

Meadow Lane Infant School Policy



Attendance Policy

Last reviewed	January 2016
Review Cycle	2 Years

MEADOW LANE INFANT SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Meadow Lane Infant School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone’s part in this.
- 1.3 The school will ensure that all stakeholders know of the policy and have access to it.

2. School’s roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at Meadow Lane Infant School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

The Head teacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school’s work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. She/he will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, are made available to all staff, pupils, parents and governors. She/he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

2.2 Registration

- i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes.

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other	Approved Education Activity

	establishment)	
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

ii) The register will be called promptly at **9.00 am** and **1.00/1.15pm** by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

ii) The registers will close at **9.15 am** and **1.15pm**. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted as **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para 4.4).

2.3 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the classroom teacher.
- ii) Meadow Lane Infant School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised;
- iv) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:

- (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example
- a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
- (b) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand;
- (c) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, eg extreme weather conditions;
- (d) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
- (e) in other **exceptional circumstances** (eg a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.

2.4 Approved educational activity

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.5 Staff Training

The School will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receives sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. **Collection and analysis of data**

3.1 The school will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. Attendance is monitored by year group and by class group. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

3.2 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DCSF within the stipulated time frame.

4. **Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance**

4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at Meadow Lane Infant School and is regularly discussed in assemblies and in class groups. Parents are regularly reminded about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment. Certificates are awarded for 100% attendance on a termly basis and at the end of the year. This achievement is celebrated in assembly and reported in the newsletter to parents.

4.2 First day calling

Meadow Lane Infant School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge.

Meetings with parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence over a 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the school will invite parents to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit.

4.3 Referral to the Family Service Enforcement lead

If there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Family Service Enforcement Lead for a referral into Early Help in order to support families to improve attendance.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late.

4.5 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the school office and sign in accordingly.

4.6 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day report to the school office and sign in and out accordingly.

4.7 Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. Meadow Lane Infant School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately.

4.8 In an exceptional circumstance the school could issue a penalty notice for attendance the school would follow the LA code of conduct (see Appendix 1). A penalty notice would only be issued after extensive efforts had been made to improve attendance as detailed in this policy and by using the Nottinghamshire Improving Attendance toolkit (Sept 2015)

5. **Term-time Holidays**

5.1 Meadow Lane Infant School will consider every application individually. However, holidays will not be authorised during term time except in exceptional circumstances. Parents may be subject to a referral or fine if a term time holiday is taken that takes a child's attendance to 85% or below in a given 6 week period. Meadow Lane Infant School will consider authorising holidays for:

- Children of service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during normal school holidays;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;

6. **Extended leave of absence**

6.1 In considering absence for extended trips overseas Meadow Lane Infant School will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved;
- where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some work during this period.

7. Parents' / carers' responsibilities

7.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Meadow Lane Infant School.

7.2 Meadow Lane Infants School expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

7.3 Parents will also be expected to:

- Notify Meadow Lane Infant School on the first day of absence by telephone or in writing.
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives

8. Pupils' / students' responsibilities

8.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.

8.2 Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn.

9. Governors' responsibilities

9.1 The governing body of Meadow Lane Infant School will ensure that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school

Reviewing the policy

The school will review this policy regularly.

Staff reviewed : March 11, March 12, March 14, January 16

Date ratified: March 11, March 12, March 14, January 16

Date for review: January 18

Signed : Head teacher

..... Chair of P&P committee

Appendix 1

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PENALTY NOTICES ISSUED IN RESPECT OF TRUANCY AND EXCLUDED PUPILS

Code of Conduct (August 2015)

INTRODUCTION:

1. The purpose of this local code of conduct is to ensure that the power to issue penalty notices is applied consistently and fairly across the local authority area and that suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of the scheme.

For the purpose of this Code of Conduct the term “school” refers to any primary or secondary phase school regardless of their status as maintained, academy or Independent Sector as well Special Schools, Free schools and Studio Schools or Pupil Referral Unit.

2. A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances where the parent is judged capable of securing their child’s regular attendance at school or whereabouts during school hours but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example this may include situations where the parent fails to engage with any voluntary or supportive measures proposed to address the non-attendance, act following a warning or notification of a child’s absence from school or make adequate arrangements for the whereabouts of their child.

3. The following may issue penalty notices, although there is no requirement for them to do so:

- authorised local authority staff;
- head teachers and school staff authorised by them (limited by regulations to deputy and assistant heads); and
- the police, community support officers and accredited persons.

4. Head teachers wishing to issue, or authorise their staff to issue, penalty notices should first discuss this with their school’s governing body. **Schools deciding to issue penalty Notices themselves should ensure that this is made clear to parents/carers and is reflected in their Attendance and Behaviour Policy.**

5. Any Penalty Notice issued or requests to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued, must comply with the Local code of conduct.

As outlined in the regulations the payment of all monies for Penalty Notices go to the Local Authority.

6. The issuing of a penalty notice must not conflict with other intervention strategies or legal proceedings that are already in process.

LEGAL BASIS FOR ISSUING PENALTY NOTICES

7. This code of conduct has been drawn up to comply with The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 that came into force on 1st September 2007. These regulations were subsequently updated in 2012 and 2013.

8. This code of conduct applies to the parents of children of compulsory school age who are registered at a maintained school, a pupil referral unit, an Academy, a city technology college, or a city college for the technology of the arts and those attending alternative provision.

Definition of a parent

9. All those recognised as a parent under section 576 of the Education Act 1996 are parents for the purposes of this code of conduct. A penalty notice may be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences.

Parental responsibility for regular school attendance

1. Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 (introduced by section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003) introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under section 444. Parents may discharge their potential liability for conviction for an offence under section 444 by paying a penalty.

There is no legal requirement for a penalty notice to be issued before proceeding to prosecution through the magistrates court.

Parental responsibility for the whereabouts of excluded pupils

11. Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents in relation to an excluded pupil. A parent has to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion.

The **Attendance Register** is a **Legal Document** and must be treated as such at all times. The register **must** be maintained as a wholly accurate and current record of an individual student's education provision and their attendance at that provision.

ISSUING PENALTY NOTICES

12. In Nottinghamshire, both the Local Authority (through the Family Service) and Schools can issue penalty notices.

Any School deciding to issue a Penalty Notice is responsible for :

- keeping accurate records as outlined in the Penalty Notice Toolkit and Guidance
- ensuring that the maximum number of notices issued to a parent as set out in this document is not exceeded,
- ensuring that a notice is not issued where court proceedings are being considered and that duplicate notices are not issued.

The Local Authority through the Family Service will be responsible for the collection of the penalty and where a Penalty Notice is unpaid (and the code of conduct has been followed in the issuing of the penalty) will take legal action under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 for the original offence.

Please Note: Nationally a high proportion of Penalty Notices (almost 50%) are unpaid and therefore may result in prosecution through the magistrates court for the original offence. Therefore it is essential that there is good written evidence that **(a)** the parent knew of the consequences of the absence and **(b)** that in the case of general unauthorised absence the parents/family were offered the opportunity to discuss and receive support to identify and overcome any barriers to school absence).

ISSUING PENALTY NOTICES FOR TRUANCY

13. Warning Letters and Penalty Notice Fines may be issued as follows:

Persistent Absence

Once a child has reached 3 days (6 sessions) unauthorised absence over a 6 week rolling period, the school can issue or ask the Local Authority to issue a warning letter. The letter will make it clear that any further absence may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies. It is advised that the monitoring period for warning letters should be 12 weeks with the school will take the lead in monitoring this.

If the unauthorised absence persists and then rises to 5 days (10 sessions) over a 6 week rolling period then the school can issue or ask the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies.

In these cases the Local Authority may also consider what services or measures may be provided to prevent or reduce further unauthorised absence including support and interventions through the Family Service.

Holidays During School Term Time

If the school has evidence that a parent has removed a child from school for the purposes of a holiday during term time without authorisation and the level of absence is in excess of 3 days (6sessions) in total over a 6 week rolling period, then the school can issue or request the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom unauthorised absence applies.

The standard of evidence required will be the same as that required for court cases brought under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.).

The evidence should include a warning to the parent/s at the start of the 6 week time period and a record of support offered to the parent/s.

Where a penalty notice is unpaid with the 28 day deadline, it will be necessary for the person who issued a penalty notice to provide evidence for the court case by way of a Section 9 Statement (a witness statement admissible in court under the Criminal Justice Act and the Magistrates' Courts Act and Rules).

An Enforcement Lead from the Family Service will consult with the person providing the Section 9 Statement and offer guidance as required and arrange for the Section 9 Statement to be completed in the appropriate format.

If the defendant requests the author of a Section 9 Statement to be present at the court hearing the Local Authority will notify the person concerned as soon as such a request is made.

15. A parent will be issued with no more than two penalty notices, relating to the same child, within a twelve month period.

Where notices are issued by the Local Authority:

16. The Family Service Enforcement Lead for each area will receive requests for penalty notices to be issued from those persons authorised to issue such notices and will oversee the process.

17. Where the issue of a penalty notice is requested it will be necessary for the Family Service Enforcement Lead to receive details of the pupil's absence and the evidence that will be available to present to the magistrates' court should the penalty be unpaid.

Where notices are issued by the School / Academy:

18. The designated person authorised by the Head Teacher to issue a Penalty Notice will oversee the process.

19. Before the issue of a penalty notice is requested it will be necessary for the designated person to check the pupil's absence and the evidence that will be available to present to the magistrates' court should the penalty be unpaid.

20. Where a penalty notice has been issued the designated person will provide a copy to the Family Service Enforcement Lead within one week.

21. The Family Service Enforcement Lead will monitor payment of the penalty and where payment is not received the LA will prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice (which can only be done in limited circumstances). All fines must be paid within the required timescales as set out in the national regulations. **There will be no flexibility to allow for the late payment of fines**

Please Note: The Local Authority will only prosecute those cases where the Code of Conduct has been followed fully in the issuing of the Penalty Notice.

ISSUING PENALTY NOTICES FOR EXCLUSION

22. For notices issued by the Local Authority, The Family Service Enforcement Lead for each area will receive requests for penalty notices to be issued from those persons authorised to issue such notices and will oversee the process.

23. Where penalty notices are issued by the school, the designated person authorised by the Head Teacher will oversee the process of issuing the notice in line with the Code of Conduct.

24. A penalty notice may only be issued when there is no reasonable justification for the child being in public at the times set out in the next paragraph. Reasonable justification may include pre-arranged medical and dental appointments or emergency appointments. It might also be necessary for a child to accompany a parent with similar appointments if the parent considers it inappropriate to leave the child unsupervised. Attendance at a court hearing or an interview at a police station or with the Youth Offending Service may also provide reasonable justification.

25. Where a penalty notice is requested by a school, it will be necessary for the Family Service Enforcement Lead to receive from the school evidence that a notice under section 104 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 has been given to a parent of the pupil.

Where the school is issuing the Penalty Notice, the designated person in school is responsible for checking that a notice under section 104 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 has been given to a parent of the pupil. In addition to the above, the person issuing the notice must have evidence that the excluded pupil was present in a public place during school opening hours without reasonable justification. The time and date must be provided to ensure that this falls within the time the school at which the pupil is on roll is open and that the incident occurred within the period set out in the notice issued under section 104 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Before requesting or issuing a Penalty Notice the school will need to evidence that they have checked that there was no reasonable justification for the child or young person being in a public place and that the parent had been told verbally or by letter that an excluded child cannot be seen in a public place.

Where a penalty has not been paid, it will be necessary for the person who requested the issue of a penalty notice to provide evidence for the court case by way of a Section 9 Statement (a witness statement admissible in court under the Criminal Justice Act and the Magistrates' Courts Act and Rules).

The Family Service Enforcement Lead for each area will consult with the person providing the Section 9 Statement and offer guidance as required and arrange for the Section 9 Statement to be completed in the appropriate format.

If the defendant requests the author of a Section 9 Statement to be present at the court hearing the LA will notify the person concerned as soon as such requests are made.

26. A parent will be issued with no more than two penalty notices, relating to the same child, within a twelve month period.

ISSUING PENALTY NOTICES FOR PERSISTENT LATENESS:

27 A penalty notice may only be issued where a pupil is persistently late for 10 separate instances over a period of six school weeks and where these are signified as a "U" in the attendance register.

28 Schools should make it clear to parents/carers and pupils in their attendance policy what they categorise as being late ("L") and the time after which arrival will be marked as unauthorised absence ("U") in the attendance register.

29 The issuing of Penalty notices will be only in cases where the persistent lateness is marked as unauthorised absence.

WITHDRAWING A PENALTY NOTICE

30. The Education (Penalty Notices)(England) Regulations 2007 limit the circumstances in which local authorities can withdraw penalty notices and the normal response to non-payment of a penalty notice will be prosecution for the offence to which the notice relates.

31. A penalty notice **may only be** withdrawn by the local authority named in the notice as the authority to which payment is to be made. The only circumstances in which a Penalty Notice will be withdrawn include cases in which:

- it ought not to have been issued; or
- it ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient;

or

- it appears to the authority that the notice contains material errors,
- it interferes with existing intervention strategies or legal proceedings

32. Where a penalty notice has been withdrawn –

- notice of the withdrawal must be given to the recipient; and
- any amount paid by way of penalty in pursuance of that notice must be repaid to the person who paid it.