



Attendance Policy

This policy will be reviewed **annually**, or earlier if required by legislation or new DfE guidance and presented to the Full Governing Board for adoption.

Ratified By: **Full Governing Board**

Date Ratified: 7th November 2023

Next Review Due: November 2024

Stickney Vision

At Stickney our Christian vision shapes all we do. Our inclusive church school aims to fulfil the potential of all. We work together to open minds and broaden horizons from the foundation of our shared Christian values. We pursue excellence through our inspiring and creative learning environment and we empower every member of our community to seek positive transformation in the world.

New Leake Vision

At New Leake Primary Our inclusive school aims to fulfil the potential of all. We work together to open minds and broaden horizons from the foundation of our shared values. We pursue excellence through our inspiring and creative learning environment and we empower every member of our community to seek positive transformation in the world.

1. Introduction

The Stickney and New Leake Primary Schools Federation aim to ensure all students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each individual to realise their potential. Our mission is to provide a welcoming and caring learning environment where each member of the community feels safe, secure and valued. We strive to achieve the highest possible aspirations, have commitment to the best possible standards of learning and teaching and to encourage the highest expectations of behaviour and personal conduct. We strenuously encourage excellent attendance for all pupils and that they also arrive at school on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. At both schools we promote an environment where pupils want to learn and work.

It is very important therefore that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why regular attendance is important

Learning – Absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil’s absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child’s regular attendance is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding – Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone’s responsibility and within school promoting the welfare and opportunities for your child include:-

Attendance

Behaviour Management

Health and Safety

Access to the curriculum

Anti-Bullying

Failure to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

The Law

The Dfe guidance on school attendance has been updated and the latest publication can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *“the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”*.

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

The Government expectations of schools continue to apply and are:

- the promotion of good attendance and reduction of absence, including persistent absence
- to ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- to act early to address patterns of absence
- to ensure parents perform their legal duty by ensuring their child of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- that all pupils are punctual to their lessons

Statement of intent:

The federation aims to work together with parents/carers to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend both regularly and punctually. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

Both schools aim to:

- Improve the overall attendance percentage of pupils attending school. Our target at both schools is to achieve 96% attendance overall.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all stakeholders associated with both schools.
- Develop and maintain an agreed framework that underpins effective practice and promotes consistency.
- Provide high quality support, guidance and advice to individual pupils, their parents and to staff.
- Use attendance generated data in a systematic and analytic fashion.
- Maintain effective and positive communication between the school and home.
- Use attendance data to reward pupils for excellent attendance and punctuality.
- Work in partnership with other agencies where applicable.
- Support individual pupils in reintegration into the school after a prolonged period of absence.

2. Understanding types of absence and Leave of Absence

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why school must have a reason for any absence.

An authorised absence is for mornings and afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall within school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave has been given. This type of sanction can lead to the school consulting the LA to use sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/Carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or Birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

We expect our parents/carers to be open and honest regarding their child's absence from school. If your child is reluctant to attend for any reason, please contact school and arrange to talk to a member of the Senior Leadership Team as soon as possible.

- Any absence from school can have a detrimental impact on a child's overall educational progress. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have been amended and new rules came into force from 1st September 2013. The amendments remove reference to 'holiday' from school and extended leave of absence as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. (i.e. the previous arrangement whereby schools could grant up to 10 days authorised/holiday absence).
- As a result, a request for leave of absence will not be granted for the purpose of a family holiday **unless deemed to be exceptional circumstances.**
- What amounts to "exceptional circumstances" is a matter for the discretion of the Executive Headteacher and will be judged on a case by case basis. However, it is unlikely to amount to "exceptional circumstances" if it is merely claimed that a holiday abroad can only be afforded in term time or that a parent is unable to take leave during school holidays (this is a matter between the parent and their employer). **The current law does not give parents any entitlement to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time, therefore any holidays taken during term time should be avoided as these will be classed as unauthorised absence except in very exceptional circumstances.** With regards to other reasons for absence the Executive Headteacher may also ask for evidence of the circumstances that have arisen where appropriate
- Parents need to be aware that if they fail to ensure their child's regular attendance they will be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine). Where necessary these letters will be issued in the parents first language.
- Absences which are classified as authorised may be authorised on the basis of evidence from several sources for example school, parents, prospective employer, health services etc. **A parent sending a note to school stating that the child has been absent through illness may well be "authorising" the absence, but this may not make the absence valid within the law unless authorised by the Executive Headteacher.** Both schools monitor attendance and are vigilant regarding patterns of absence. Absence from school, for any reason, can have a negative impact on a child's educational progress. However, absence due to long term medical conditions may require a tailored programme of reintegration back into school. The responsibility for determining whether any absence is to be authorised is to be unauthorised rests ultimately with the Executive Headteacher.

3. Expectations

As a Federation we have regular day to day contact with parents and carers, which ensures that most issues are resolved quickly. If further problems exist an Attendance Review meeting may be arranged to discuss reasons behind the poor attendance in confidence and the possible solutions and potential involvement of outside agencies. We expect the following from all pupils attending the federation:

- To attend school every day
- To arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day.
- To inform a member of staff if any problems occur that may prevent attendance.
- To behave in an appropriate manner, in line with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis. Parents should ensure if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason they should do the following:-

We expect the following from parents:

- To ensure that their children attend school every day and on time.
- To ensure that their child is at school for morning registration, which is at 9.00 a.m. with registers closing 30 minutes later. (Morning session ends at 12.00 at Stickney and 11.45 at New Leake. Afternoon registration is at 1.00pm at Stickney and at 12.45 at New Leake with registers closing 30 minutes later. Afternoon sessions end at 3.15pm)
- To notify the school of any absence no later than 30 minutes after the start of registration (9.30am) on the day of absence and every day of absence thereafter. If a reason for the absence is not given parents will be contacted by the Attendance Officer for further details.
- To ensure that their children have the correct equipment for the day and to check that they have completed their homework.
- To inform school of up-to-date contact details.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problems occur that may affect their child's attendance and/or performance in school.
- To be notified of other planned absences/appointments before the absence is taken.
- To avoid taking leave of absence during term time. Term time absences can seriously affect the progress of your child.
- That any leave of absence is to be requested by letter to the Executive Headteacher in advance of the date/s requested. Please be aware that authorised leave of absence will only be granted under **exceptional circumstances** and is at the discretion of the Executive Headteacher.
- That parents will attend meetings (whether it be in person or virtually depending on COVID restrictions) to discuss attendance concerns (where necessary). Parents are also requested to attend parent consultation evenings, to discuss the progress their child is making or concerns the school has regarding their child.
- Support their child and the school in achieving maximum attendance.

The DfE guidance on parental responsibility for behaviour and attendance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance> remains the current statutory guidance. Attending school is mandatory and therefore the legal duty given to parents and the powers of the local authority and schools to act if this duty is not met, are in place.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- A request for an explanation of the child's absence if the parent/carer has not contacted the school.
- Consultation with the Local Authority regarding use of sanctions and /or legal proceedings if a child's attendance becomes a concern.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us by pupil or parents.
- Recognition and reward for good attendance.
- A high quality education in a safe environment.
- Offer of support via an Early Help Assessment (EHA), Team Around the Child (TAC) or similar support such as the Pastoral Support Programme

4. School Organisation

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of attending school.

In addition there may be specific responsibilities allocated in the following ways:-

Governors

- All governors' have a role in monitoring attendance.
- Receive regular attendance reports through the Executive Headteachers Report
- Ensure any areas of concern are raised at full governing board meetings.

Executive Headteacher:

- Oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy.
- Regularly report progress on attendance to Governors and to pupils in assemblies / collective worship and parents through individual letters and newsletters and annual reports.
- Sets challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence.
- Consults with the Local Authority when appropriate

Administration staff at both schools:

The schools administration staff play a vital role in supporting the schools attendance and absence management strategies. The schools will record and monitor attendance in accordance with the statutory requirements and with a view uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's progress and personal wellbeing. Stickney and New Leake will:-

- Initiate first day calling to parents/carers
- As school has a duty of care, if your child is absent for more than two days you may be contacted by the Attendance Officer for an update on your child's condition.
- Ensure registers are completed morning and afternoon by each Class Teacher and reported to the office for checking.
- Check accuracy of Integris using the information from Class attendance registers
- Follow up any unexplained absences by contacting parents and establish reason for absence where not given
- Challenge any suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence and inform the Executive Headteacher immediately of any serious concerns.
- Keep records of communication with parents where there is an attendance concern
- Take messages from parents/carers to relay to teachers
- Monitor pupil attendance below 90% on a weekly and a termly basis.
- Send out letters regarding attendance
- Respond to any concerns raised by staff.
- Arrange School Attendance review meetings as directed by the Executive Headteacher.
- Co-ordinate attendance reward systems.
- Ensure that staff are kept up to date with the latest DfE Attendance Guidance.
- When a child arrives late before the register closes, the register is marked by office staff with the 'L' code that denotes a present mark. The register is marked with a 'U' code for arrivals after registration has closed where no other code is appropriate. The 'U' code shows they are on site, but this will not count as a present mark and will mean that they have an unauthorised absence.

Class teacher:

- To complete registers accurately and on time.
- Correctly record 'Lates'
- To challenge suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence and inform the Executive Headteacher immediately of any serious concerns.
- To follow the school attendance reward system.
- To celebrate attendance regularly with the class and in celebration assemblies / collective worship.

5. General Data Protection Regulations May 2018

GDPR places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the regulations. The Federation has a Data Protection Officer, who oversees the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the police or social services, where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

6. Administration

Both schools ensure that they comply with the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) and the Human Rights Act (1998). This means providing information that is accessible and understood by parents, including translation and interpretation, when required. This is particularly important for parents new to the country, who may not be aware of the importance of school attendance and of the law relating to school attendance. Lack of knowledge or understanding may result in lower school attendance rates for some ethnic groups.

Publication of Attendance Data

The Federation's Attendance Policy is published on each schools' websites, where a link can be found to the performance tables' website. Every pupil's attendance information will be included in the end of year Annual Reports to parents.

Providing Education to Children at Home

Where no authorised reason for absence has been established school work should not be provided at home. However, there could be situations where pupils are at home for a justifiable reason, such as quarantine when they are not themselves ill. See point 8 below regarding covid.

Anxiety due to the pandemic

It is not acceptable for a parent to keep a child home due to their own anxiety about them returning to school. The law is very clear and ill health absences must relate to the pupil and not the pupil's parent or carer. It remains the duty of the parent/carer to ensure their child attends school, and if the child does not, the absence will be marked as "unauthorised".

Persistent Absence

The DfE's current definition of persistent absence is:-

"any pupil who at any point in the year has accumulated absence of 10% or more of the available sessions regardless of whether or not any of it is authorised"

The DfE use the school census data to identify individual schools that have high rates of persistent absence.

In addition to the procedures outlined below regarding responding to non-attendance even if a pupil has attendance of above 90% but where there are concerns about deteriorating attendance or where patterns are emerging, for example regular absence on particular days or persistent lateness, the Attendance Officer will monitor the situation and report to the Executive Headteacher and the parent may be invited in to school to discuss the situation to see if school can offer further support.

The school will take into account any long-term medical conditions when reviewing persistent absentees.

7. Encouraging Good Attendance

- Accurate recording of attendance in the registers at the start of each session and within 30 minutes of the start of each session.
- Certificates are awarded to celebrate 100% attendance, termly. (3 times a year).
- Annual 100% certificate of attendance provided by Lincolnshire County Council
- Ensuring that all pupils feel valued.
- Pupils to be welcomed back after absence.
- Support pupils who have attendance problems.
- Identifying pupils with attendance problems before transition to secondary school or before a move to another Primary School.
- Attendance reports are sent out with the year-end academic reports.

8. Responding to Non-Attendance

On the first day of absence:

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents, the parent will be contacted on the day of absence by phone call, if a parent cannot be reached by this method text and or email may also be used. It may be necessary to make enquiry through siblings at the school as to the reason of the absence.

On the second day of absence:

- If the child is still absent and there has been no explanation provided, the school will again endeavour to contact the parents. Where there is no response a letter will be sent to parents by post.

On the third day of absence:

- If a child is missing for 3 days and there has been no response from parents, the school will arrange a home visit, then if no response the police will be contacted and asked to do a Safe and Well check.

On the fifth day of absence:

- After 5 days of unexplained absence, no contact from parents and all checks have been made the child will be reported as Child Missing from Education Team (CME). If a child is missing for 10 days (20 sessions) a referral will be made to Child Missing from Education Team (CME).

After 10 days of absence:

After 10 days of absence, unless other circumstances dictate, the parents will be invited in to school to attend an attendance meeting. This meeting will include the Executive Headteacher, parent / carer and possibly the pupil and may also include outside agencies with the aim of identifying and resolving the issues preventing the pupil from attending school.

9. Fixed Penalty Notices:

Fixed Penalty Notice warning letters will be sent out to all parents on a two-yearly cycle and given to new parents when their child starts at either school.

If you choose to take your child out of school during term time and it is **not** deemed to be exceptional circumstances and/or has not been approved by the school, then this will be coded as an unauthorised absence and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued for the period of absence. Failure to pay the Fixed Penalty will result in further legal action being taken against you.

A Fixed Penalty Notice is a strategy used by schools to address the unacceptable levels of attendance of children at their school under the following legislation:

- **Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.**
- **Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act.**
- **In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of either £60 or £120**

Please note: A Fixed Penalty Notice can also be issued if your child is seen in a public place within the first 5 days of an exclusion from their school.

- **Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 makes it a duty for parents in relation to pupils subject to a fixed period of permanent exclusion to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of any such exclusion. If a child is present in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion during school hours the parent may be guilty of an offence for which they can be prosecuted by the LA before a magistrates' court or issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for £60.00 or £120.00.**