent's responsibility. A message may be left on the answer machine (01763 852474) which is checked daily. Parents/carers may also e-mail the office with this information – office@steplemorden.cambs.sch.uk or visit the school office.

No child should attend school until 48 hours after they have suffered sickness and/or diarrhoea. The 48 period begins after the final bout of illness.

If a child becomes unwell during the school day, we will make every effort to contact Parent/carers, so it is important that we have up to date contact numbers. Should emergency contact details change, please inform the school office as soon as possible.

Medical appointments

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; **routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.**

If this is not feasible children should be returned to school as soon as practical after the appointment. Parents/carers are required to sign their child(ren) in and out of school at the school office.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

These are absences where:

- no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by the parent/carer
- the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of **authorised** absence above.

There are clearly some grey areas. The DfE guidelines look at the area of Special Occasions and make clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised; for example, absence resulting from a pupil attending the graduation of an older brother or sister could be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a theme park would **not**.

Holidays

We strongly discourage holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child.

In common with the other schools, we ask parents who feel it is absolutely unavoidable that they take their annual holiday (or any other proposed special occasions) during term time to notify the school, in writing, **at least four weeks in advance**, explaining the very exceptional circumstances. This may result in an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss the matter further.

The school will **not** authorise holidays retrospectively.

HOME / SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

- do all they can to ensure their child arrives **on time** for morning and afternoon school sessions. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken (**parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late**);
- notify the school by phone or email **each day by 9:30am** if their child is ill with an estimation of the likely length of absence;
- get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude towards school.

In return the school will:

- contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home;
- contact home over any unexplained absences;
- follow up promptly any concerns parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school.

ATTENDANCE, ABSENCE and PERSISTENT ABSENCE

All attendance and absence is monitored closely by the school; figures for whole school attendance are published by Ofsted and the DfE. Records of each child's attendance are kept year on year for comparison. We expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

Should a child's attendance fall below 90% then this is classed as persistent absence. All absence is followed up by the school initially. Sometimes, absence may involve the support and intervention of the Education Welfare Officer.

As a school, we follow the Cambridgeshire County Council policy 'Managing Attendance, Three Letter System (Including the use of Penalty Notices)' to alert parents to the fact that there may be a problem with attendance. Parents/Carers will then be invited in to school to discuss this with the Headteacher and to agree targets. A record of this meeting will be kept on the child's file.
Appendices A-C

THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

Should there be no improvement in attendance the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will become involved. The EWO is able to support and advise parent/carers on many issues including frequent lateness or regular absence from school. The EWO visits regularly to monitor whole school and individual attendance. Any persistent lateness or absence may be followed up, by letter, home visits and even penalties including custodial sentences or prosecution in the magistrate's court.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class. If they are aware of any unexpected absence during the school day, they will alert the school office as soon as possible.

The school office monitors attendance and records absences on the school attendance system. These records include who reported the absence to the office and what was reported as the reason for the absence. Where the office staff have any concerns about an unexplained or unauthorised absence, they will raise this with the Headteacher immediately.

Attendance is monitored closely and any concerns discussed with parents at Parents' Evenings in the Autumn and Spring terms. Parents receive a copy of their child's annual attendance alongside the written annual report in July.

Where there are on-going issues about the attendance of any child, parents/carers will be contacted by the Headteacher. This will be done by the use of the three letter system of referral. Sometimes this process may include involvement by the EWO and prosecution in magistrates' court.

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body of Steeple Morden Primary School to monitor overall attendance. Regular attendance and absence figures are discussed by the Governing Body. The Governors work closely with the school to ensure that the school's attendance figures are as high as possible.

MISSING IN EDUCATION

From September 2016, all schools must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points i.e. when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school. Where a parent intends to remove a child from school, notification must be in writing and the admissions procedures followed to ensure Parents fulfil their duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education.

Appendix A: 'The Three Letter System' Letter One (Trigger 94%)

Date

Name and address of parent

Dear Parent

Re: Name of pupil Dob: School:

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to «percentage_attendance»% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

I will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If possible, and again if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me or «forename»'s class teacher.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Tracey How

Headteacher

cc Education Welfare Officer – *(for information only and to be available on request)*

Enc Record of attendance

Appendix B: 'The Three Letter System' Letter Two (Attendance below 92%)

Date

Name and address of parent

Re: Name of pupil Dob: School:

Dear Parent

I am writing to inform you that «forename»'s Attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting «forename»'s progress and we need to meet with you urgently.

You are required to attend a meeting with myself and «forename»'s class teacher / Assistant Head of KS1/2 to discuss this matter further at the date and time below.

Date: Time:

Should «forename»'s attendance remain irregular; the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under **Section 444 Education Act 1996**, and a fine of up to **£2500 and/or 3 months in prison**.

Medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect. We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support «forename» in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve «forename»'s attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Tracey How

Headteacher

Cc Education Welfare Officer

Encs Record of Attendance

 School Attendance Leaflet

Appendix C: 'The Three Letter System' Letter Three (Attendance below 90%)

Dear xxx

Re: Child Name: xxx DOB: xxx
School:

Despite previous correspondence, I now note that «forename» has been absent from school for xxx sessions this school year/over the previous xxx weeks. I enclose a record of «forename»'s attendance.

As parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually.

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

I am therefore writing to inform you that if attendance fails to improve during the next (6) weeks, the case may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for possible legal intervention.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Tracey How

Headteacher

Enc. Record of attendance

