 **Milton Primary School**

**Pupil Attendance and Absence Position Statement**

**March 2022**

**Rationale and aims**

At Milton Primary, we are committed to ensuring that inclusion and equality are at the heart of what we do. Our newly created attendance and absence position statement should be read in conjunction with the revised national guidance *Included, Engaged and Involved (Part 1): A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools*.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-1-positive-approach-promotion-management-attendance-scottish-schools/>

Absence from school, whatever the cause, disrupts learning and can have an adverse impact on participation, attainment, peer relationships, health and wellbeing and ultimately positive life outcomes for our children and young people. The causes and resultant impact of poor attendance are complex and far reaching. Poor attendance has been linked to lower levels of attainment, difficulties with peer relationships, emotional and behaviour needs and poorer post school outcomes including employment opportunities.

Every child of school age has the right to education. They have the right to feel connected to their community and to have opportunities to develop positive relationship with their peers. Poor attendance has an adverse impact on children and young people feeling included. The recently published Scottish Government document, *Guidance on the Presumption to Provide Education in a Mainstream Setting* *(March 2019)*, documents four key features of inclusion which can be used to set expectations and evaluate inclusive practice in schools and establishments. These are:

(1) Present

(2) Participating

(3) Achieving

(4) Supported

<https://www2.gov.scot/Publications/2018/10/6543>

**Importance of Good Attendance**

Attendance is defined as participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school, including:

* Attendance at school
* Learning out-with the school provided by an alternative learning provider while still on the roll of the school
* Interviews, visits and experiences (day and residential) relating to all aspects of the curriculum and taking place in a location out-with the school
* Tuition via hospital or outreach teaching service

**Impact of Cumulative Missed Days**

The impact of missed days at school can have detrimental and long lasting consequences and can significantly impact on positive destinations and outcomes for children and young people. The table below illustrates the cumulative effect of random days missed from school, in any single academic year. A high number of days missed from school can have a significant impact and could leave a child or young person at risk of under-achieving and not reaching their true potential.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Attendance below 95% (9/10 days)** | **Missing nearly 2 weeks of learning**  |
| **Attendance between 85% and 90% (19/20 days)** | **Missing nearly 4 weeks of learning** |
| **Attendance between 80% and 85% (27/28 days)** | **Missing nearly 6 weeks of learning** |
| **Attendance below 80% (around 38 days or more)** | **Missing up to 8 weeks of learning**  |

**Promoting Good Attendance via our Attendance Intervention Support Pathway**

* Ensure that the school attendance policy is clear and accessible to all
* Ensure parent/carer understanding of attendance processes and position statement
* Encourage development of key relationships between staff and parent/carer
* Use multi-agency partnership approaches, where appropriate
* Regularly review and analyse attendance data
* Implement, regularly monitor and evaluate targeted interventions for children/young people at the appropriate level of staged intervention
* Ensure timely communication with parent/carers and young people where appropriate
* Use a range of approaches including home visits to build relationships between home and school (where possible)
* Maintain regular, informal contact and encourage parent/carers to view the school as a source of support and help

Many issues relating to absence in school can be dealt with quickly and promptly by using ‘within’ school supports and by ensuring that there are positive relationships in place to support children/young people and their families. When absence from school becomes a more significant concern then it is important that schools follow the staged intervention process.

**Attendance Intervention Support Pathway**

\* There are always extenuating circumstances and these will be taken into account when monitoring attendance.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Attendance Intervention Level** | **Description of Action to be Taken** | **Attendance Level** |
| **Monitoring** | * Class teacher routinely monitors attendance of all pupils.
* Principal Teachers record any early cause for concerns and appropriate communication is made.
* Assess possible barriers to attendance and wellbeing and identify supports to overcome them.
* Review attendance in subsequent weeks, move to next level of intervention as required.
 | High attendance leads to improved and high achievement which means greater success! |
| **One**School based intervention | * Class teacher and Principal Teachers routinely monitor attendance of all pupils.
* Cause for concerns previously identified - appropriate letter is sent (Letter 1), making contact with parents/carers.
* Assess possible barriers to attendance and wellbeing and identify supports to overcome them.
* Review attendance and take next step; attendance improves (Letter 1a) or move to stage 2 intervention
 | Less than or equal to 95%This is the same as missing **9 school days**; nearly **2 weeks**. |
| **Two**School based intervention | * Principal Teachers and Head Teacher routinely monitor attendance of all pupils with Stage 1 intervention.
* Cause for concerns previously identified - appropriate letter is sent (Letter 2), making contact with parents/carers.
* Assess possible barriers to attendance and wellbeing and identify supports to overcome them and invite parents/carer in to meet with Head Teacher.
* Review attendance and take next step; attendance improves (Letter 1a) or move to stage 3 intervention.
 | Less than or equal to 90%This is the same as missing **19 school days**; almost **4 weeks**. |
| **Three**Education Resources based intervention | * Head Teacher routinely monitors attendance of all stage 2 interventions.
* Appropriate correspondence sent to parents/carers (Letter 3)
* Assess possible barriers to attendance and wellbeing and identify supports to overcome them and meeting arranged with Head Teacher.
* Review attendance and take next step; attendance improves (Letter 1a) or move to stage 4 intervention.
* Involve other agencies where required e.g. – Senior Manager of Pupil Support, Educational Psychologist etc.
 | Less than or equal to 85%This is the same as missing **27 school days**; just less than **6 weeks**. |
| **Four**Multi-Agency Intervention | * Head Teacher review attendance of all pupils with Stage 3 interventions.
* Send appropriate (Letter 4, making contact with parents and Senior Manager/Pupil Support)
* Assess possible barriers to attendance and wellbeing and identify supports to overcome them (*Appendix A (ii) Attendance: Risks and Interventions*)
* Request assistance from other agencies: social work; health; police; housing as appropriate
* Complete staged intervention level 4 planning paperwork (review and update ASP), outlining a plan to improve attendance outcomes,
* Consider use of the School Refusal Scale (Education Psychological Services, SLC 2010) at this stage.
* If no improvement, Letter 5 – meeting with Senior Manager (Pupil Support)
* Review attendance and take next step; attendance improves or move to refer to Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA)
 | Less than or equal to 80%This is the same as missing **36 school days**; just less than **8 weeks**. |
|  | **Referral to Reporter Ref: Framework for Inclusion and Equality (Inclusive Education Service, January 2018) Practice Guide 25.** |  |

**Letters Explained**

**Letter 1** - Attendance Letter 1 – contact made by Principal Teacher

**Letter 1A** - Improvement of Attendance Acknowledgement

**Letter 2** - Attendance Letter 2 - contact made by Head Teacher

**Letter 3** - Attendance Letter 3 – meeting with Head Teacher

**Letter 4** - Attendance Letter 4 – meeting with Head Teacher/contact made with Senior

Manager (Pupil Support)

**Letter 5** - Attendance Letter 5 – meeting with Senior Manager (Pupil Support)

**Letter 6** - Attendance Letter 6 – referral to Children’s Reporter (SCRA)

**Specific Circumstances**

**Home education**

Parent/carers have a duty to provide efficient and suitable education for their children of school age under section 30 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. Most parent/carers fulfil their responsibility to provide efficient and suitable education by sending their child to an education authority school. Some parent/carers may choose to provide home based education. For further information and guidance in relation to home education, schools should refer to the Framework for Inclusion and Equality, Practice Guide No.17 – Home Education.

**Providing education for children and young people during long term illness**

Education authorities are required to make arrangements to support the learning of children or young people with prolonged ill-health (section 14 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (“the 1980 Act”)) through outreach teaching or other special provision such as hospital education services. Where appropriate provision is in place, schools may record this as attendance. Where it is not in place, this is still categorised as authorised absence. However, the school in which the child or young person is enrolled must actively make alternative arrangements to ensure that the child/young person can access their entitlement to education.

For further information and guidance in relation to home tuition and hospital education, schools should refer to the Framework for Inclusion and Equality: Practice Guide No.18 - Home Tuition and Practice Guide No.19 - Hospital Education.

**Young carers**

Understanding and responding to the family circumstances of children and young people is fundamental to the work of schools. In situations where there is an unwell family member there can be challenges for a child/young person in relation to school attendance. In terms of Section 34 of the 1980 Act, an education authority can grant exemption for a child over fourteen years of age from the obligation to attend school upon such conditions, if any, regarding further attendance as the authority sees fit (up to the point the child reaches the upper limit of school age). Schools will respond with care and sensitivity, and often in such cases it is the school that provides consistent and long term support, positive adult and peer relationships, and a place where the child or young person feels safe and supported.

**Recognising diversity**

Schools respond to cultural differences with sensitivity. Children and young people of all faiths may be granted authorised absence to enable them to participate in religious observance. In some cultures, family weddings or funerals are major events which may require children and young people to travel or participate in extended celebrations. If a related absence lasts for more than four weeks, in these circumstances, children and young people should be recorded as on ‘‘extended leave with parent/carer consent’’. This allows them to remain on the school register with an expectation of their return which has been confirmed by parents.

**Children and young people from the travelling community**

Children and young people from the travelling community have some of the poorest educational

outcomes of any group in Scotland.

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/gypsy-travellers/educational-outcomes-for-gypsytraveller-children/>

As a group, gypsy/travellers still experience widespread prejudice and discrimination. In order to improve outcomes for these children and young people, partnership working is key and may involve health, social work, housing and community learning and development. Building positive relationships with families is vital and this should include being sensitive to the negative experiences of school that some individuals and families may have had.

For further information and guidance in relation to education support for gypsy traveller communities, schools should refer to the Framework for Inclusion and Equality: Practice Guide No.8 - Education Support for Gypsy Traveller Communities.

**Children or young people missing from education for extended periods**

There may be occasions where a child or young person goes missing from education for an extended period of time and the education authority has made extensive unsuccessful attempts to make contact with a family. There are established local and national procedures to be followed in all cases of this nature. There are complex reasons why a family may move from one area to another unannounced. Often, staff in schools are aware of individual circumstances and family connections which will enable them to find children or young people quickly. A child or young person may simply have moved schools or have moved homes, and when the new school is contacted, information can be transferred to help promote a smooth transition for the child or young person.

For further information and guidance in relation to children missing from education, schools should refer to the Framework for Inclusion and Equality: Practice Guide No.6 - Children Missing from Education.

**Managing Authorised Absence**

School staff are best placed to decide the most appropriate response to requests for absence to be authorised. Schools may authorise absence when they are satisfied with the reason provided, usually by the parent/carer (a note, email, phone call), self-certified or sometimes the reason may be provided by another service which is actively engaged with the child or young person or their family

Reasons for authorised absence may include:

* illness where no learning provision is made (including mental health and wellbeing concerns)
* Medical and dental appointments (parent/carers and children and young people should be encouraged to arrange appointments outside school hours)
* Meetings prior to and during court appearances and other legal processes
* Attendance at, or in connection with a Children’s Hearing or Care Review, or appointment with another service working with the child or young person / family
* Religious observance
* Bereavement
* Weddings or funerals of close friends and family
* Arranged absence in relation to child or young person in Gypsy/Traveller families
* Participation in non-school based debates, sports, musical or drama activities agreed by the school
* Lack of transport (including due to bad weather
* Family recovery from exceptional domestic circumstances or trauma
* Authorised parental holiday (refer to unauthorised absence section)
* (Extended leave with parent/carer consent including some young carer activities
* Period of exclusion

**Managing Unauthorised Absence**

Schools should record absence as unauthorised when they perceive that there is no valid reason for the absence provided. Such absence may be:

* Family holidays during term time (see paragraph below)
* Occasional absence without parent/carer awareness
* Longer term absence (home, community and school related issues)
* Absence relating to substance and alcohol misuse

Family holidays are one of the most common reasons why children and young people are

absent from school during term time. Comparative cost is not accepted as a reason for these absences to be authorised. Family holidays during term time should be recorded as unauthorised, other than in exceptional circumstances which may include where a parent/carers employment is of a nature where school holiday leave cannot be accommodated. Such employment may include the armed services, emergency services or professions where parent/carers are required to work away from home for prolonged periods.