MARSHLAND HIGH SCHOOL

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved by:	Local Governing Body	Date: February 2020
Last reviewed on:	October 2019	
Next review due by:	February 2021	

Contents

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence

- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled

- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Improving attendance and reducing persistent absence is a school priority. National data shows that there is a clear link between attendance and achievement at school.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold. This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3.   School procedures

3.1   Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present

- Attending an approved off-site educational activity

- Absent

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry

- The amended entry

- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made

- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.40am on each school day ready for tutor form to start at 8:45am.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 11:10am. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:15pm and will be kept open until 13:45.

3.2   Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence. For example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health, by 8.40am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Parents inform school by calling 01945 584146 and leaving a message on the absence line. Incidents of non-attendance will be reviewed and followed up by the Attendance Officer or members of the Pastoral Team.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Parents/carers will be asked to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Parents will be able to see if an absence is authorised or unauthorised via the parent gateway app.

If there becomes a frequent pattern of unplanned absences due to illness, the school may request a doctor's note to confirm the authenticity of the illness and therefore be able to record the absence as authorised. Where authenticity has not been proven the school may record the absence as unauthorised until such a time that medical evidence is provided.

3.3   Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents will need to notify the tutor, Attendance Officer or Pastoral Manager if they have an appointment during school time.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4   Anxieties about school

In all schools some young people experience increased anxieties and we have a wide range of pupil support services to help with this. However, unless there is a clearly diagnosed medical reason for non-attendance (physical or emotional), parents still have a responsibility to ensure students attend school and receive their education. We cannot authorise attendance for anxieties without a medical diagnosis and a medical statement on the impact on education.

School will of course offer specialist support and may be able to make further referrals for additional assistance, but students are still expected to attend school. Advice from external professionals is generally that attendance is the best way to overcome anxieties. Please contact the school as soon as possible to speak to the relevant Pastoral Manager if you have any concerns and we will work with you.

3.5   Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Students who are continually late to school will be dealt with in the first case by the Tutor who will ascertain the reason for lateness. Parents will be informed and sanctions such as after school or lunchtime detentions may be issued in order to catch up on work missed.

3.6   Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.7   Reporting to parents

A child's attendance will be reported in the academic reports that are sent via the SIMs gateway app. "Live" attendance data for students can be seen via the SIMs gateway app.

3.8 Child Missing in Education

If a pupil is absent for a prolonged period or fails to return from a holiday or fixed term exclusion, the school should follow the normal procedures for investigating pupil absence (i.e. telephone calls, letters, invitations to meetings at the school, etc). If the child does not return to school the absence will be unauthorised and should be referred to the ASEO (Attendance Support and Enforcement Officer) who will follow their procedures for 'missing pupils'. If it is established that the child no longer resides at that address and their whereabouts is unknown, the school will receive a letter from the ASEO advising them of the situation and the school can remove the pupil from roll.

4.   Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1   Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be "exceptional circumstances".

Exceptional circumstances can include funerals (for immediate family members only), weddings and representation in major sporting competitions or public performances. For advice on exceptional circumstance please speak to the Pastoral Manager for your child's year group.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Holidays during term time will not be authorised and if a family takes a holiday that has not been authorised a referral to the Local Authority for the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice will take place.

4.2   Legal sanctions

Schools can refer parents to the Local Authority for consideration to impose a fine for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay in accordance to the current penalty notice charges as set by Norfolk County Council. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Marshland High School have a variety of ways in which we support good attendance. Parents will be notified by letter when a child is at risk of poor attendance and again when a student has an attendance lower than 90%. Attendance will be monitored closely by school and parents may be asked to attend attendance meetings with the Attendance Officer, relevant Pastoral Manager and other Senior Staff. An attendance plan may be agreed and reviewed in 6 weeks. In the case of persistent poor attendance that includes unauthorised absence, either a fixed penalty notice or a "Fast Track" attendance panel will be considered. Home Visits may also be made in the event that regular contact is not being made with the school.

Attendance is celebrated in school through reward points, reward assemblies, prizes to the tutor group with the best attendance and letters home to parents. Attendance is celebrated regularly in Assemblies with 100% attendance recognised in two award ceremonies in the Autumn and Summer Term. Weekly assemblies promote good attendance across form groups.

In each year there is a tutor group for those who are at risk of becoming a "Persistent Absentee" strategies are used to develop a positive relationship with the tutor in order to promote good attendance. Students track their own attendance across the term. If attendance improves significantly, students may move to another tutor group. Likewise if students in another group have poor attendance they can be moved into an attendance tutor group.

6. Attendance monitoring

Tutors monitor pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to contact school for each day a child is ill.

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

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

7. Roles and responsibilities

The Deputy Headteacher is responsible for promoting good attendance in school, this work is supported by an Attendance Officer and 5 Pastoral Managers.

8.   Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Deputy Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be presented to the Local Governing Body for approval.

9.   Links with other policies

This policy is linked to the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Appendix 1: 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