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MULBERRY PARK EDUCATE TOGETHER PRIMARY ACADEMY ATTENDANCE POLICY

Educate Together Academy Trust wishes to support all its schools in encouraging and maintaining good attendance. One of our core principles is equality and we believe that children will not have an equal education if their attendance or punctuality is poor.

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Our schools fully recognise their 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 children registered at each school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils, who are registered at each school, on the school website.

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 the Local Authority. These requirements are contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- 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

This policy incorporates the latest guidance from DFE 2.11.16

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and staff work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff in the school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise parents, carers and pupils awareness of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children as well, in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our schools will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, Board and Council members, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to local LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Headteacher.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted in the electronic register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised

- Making referrals to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

All classroom doors will open at 8.40 am until 8.50 am for activity mornings. All pupils must be in class by 8.50am. The playground is open from 8.30am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher at 8.50am and at 1.00pm.

All attendance records are documented using Arbor software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

The school registration will be at 8.50am in the morning and 1.00pm in the afternoon. If a child arrives after registration closes then that child will be marked accordingly. Once the classroom doors are closed at 8.50am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way after 8.50am will be

marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.00am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.00am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence provided an appointment card is shown. (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

ABSENCES

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence by 8.50am. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

If a child's location cannot be ascertain, the school will judge on a case by case basis when to refer the matter to the Education Welfare team via a pupil tracking form. This will usually be on the fifth calendar day but can be sooner.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside of school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. If the quest is for a holiday in term time you must be the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission must be sought in advance and there must be exceptional reasons as to why this family holiday needs to be taken during term time. Our school can only consider requests from the main carer or parent.

The Headteacher will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. Visits to relatives, for medical treatment of either the child or a relative abroad unless an NHS doctor's note is provided or because travel is cheaper are not exceptional circumstances. Nor are availability, family events or to visit ill relatives.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95% from all children except those with a medically diagnosed chronic illness.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

Unauthorised absence may incur a penalty notice from the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice of up to £60 per child per parent if the child is over 5

years old. This rises to £120 if not paid within 21 days with a prosecution possible after 28 days non-payment.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits regularly to check and monitor attendance. He/she carries out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 90%). He/she works with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Leave of absence in term-time will never be authorised:

- during the first term, when a pupil is just starting at School, as it is very important for the child to settle into their new class;
- during an assessment/test period – Key Stage SATs
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes **any** level of unauthorised absence;
- Birthday, family celebration, family illness
- Shopping
- Minding the house, caring for siblings or relatives
- Parental illness

Absence for religious reasons

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 3 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carer is a member and this will be marked in the register (Attendance Code 'R').

If parents/carers require an additional day this must be requested 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').

Complaints arising from use of this policy

These will be handled in the same way as other complaints – please see the complaints policy available from the school office or on the website.

Monitoring and Evaluating

This policy will be monitored and evaluated by the Headteacher and the Academy Council and approved by the Trust. The Headteacher will report on its implementation to the Council and Trust on a monthly basis.

Date of policy May 2016, reviewed May 2018

Signed.....(Head) Signed.....(Chair of Council)

Signed.....(Trust Executive Head)