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**Attendance Policy**

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| Date written: January 2018 |
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**Introduction and Statutory framework**

Mill Lane Primary School aims to maximise attendance rates and secure high levels of punctuality in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them. If allowed to remain unchecked persistent absence and lateness can significantly impact on a pupil’s progress and achievement. Our partnerships with parents play a vital role in ensuring that this is achieved.

In line with the 1996 Education Act, we expect all children on roll to attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We will endeavour to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to create happy and rewarding environment for all children where they want to come. We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school. We reward good rates of attendances through weekly treats for 100% weekly attendance, weekly class certificates, Attendance Ted and termly and annual treats for 100% attendance.

We recognise that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. At all times, parents are encouraged to take an active role in the school life and to share and support their children’s learning. Through our home-school agreement, parents agree to ensure their child’s regular and punctual attendance. As part of our annual written reports to parents, children’s attendance records are shared. They are also shared at other times during the year if they become a concern.

**Monitoring and Reviewing Attendance**

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil. Regular checks on attendance are carried out by all class teachers. The Attendance Registers are marked twice each day, at the start of the morning session and again in the afternoon. Registers are checked by the Office. All absences and persistent lateness are investigated. When the register closes, office staff check the messages. If a pupil is absent and the school has not been contacted, then office staff will telephone parents to check why a pupil is not in school.

Attendance data is held electronically on separate SIMS Management Information System, accessible by the Head Teacher, Parent Support Advisor (PSA) and School Administration Team who are able to conduct spot checks on individual children and provide comprehensive attendance records.

The PSA monitors the attendance of pupils each week. Where the PSA and Head Teacher feel it appropriate, parents/carers will be notified by letter when their child’s attendance drops below 95%. At this point medical evidence for absences can be requested. If attendance drops below 90% a 2nd letter will be written inviting parents/carers to meeting to discuss ways of improving attendance. Mill Lane will refer a pupil to the Attendance Team if a child’s attendance drops below 80% and there is no satisfactory reason for this drop in attendance. If a child has 10 sessions unauthorised absence in any 6 week period school will refer to the LA Attendance Team and a penalty notices may be issued.

Returns of school data are made annually to the DfE and benchmark data exists to compare our school within local and national contexts. The school sets attendance targets each year. Targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years.

**Punctuality and lateness**

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start to the school day. The PSA monitors lateness of pupils as punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is of extreme importance therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

Children may arrive onto the school site from 8.50. There is no supervision on site for children before this time, the school is not legally responsible for them and to this end, the gates are not opened until this time.

Registration is called at 9:00 am and again at 12.45pm for Reception and KS1 and 1.00pm for KS2. Registers will close after registration times. A pupil that arrives after this time will be marked as ‘late’.

The register will close after 30 minutes and pupils arriving after this time will be marked as unauthorised.

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will make verbal contact with parents/carers through the PSA. If the concerns persist, PSA will write to the parents/carers. If there is no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer. In the event of persistent unauthorised lateness, the school will make a formal referral to the Attendance Team.

**Authorised and unauthorised attendance**

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence and not parents. It is a statutory requirement for the Head Teacher to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised. Wherever reasonably possible, we expect parents to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time if this is not possible they should give as much written notice as possible with a copy of the appointment slip. The codes for absences can be accessed through SIMs when taking the register.

If a child is absent from school for whatever reason the parent must inform the school in person, in writing or by telephone as soon as possible. The normal routine is to telephone the school on the first morning of absence. Such calls are always logged and the class teacher informed.

Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school received no reason/explanation, unauthorised leave of absence eg holiday, or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given.

**Leave of Absence**

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

* Head teachers **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application. Exceptional circumstances being defined as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.
* Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
* Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
* Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.
* The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent.
* Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
* If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Stockton Local Authorities Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

**Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.**

Mill Lane Primary School understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but this does NOT count as an exceptional circumstance. Leave which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

• Availability of cheaper holidays

• Availability of desired accommodation

• Poor weather experienced in school holidays

• Overlap with beginning or end of term

• Booked the wrong dates by mistake

• Booked by another family member

• Attending a wedding that is not immediate family

• Family birthdays or visiting relatives

**Strategies for promoting attendance**

**Why attendance matters:**

Less than 5 days absence = 98%+ attendance

• 14 days absence (approx.) = 93.5% attendance

• 20 days absence (approx.) = 90% attendance

• 30 days absence (approx.) = 88% attendance

If a child achieves 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 40 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

At Mill Lane the staff and Governors endeavour to support parents in the responsibility of attendance by:-

* Offering an environment in which pupils feel welcomed and valued. The school’s ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
* Making every effort to match learning tasks to pupils’ needs.
* Collating attendance data termly and analysing it in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice.
* Reminding parents regularly (via newsletters, the school portal, parents’ evenings etc) of the importance of good attendance.
* The Headteacher will make a termly report to governors on attendance.
* The Headteacher, PSA and SENDCo may liaise with other agencies when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing difficulties.
* Some secondary schools make links with the school and the Year 6 pupils to help with a smooth transfer to their school. Discussions will identify those pupils who may require extra support during this process.

**Role of the Safeguarding Governor**

The Safeguarding Governor will act alongside the Head Teacher to monitor the attendance of all children and vulnerable groups (Pupil Premium, FSM, SEN etc) and ensure that this policy is being followed.

**Role of Attendance Team**

On those occasions when a pattern of poor attendance or unauthorised lateness is developing the Head Teacher and PSA will work directly with the family to seek solutions. Where unauthorised absences continue the Head Teacher will consider making a referral to the LA Attendance Team to commence legal procedures.

**Data Analysis**

The school collects and stores attendance data using the management information systems (SIMs). The school provides attendance data to the DFE, using SIMs to send data about the school census. The figures returned are then published by the DFE as part of the annual publication of school statistics.

The school uses the attendance data to identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and to track the attendance of individual pupils. Where attendance is a concern, the school will use data to analyse attendance by year group, classes, groups of pupils for example ethnicity or gender. The school uses attendance data to identify the main causes of absences within the school and to take action to address and improve those areas.

The school will use data to monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

**Signed and dated:**

Head Teacher ………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Chair of Governors …………………………………………………………………………………………