

*Care, Aspire, Achieve*

# **Alexandra Park Primary**

## **Attendance Policy**



**March 2017**

## Attendance Policy

The launch of Stockport Family in April 2016 has created a new framework for the delivery of school attendance support by the local authority, with new options for support available for both schools and families. The aim of this guidance is to:

1. assist schools in ensuring they continue to comply with statutory duties in relation to attendance, children missing education and safeguarding
2. assist school in the internal management of attendance problems
3. provide options for accessing attendance support from Stockport Family

### **1) What are the legal duties on schools around attendance and how do I comply with them?**

As well a general legal duty to carry out their functions in a way which safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, all schools - whether maintained schools, Academies or independent schools - have a number of specific legal duties relating to pupils who do not attend school regularly or who go missing from school. These are:

- a) a duty to report to the local authority pupils who don't attend regularly (Regulation 12 (1)(a) Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)

*Under Stockport's new arrangements, schools will be able to refer poorly attending pupils to the local authority via three different routes – to The Team Around the School (TAS) if supportive/preventative work with the family is needed, to their allocated Education Welfare worker for Parent Contract work, or to the Education Legal Officer for use of the Education Penalty Notice system.*

*In addition, to help schools comply with the regulations, schools will be asked to provide the Education Welfare Team with a list of all pupils with attendance below 85% on a termly basis. This process replaces face to face under 90% meetings previously conducted by Young People's Workers.*

- b) a duty to report to the local authority pupils who are continuously absent without authorisation for 10 days or more (Regulation 12 (1)(b) Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)

*Under the new arrangements pupils who don't attend school for a continuous period of 10 days (or less if there are additional concerns) should be reported to the Contact Centre (0161 217 6028). Please see the Flowchart on Reporting Pupils Missing from School available on Office Online. This process replaces reporting using the CME2 Form which is now obsolete.*

- c) a duty to inform the local authority when removing a pupil from the school roll (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016)

## Attendance Policy

*Schools should continue to report removals from roll to the Education Welfare Team, however following changes to legislation coming into force on September 1<sup>st</sup> schools will now be required to report all removals from roll, whatever the grounds for removal, the only exception being Year 6 and Year 11 transitions. More information is contained in: Removal from Roll: A Guide for Schools in Stockport 2016, available on Office Online*

- d) duties around the taking of registers (Regulations 6 and 13-15 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)

*Your allocated Education Welfare Team Member will provide advice regarding the marking of registers. In addition, Stockport Family will undertake an annual in-depth Register Quality Assurance and Compliance Review at all maintained schools and, and if requested, at academy schools. Please also see Register Codes: A Guide for Schools in Stockport, available on Office Online.*

### **2) Managing attendance in school**

Experience shows that schools manage attendance in a variety of different ways, which is mainly a reflection of the differing needs and resources of individual schools. There is no “one size fits all” and every school needs to develop attendance policies and procedures which best suit its needs. However, Stockport Family recommends schools have clear internal processes and policies, and allocate sufficient resources to carry them out. Not only is this essential to improving pupils’ attendance, it will also assist in ensuring seamless transition between school action and local authority support. In this section of the guidance we outline some of the processes which have been found to be effective in many schools in Stockport.

If you require further information or support in implementing any of the processes described, please contact the member of the Education Welfare Team allocated to your school; they will be pleased to work with you.

#### **a) Under 90s meetings**

Early intervention is the key to preventing poor attendance, both on the level of individual pupils and a “whole school” level. Schools can use the data available to them on SIMS to identify attendance problems, and take steps to address them early. The key to this is to establish routines for reviewing cases on a regular basis. We would suggest that this be done by way of a regular “Under 90s” meeting, where all pupils with attendance of under 90% are reviewed, and measures to improve the attendance of each are identified and recorded.

- *How often should Under 90s meetings take place and who should attend?*  
This will vary depending on the needs of the school. Some schools will want to undertake this exercise on a fortnightly basis, other less frequently. However, we would suggest that at the very least this exercise should be undertaken half-termly.

## Attendance Policy

In larger schools separate meetings may be appropriate for different year groups or key stage groups. We would recommend that a member of staff be given responsibility for coordinating the meetings, compiling the under 90s list, and recording agreed steps. The meetings should be attended by staff with pastoral responsibilities around attendance – such as pastoral heads of year in secondary schools.

- *What actions might be agreed at the under 90s meeting?*

This will vary, depending on the needs of the case. It could involve making contact with the parent, speaking to the pupil, or making contact with other members of staff or outside agencies. It could also involve deciding to use Letters 1 and 2, or complete an Early Help Assessment form with a parent, or to refer the case to Stockport Family (see below)

*b) Letter 1 and Letter 2*

An important part of tackling poor attendance is to make contact with parents early, and if necessary inform them that absences will no longer be authorised without medical evidence. Over the years, the Local Authority has developed some standard letters which many schools have adopted – these are often referred to as Letter 1 and Letter 2. Letter 1 informs the parent that there is an attendance problem and invites them to make contact to discuss how this can be addressed; letter 2 is sent if there is still no improvement, and tells parents that the school will require medical evidence before authorising absences. There are two versions of letter 1, one aimed at the situation where there are unexplained absences, the other at the situation where there are excessive amounts of absences attributed to illness. Letter templates are available on Office Online.

*c) Home Visits*

Visiting a parent at home is sometimes the most effective way of engaging with them and getting to the bottom of why their child isn't attending regularly. Information gathered on a home visit will also be valuable if you want to discuss the case with a member or members of the Team Around the School.

*d) Attendance Panels*

Schools can set up Attendance Panels, to which parents and/or pupils can be invited. Attendance Panels commonly consist of pastoral staff, senior staff and governors and can be particularly effective as a way of raising attendance issues at an early stage.

*e) Early Help Assessments and Team Around the Child meetings*

Schools may become aware that a poorly attending child has multiple needs and that other agencies are involved or need to become involved. Completing an Early Help Assessment (EHA) form with the parents and leading Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings may well be the most effective way of identifying and coordinating the support needed to address these needs, and improve the child's attendance.

**Attendance Policy**

f) Further monitoring

Sometimes schools will know about a specific problem or reason which has affected the attendance of a pupil, but believe this is an isolated issue and that no further steps are needed. In that case there may be no need to take any further action. However, further monitoring of the case through the Under 90s process will ensure that any further problems are spotted.

**3) Accessing additional Support from Other Services**

a) Team Around the School

Where schools are unable to address the attendance problems alone, they should consider accessing support from other services working with the school. This could be through the Team Around the School or other services you work with. The Team Around the School which includes, your linked Social Worker, your School Age Plus Worker and your School Nurse, amongst others may be able to help with issues such as:

- i) improving the family's level of engagement with school
- ii) Putting in place interventions to support identified issues that might be affecting pupil's attendance
- iii) Carrying out direct work with the child or young person to improve motivation and readiness to learn

b) Referral to the Education Welfare Team

Where there is no or little improvement in attendance and where:

- i) The parent has refused to engage with services
- ii) Engagement levels of the parent remain poor even after offers of support
- iii) Following assessment no clear reason for poor attendance has been identified

It may be appropriate to consider a Parent Contract referral to a member of the Education Welfare Team

*The Parent Contract process provides a formalised structure for casework with a family specifically around attendance, in which the parent's legal duties are emphasised. A series of Parent Contract Meetings are held (normally in school) to which the parent, the Education Welfare Worker, a representative from school and, if appropriate, the young person are invited. The process aims to identify specific barriers to improved attendance and the actions needed to overcome them (whether by the parent, young person, school or local authority), set targets and then monitor and review those actions and targets at a further meeting. If attendance does not improve without justification, or if the parent does not engage with the process, the parent may be prosecuted. Referrals can be made using the Parent Contract Referral form available on Office Online.*

## Attendance Policy

### a) Education Penalty Notices

A request to use the Education Penalty Notice system

*The Education Penalty Notice system can be used as an early intervention step to address poor attendance, especially if there are not believed to be any complex issues affecting the child or family which may be impacting upon the pupil's attendance. In cases of irregular attendance, parents are initially sent a Formal Warning and are given the chance to improve attendance over a short period of time. EPNs can also be used as a response to unauthorised term time holiday. Referrals can be made using the EPN/Formal Warning Request form available on Office Online. Schools are asked to note that a number of changes to the system in Stockport are taking effect from the start of the 2016 – 17 school year. Full details are available on Office Online.*

### 4) “Whole School” and “Over 90’s” measures

As well as focussing on supporting the attendance of individual pupils, schools can establish a culture in school where good attendance is prioritised by undertaking regular activities to raise the profile of attendance. These include:

- rewards for good attendance
- regular communication with parents in newsletters
- having a clear attendance policy
- “late at the gate” events
- effective first day calling procedures
- clear leave of absence/term time holiday policies
- raising the profile of attendance amongst teaching staff

Alexandra Park Primary School aims to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality. We do not expect children to attend school when they are clearly unwell, but absence should be kept to a minimum.

Absence from school will be authorised for: –

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Days of religious observance, e.g. Muslim festivals
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement

Absence will **NOT** be authorised for:

- Shopping

## **Attendance Policy**

- Birthday treats
- Holidays in term time

### **What will school do?**

The register is taken twice a day.

The school will record information on SIMS about a child's absence by telephone, in person and preferably followed up by a letter on the child's return.

If a child is absent from school a text message will be sent to parents to alert them that their child is not in school and to contact school with a reason for absence.

If a child's attendance falls below 90% the Education Welfare Officer may make a home visit, or the Headteacher will invite the parent/carer to discuss ways that the school can support the family in improving attendance. Parents will receive a telephone call each day their child is not in school to find out reasons for absence.

If a child has a poor attendance rate due to illness, parents may be asked to send a letter from the GP to confirm the illness.

### **What do Parents need to do?**

Please ensure children attend school regularly and punctually.

Please inform school on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of your child's absence by telephone (480 5557), or in person and preferably followed up by a letter when the child returns to school.

If your child is late for school, please sign the late book, giving reasons for late arrival.

If you have to take leave of absence during term time please complete the leave of absence form.

If there are exceptional reasons for absence, such as bereavement, please inform school, so that we can support your child as well as authorise the absence.

### **Holidays in Term Time**

In 2013 the Government took further steps to discourage holidays in term time. It passed legislation abolishing the right of schools to authorise up to ten days a year specifically for holidays if special circumstances exist. This means that from September 2013 leave of absence for any reason, including for holidays, can only be granted if the school is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

**Attendance Policy**

Even then, schools may still refuse to give permission; for example, if your child has a poor attendance record, or if the holiday is at a particularly important time, such as in the run up to exams or at the start of a new school year.

**What should I do if I wish to request leave of absence?**

You should contact the school to find out how to make a request for permission. **We would strongly recommend that you do this before planning any leave of absence.**

**Who should make the request?**

The request should be made by the parent or carer with whom the child lives. This is the case even where it is another person who wishes to take the child out of school.

**What happens if my child goes on holiday in term time or takes leave of absence for other reasons without permission from the school?**

The absences will be marked in the school register as unauthorised absences and this may result in fixed penalty fines of £60 (rising to £120) per parent per child being issued by the Local Authority. In some cases, parents may be prosecuted for the offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school

**Please see the website for the most up-to-date list of term time dates.**

**All requests for leave should be made in writing at least 4 weeks before the proposed start date. A letter explaining the reasons for this leave of absence must also be attached, as requested by the Local Authority and the Education Welfare Officer.**

A reminder that **SAT's** for children in **Year 6** will be taking place in **May** and that **holidays during that time will not be authorised**. **SAT's** for children in **Year 2** will take place all through the spring term. **Phonics Screening** for children in **Year 1** will take place in June.

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