

Whole School Attendance Policy

For the academic years 2020 - 22 this policy should be read with the addendum as this reflects expectations during a pandemic, see page 10.

Introduction:

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

All members of our school, understand that our pupils may be absent due to medical reasons such as seizures, operations and low immunity. When this is the case the school will support the child and their family and make reasons known to the local authority attendance team.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- Celebrate high attendance when appropriate by sending home certificates;
- Report to you regularly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality; if attendance is a concern you will be contacted.
- Work with parents, carers, health professionals and social care to help increase attendance.
- Develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

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 before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

It is the policy of the school to request an appointment card or letter, in order for an absence to be authorised. If there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence is authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription, appointment card or similar.

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 child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

From September 2015 a pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be prioritised and parents will be informed of this promptly.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with monitoring progress towards individual targets.

For all pupils who are identified as PA the school has identified individual actions matched to the needs of the pupils and their family. Due to the serious nature of persistent absence, school will initially support raising attendance if this is not successful school will consider requesting support from the local authority attendance team in order to address the matter. School will also consider requesting that the local authority issue penalty notices, or use other sanctions, as a means of improving attendance. If the reason for your child's absence is severe illness, seizure related or due to hospitalisation and recuperation the school will ensure the attendance team are aware of the circumstances and only supportive action will be taken.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone or you can call into school and report to reception

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Discuss the situation with the headteacher
- Our family welfare officer will send a letter or invite you in to discuss the situation, if absences persist.
- Consider using parenting contracts or panel meetings in order to identify barriers to regular attendance and agree targets for improvement,
- Refer the matter to the local authority school attendance team, where appropriate,
- Consider requesting that the local authority issue penalty notices in accordance with LCC's Code of Conduct, or use other legal sanctions, as appropriate, in order to improve attendance

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality (see appendix):

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with us in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

- Meetings between school parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the head teacher,
- Use of parenting contracts,
- Use of the common assessment framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the local authority school attendance team),
- Use of attendance panels,
- Use of penalty notices
- Referrals for legal action

The Local Authority School Attendance Service:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). PAST will also support school in trying to resolve the situation by agreement and will work to support school and parents in achieving improved levels of attendance.

Use of Legal Measures:

Red Marsh School defines irregular attendance in line with the thresholds set out for the use of penalty notices within the Local Authorities Code of Conduct.

If other ways of trying to improve the attendance of an individual pupil fail, and we consider attendance to be irregular, where absences are unauthorised the case may be referred to the School Attendance Legal Team (SALT), who can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the magistrates' court.

Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the local authority.

Lateness which is not the result of health issues, medical appointments or LCC transport issues:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable unless there is a valid reason such as an agreed late start due to health issues or LCC transport issues. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. If your child misses the start of the day their routines are disrupted and this can lead to difficulties settling into classes. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

At **9.45am/1.20pm** the registers will be closed. In accordance with regulation, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark

and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a penalty notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the head teacher and/or a member of the pastoral support team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave in Term Time:

It is important that parents understand that leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.

All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form, available from the school office

Exceptional circumstances are 'one off events that would not occur on an annual basis', i.e a wedding, a funeral and a graduation.

If you are granted an exceptional holiday wish provided by a charity it is important that you have evidence that you have requested the holiday is taken during school holiday time. If you are granted a wish outside of this time you will need to provide evidence of this to share with the school.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised.

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise **one day** of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.

Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Participation in sporting events

Parents can request leave of absence for their child to take part in regional, national and international sporting events. However, as always, granting leave is at the headteachers discretion and she/he will need to discuss with you the length and frequency of the absence(s) requested and how learning will continue if absence occurs, eg the sports club or association providing an approved education tutor.

Leave for a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school can be marked in the register as code P.

Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late in order to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the head teacher and is unlikely to be approved if it would occur regularly.

Alternative provision and use of directions:

There are a range of reasons why pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are listed below:

- When a pupil is unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons
- When a pupil is required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour; either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (managed move)

Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons:

A key element of the work of our school is reducing the amount of time missed by pupils who are unwell; whether their condition is short or long term. The school will continue to work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence
- Avoid any leave in term time, but apply in advance using form if the reason for leave is unavoidable/exceptional
- Attendance at meetings in school
- Participation and cooperation in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Attend school when you are in good health.

Headteacher / (School Attendance Lead):

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision
- Where there is ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process

Designated Staff:

- First day response: The school office
- Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided and log this information accordingly
- Input and update the attendance registers
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil attendance for every pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
- Family worker will co-ordinate work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance.

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Governors

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures
- Authorise the head teacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the head teacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered.

This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

Expectations regarding regular attendance:

As a school, we aim whenever possible to have all of our pupils in school every day. We recognise that pupils may have absences at times due to illness and other unavoidable cause, such as hospital appointments we aim to reduce unauthorised absence and to work with parents and pupils to minimise absence where possible.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. As stated previously, school defines irregular attendance in line with the thresholds set out for the use of penalty notices within the Local Authorities Code of Conduct. Good attendance is considered to be above 96%.

Children missing from school Red Marsh Procedures

The Teacher /TA3s responsibility is to take the register each morning and afternoon. If they know the reason for a child being absent inform the school office, this will be recorded in the absence folder.

Teachers will be made aware of reason for child's absence if known by the school office. If they are not made aware of reasons for absence teacher/TAs should continue to ask.

Identified office staff, look at the registers each morning and identify children with an absent mark.

Office staff look in the pupil absent folder to see if there is a reason for the absence, if no recorded reason identified staff call the home number to speak to a parent/carer to identify a reason for absence.

If first contact number cannot be reached after three attempts other contact numbers will be rung.

Where a child may have been absent from school for two days without contact and school have tried and failed to locate the child's whereabouts, school will follow safeguarding procedures e.g. go out to visit the house, contact a social worker, social care or the police.

If the above procedures have not been successful, after three days school will make contact with the CME Officer for their locality who will attempt to locate the child using their links and networks. A PAST referral and/or a CME1 form will be completed within 6-10 days.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Date of Policy: Autumn 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021

Date Review Due: Autumn 2022

Appendix: School attendance and the law

There are many pieces of legislation and government regulations and guidance that are relevant to school attendance and to children and their parents and carers. The list below relates to this policy but is not exhaustive.

Parents and carers

Government expectations

The Department for Education's [School attendance guidance](#) states that the government expects:

- *Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.*
- *All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.*

Duty to ensure children receive education

[Section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#) covers the duty of parents to secure the education of children in their care who are of compulsory school age and states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

- (a) *to his age, ability and aptitude, and*
- (b) *to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.*

Offence if a child does not attend regularly

Under [Section 444 of the Education Act 1996](#), if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly, their parent is guilty of an offence.

The offence is absolute as the only defences available to the parent are those statutory defences listed within that section of the Act, ie:

- the child was absent with leave granted by the school;
- the child was prevented from attending by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause;
- absence was on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which their parent belongs;
- that the school is not within statutory walking distance and that the local education authority has made no suitable transport arrangements or enabled the pupil to become registered at an alternative nearer school.

Compulsory school age

[Section 8 of the Education Act 1996](#) establishes that a child becomes of compulsory school age on the start date of the term following her/his fifth birthday, or that day if her/his fifth birthday falls on the day term starts.

A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which he/she reaches the age of 16 or if he/she reaches 16 after the last Friday in June but before the start of the new school year.

Legal definition of "parent" in relation to attendance

The law requires that all “parents” are held responsible for their child’s attendance. This definition can include any person who has care of the child. [Section 576 of the Education Act 1996](#) states:

Meaning of “parent”.

(1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, “parent”, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person—

- (a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or*
- (b) who has care of him.*

Thus, the definition of “parent” means all natural parents, whether they are married or not, and includes any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility and/or care for a child or young person.

Schools

Attendance and absence registration codes

[School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities](#), DfE, regularly updated

This guidance also states that the government expects *schools and local authorities to:*

- *Promote good attendance and 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.*

Data protection

Schools must ensure that personal data is handled in accordance with the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). See Red Marsh Schools Privacy Notice for information about how personal data will be used.

Duty for schools to include attendance information in reports for parents

[The Education \(Pupil Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2005](#)

Duty for schools to notify the local authority when pupils join or leave school

[Regulation 12 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Duty for maintained schools to publish attendance data

[What maintained schools must publish online](#), DfE guidance

Duty for schools to report attendance concerns about individual pupils to the local authority

[Regulation 12 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Duty for schools to report attendance data to Government

[Section 537A of the Education Act 1996](#) and

[Complete the school census](#), [DfE guidance for schools and local authorities on what data government requires](#)

Duty for schools to safeguard and promote welfare of children

[Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges](#), DfE, regularly updated

Leave in term time *

[September 2013 amendment to The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

* This regulation does not apply to academies, though many adopt this as good practice.

Legal interventions

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child who is on a school roll fails to attend regularly and those absences are recorded by the school as unauthorised.

Legal interventions are available under the following Acts, Guidance and Regulations:

- [Section 444 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- [Section 36 of the Children Act 1989](#)
- [Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [School attendance parental responsibility measures 2015](#)

Pupils with health needs who cannot attend school

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions: Statutory guidance](#), DfE, 2015

Regulations regarding participation in performances

[The Children \(Performances and Activities\) \(England\) Regulations 2014](#)

Regulations regarding removal from roll

[Regulation 8 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Regulations regarding the school day and number of sessions.

[The Education \(School Day and School Year\) \(England\) Regulations 1999](#)

Addendum to Red Marsh School Attendance Policy

Academic Year 2020 – 2022

Expectations of Attendance

In their published guidance, the Department for Education have clearly stated that:

- From the start of the autumn term 2020 attendance in school is mandatory and the usual rules on attendance apply
- Schools should now record attendance and follow up absence in the usual way
- The duty on parents to ensure the regular attendance of children of compulsory school age is no longer disapplied
- The ability to issue sanctions such as penalty notices is no longer disapplied
- However,
 - a) should a pupil or house hold member have symptoms or test positive for Corona Virus
 - b) or have had close contact with someone with symptoms or a positive test with Covid-19
 - c) or are under a period of quarantine
 - d) or are advised to stay at home due to being vulnerable these pupils should not attend school and will not be classified as an absence, see page 2 for further information.

The school day

- Excellent punctuality is very important as the school day is structured to avoid mixing and to enable social distancing. Pupils arriving late may compromise the safe running of school.
- If pupils are late, a member of staff will speak with their parents/carers

To address the requirements of reopening safely there are some changes to processes in school. The school day now starts:

09:05 – for pupils arriving with their parents/carers or via a taxis

09:20 – for pupils arriving in LCC transport

Pupils are expected to be in school by 09:30. The morning register closes at 09:45am and the afternoon register closes at 13:20. Pupils arriving after these times will receive a U mark (unauthorised absence).

The recording of attendance

Attendance registers will be marked as laid out in the DfE School Attendance Guidance and as detailed in our main Whole School Attendance Policy. During this academic year, there will be the use of an additional code X (as outlined in the DfE School Attendance Guidance Addendum). This will be used to record situations when pupils are not able to attend school due to:

- self-isolation
 - pupil or household member has coronavirus symptoms*
 - pupil has had close contact with someone with symptoms/confirmed positive COVID19 and told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace/Public Health
 - pupil is under a period of quarantine, e.g. following a relevant trip overseas
- staying at home following advice of a health professional, where they are clinically extremely vulnerable, in a local lockdown scenario only
- advice from DHSC or PHE advising them to stay at home in a local lockdown scenario

In all the above cases, school will provide access to remote education.

*all pupils with coronavirus symptoms are advised to get a test.

If the test is negative and the pupil feels well enough, they can return to school.

If the test is positive, the pupil should self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. The absences following the positive test result will be marked as I (authorised absence).

The X code is not classed as an absence for statistical purposes.

What happens if my child develops symptoms when on site?

In this situation, we will make immediate contact with parents/carers in order to send the pupil home. It is **essential** that parents have provided us with up to date contact details and that parents respond quickly, to enable us to remove the pupil from site as soon as possible, following the latest DfE guidance for schools.

Parents/ carers should ensure that a test is requested and inform school of the result of this test as soon as possible.

Leave requests

The school policy and procedure around leave in term time remains the same. Any leave in term time will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Parent/carers must request permission for the leave **before** the absence. Requests cannot be agreed retrospectively. Whilst the current situation feels exceptional to us all this should not in itself be seen as an exceptional reason to support a request for leave. The Covid-19 situation has affected all families.

Policy review date: Autumn 2021