



## The Laurels Primary School

### Attendance and Punctuality Policy

**‘Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school’.**

(School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DFE Aug 2013)

The Laurels Primary School believes that regular attendance and good punctuality is important for successful learning at school. Patterns of good attendance and punctuality should be established at an early age as this is an important life skill.

#### Overall Aims of this Policy:

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved (96%), through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality.
- To raise standards and ensure every child achieves well through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
- To identify and challenge causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

There are legal obligations on:

- The parent/carers to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, to send them to school regularly once they are on the register
  - The school to register attendance and notify the Local Authority of absence from school
  - The Local Authority to provide education and to enforce attendance.
- Deputy Headteacher's role is:

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.
- To deal with parental requests for 'Leave From Learning' in line with Government legislation
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices, in line with West Sussex Local Authority policies and procedures.
- To inform parent/carers of poor attendance and punctuality and improved attendance and punctuality
- To reward children for consistently good attendance
- To set up incentives for all children and targeted groups of children so that both attendance and punctuality improves
- To track attendance and punctuality regularly and challenge poor attendance.
- Liaise with outside agencies and support networks if necessary.
- To report on Attendance regularly to Governors

It is the role of the Parent/Carer to:

- Ensure regular attendance and punctuality for their child
- When exceptional circumstances exist, to apply for leave of absence in advance where possible
- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Contact the school in confidence, whenever problems occur which may keep children away from school.
- Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents should contact the school first thing. If a child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache, stomach-aches etc. parents should inform the school and bring them in. If they don't get any better, school will contact parents straight away, to collect them. If pupils have a dental, clinic or hospital appointment, parents should let the school know. Pupils should be brought back to school after appointments. Pupils should miss as little time as possible.

- Medical and dental appointments should not be arranged in school time wherever possible.
- We require parent/carers to work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning.

It is the role of the class teacher to:

- Maintain accurate registers and records for the children
- Follow up all absences
- Inform parents of individual pupils attendance record, each term at Parents' Evening

It is the role of the office staff to:

- Input attendance data on SIMS
- Run official reports for DMAT attendance spreadsheet
- Complete the absence record book
- Monitor alongside the Deputy Head Teacher, patterns of attendance and lateness
- Make first day absence calls and record reasons for absence
- To attach an attendance report to pupil's end of term reports
- Send out RAG notices to parents at the end of each term.
- Send out letters of concern if absence falls below 90%.

It is the role of the governors to:

- Support the school in challenging 'leave from learning'
- Ask the Deputy Head Teacher to report on Attendance

Leave from Learning

Parent/carers are reminded that all absences mean that a child will miss out on learning and teaching and they are, therefore, requested to keep absence to a minimum. All absences are required to be authorised or approved, wherever possible before they occur, and it is the parent's/carer's responsibility to seek this.

Clear instructions from the Government state the following:

*'Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations removing references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments made clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. These amendments come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013. For further details please follow the following link:*

The importance of school attendance is such the law has now changed and Head teachers may now only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional.

For example:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child; nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

If you have exceptional circumstances which have lead you to request leave in term time for your child/ren, please complete the required form, which you can obtain from School. The Head Teacher will then make a decision on whether or not the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

If a child is taken out of school without the Head Teachers authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

#### Monitoring First Day Absence

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carer, a first day absence call will be made. The Office follows this system:

- The office will prioritise calls first to children who are known to social services. If the parent is not contactable and does not provide a valid reason DHT/ HT (DSLs) will be informed immediately.
- Phone parent/carers contact number(s). If no response call other contacts on SIMS. All children must have a minimum of three contacts on SIMS.
- If there is no response after several calls inform HT/ DHT (DSLs) and two members of staff will visit home address. If there is no response from home address HT/DHT will inform MASH. Following MASH's advice the police may be informed to undertake a welfare check.

- The Office must establish a reason for every absence. No absence should be left on the system as an 'N' (no reason given) code.

#### IMPORTANT:

##### School attendance, Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff will follow the school's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015, updated in 2016 and Children Missing in Education Nov 2013, updated Sept 2016)

All Schools are required to make the local authority aware of every registered pupil who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 10 school days Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulation 12.

This attendance policy is part of broader suite of Safeguarding policies including the schools Child Protection Policy.

Child Protection and safeguarding concerns must be acted on immediately, in line with the school Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

#### Illness

It is a school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In the majority of cases a parents' note explaining that their child was ill can be accepted without question or concern (we expect medical evidence to be provided for absences of more than 4 days). In exceptional circumstances further evidence of a child's illness may be requested.

#### Late Procedures

Children, who arrive late and have gone to the office entrance, must be signed in by their parent/carer or appropriate adult, a reason for the lateness is also requested. The admin staff will update the SIMS system with their mark.

Children who frequently arrive late will be monitored and parents will be contacted.

Children who arrive late after the registers have closed due to a medical appointment will be marked M (in). For regular (e.g. once a week) medical issues causing lateness the child will have their code move from M to /(present).

Any child arriving after 9:15am for any reason other than medical will be marked U (late after registers closed).

Children who have to leave for any reason throughout the day should be signed out at the main office by their parent/carer or appropriate adult. This is

strongly discouraged. Parents are requested to make dental or medical appointments outside of school hours.

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