# Attendance Policy

## Last reviewed: September 2018

**Vision Statement:**

*"We want each and every child to leave Markeaton with resilience, empathy, cultural awareness and confidence at the core of everything they do. We want our children to experience a challenging and immersive curriculum which will encourage them to become responsible and ambitious citizens of the future; looking back positively on their time at Markeaton."*

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. At Markeaton Primary School we aim to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality. We aim to achieve or exceed 97% whole school attendance each school year.

**Our School Day:**

- Main school gates open at 8.40am
- Whistle blown at 8.50am and register taken in the classroom
- Children arriving between 9.00am and 9.15am will be marked as **late**
- Children arriving after 9.15am will be marked as **unauthorised late**
- Lunch is between 12.00pm and 1.30pm (dependent on year group)
- Afternoon classes start between 1.00pm and 1.30pm (dependent on year group)
- School ends at 3:25pm

**Types of Absence:**

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the appropriate register code will be used. Please see the key at the end of this policy for the different register codes.

**Authorised Absence:**

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence. Absence is **generally** authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical or dental appointments (proof of medical appointment is required)
- Days of Religious Observance
- Exclusion
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment
- Family bereavement
- Involvement in a public performance
- 'Exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis)
- Approved sporting activity
- Non-Compulsory school age absence
- Educated off site

**Unauthorised Absence:**

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence should **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- No explanation is offered by the parent/carer
- The explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, leisure activities, etc.)
- Family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances)

**Persistent Absence:**

Persistent absence (or PA) is when a child has absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

**Approved Educational Activity:**

Children who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises need not be marked as authorised absent, and will be recorded as being on an approved educational activity. This means that, for statistical purposes such as educational visits or approved sporting activities, the child can be counted as statistically 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of the appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

**Registers:**

We are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. Markeaton Primary School advises parents/carers to ensure that children are on the school premises by 8.50am (in time for the morning whistle) and again by between 12.55pm and 1.25pm (dependent on year group and if they have been off site). Pupils arriving between 9.00am and 9.15am will be marked with an 'L' indicating they are late for school.
Pupils arriving after 9.15am will be registered with a 'U' showing they are present in school but were late enough to affect their learning.

**Attendance data and data sharing:**

Registers are legal documents. In considering attendance levels, the register is of paramount importance. Should a persistent non-attending pupil be identified, information regarding this pupil will be shared with Educational Welfare. This information will include the pupil's name, date of birth and address, along with, their parents'/carers' names and addresses. Should the parents of a persistent non-attender be

prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

The data which is extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- Support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a termly and yearly basis
- Identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees
- Facilitate and encourage early intervention
- Identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism (for example, time lost to term-time holidays, regular absences on Mondays and/or Fridays, etc.); match attendance trends with attainment trends
- Identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy
- Report attendance matters to parents

As a school we have a legal duty to accurately record pupils' attendance and share information with the Local Authority if a pupil's attendance gives cause for concern. Any information shared with the Local Authority will be done so through secure means and in accordance with the General Data Protection Act (GDPR) 2018.

**First Day Notification/Response:**

We expect parents/carers to notify school of their child's absence on the first day of absence. If this expectation is not met, school will make a sustained effort to obtain a reason for absence on the first day of absence, usually via a phone call. Failure to obtain a reason for absence will result in a letter home requesting a reason to be given in writing. In some cases Educational Welfare will be contacted to make a home visit.

**Punctuality:**

In addressing punctuality at Markeaton Primary School we:

- Clearly advertise times for the school day
- Publicise this policy in school and communicate it to parents/carers
- Balance any sanctions with positive encouragement
- Praise and acknowledge punctuality and improvements in punctuality
- Ensure that teachers set a good example by arriving punctually for registration and for lessons
- Follow up the reasons for lateness and are alert to any emerging patterns or problems

**Leave of Absence:**

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time. Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance using the 'Application for Leave of Absence' form and any request can only be authorised where school accepts there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents/carers risk losing their child's place on the School Roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed date of return and re-admission cannot be guaranteed as defined in legislation: 'The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended 2013)'.

**Leave of absence in term-time will never be authorised under the following circumstances**:

- 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 – e.g. Key Stage Two SATs
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence

**Penalty Notices:**

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Parents commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days.

Parents may receive a Penalty Notice payable up to £120 per parent per child for unauthorised leave of absence (if paid within 28 days of penalty being issued). However, if paid within 21 days of the notice being issued the cost is £60 per parent per child. Failure to pay the penalty within 28 days may result in prosecution and conviction. In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 5 school days lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or 10 school days lost to unauthorised absence in 2 consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is considered. In cases of unauthorised absence parents will receive a written warning of the possibility of Penalty Notice being issued. This will state the extent of the child's absences and give parents 15 days to bring about an improvement. In that time the child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

In cases of unauthorised holidays, warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that in some cases Penalty Notices may be issued without a warning.

**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 is a member, and this will be marked as 'R' in the register. If parents 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').

**Key:**

| Absence Code | Meaning |
|---|---|
| B | Educated off site |
| C | Other authorised circumstances |
| F | Agreed extended holiday |
| G | Family holiday not agreed |
| H | Family holiday agreed |
| I | Illness |
| L | Late before register closed |
| M | Medical/ dental appointment |
| O | Other unauthorised circumstances/ Unauthorised absence |
| P | Approved sporting activity |
| R | Religious observance |
| U | Late after register has closed |
| V | Educational visit or trip |
| X | Non-compulsory school age absence |
| Y | Unable to attend school due to exceptional circumstances. For example, self-isolating or 'Bubble' closure, Local Lockdown, etc |

## Covid-19 Addendum – September 2020

In March when the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, the Government made it clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school. Their stance has now changed and 'it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.'

Therefore, school attendance from September 3rd 2020 will be mandatory and the usual school attendance rules and expectations will apply:

- Parents' duty to ensure that their child attends regularly
- School's responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- The availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authority's codes of conduct

**Our School Day:**

There are now staggered start and end times for eligible children:

| Year Group | Start and end time |
|---|---|
| FS2 | 08:30 – 15:00 |
| Y1 | 08:50 – 15:20 |
| Y2 | 08:50 – 15:20 |
| Y3 | 09:05 – 15:40 |
| Y4 | 09:05 – 15:40 |
| Y5 | 09:20 – 15:55 |
| Y6 | 09:20 – 15:55 |

**Punctuality:**

Children must be on time to attend school. Children who are late will not be able to come into school until after the last Year Group Bubble has come into school at 09:20. This is to minimise the risk of contaminating the Year Group Bubbles and to limit the amount of people coming into school at any given time. Any child who arrives after their designated Bubble arrival time will be marked as Late (L). Punctuality will be closely monitored. If a child is regularly late then they will be marked as Late after the Register has Closed (U) which will affect their attendance percentage.

**Medical Appointments:**

If your child is required to attend a medical appointment during the school day, we must ask that they are not dropped off or collected at any time during the school day that will clash with Year Group Bubbles coming into / leaving school. This is to minimise the risk of contaminating 'Bubbles' during the school day. Children will be marked as M (attending a medical appointment).