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Attendance Policy

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I. Aims

Malet Lambert School is committed to maximising educational opportunities and achievement for all pupils. For pupils to gain the best from their time at Malet Lambert School, it is vital that they maintain excellent attendance and punctuality. We strive for 100% attendance for all pupils and we actively promote good attendance and discourage unjustified absence - this ethos prepares pupils for the disciplines of working life and maximises learning opportunities.

- We will ensure that all pupils access full-time education which meets their needs and allows them to reach their potential.
- We emphasise that it is the responsibility of everyone in the school to improve attendance and punctuality.
- We strive to provide a safe and caring environment where each pupil can engage in all opportunities offered.
- We work with pupils and their families to ensure every pupil has good attendance and punctuality.

What you can expect from Malet Lambert School

- We will promote good attendance and punctuality and will investigate any unexplained and/or unjustified absence.
- We will work closely with parents/carers where pupil absence is cause for concern.
- We will support pupils to achieve good attendance and punctuality.
- We will support pupils returning to school after prolonged absence.

What Malet Lambert School Expects from Pupils

- To attend regularly and on time.
- To be punctual to all lessons.
- To ensure that they register for all timetabled lessons and inform the Attendance Officer if they are not able to register
- To ensure all messages and notes from parents/carers are taken to the Attendance Officer in pupils services.

What Malet Lambert School Expects from Parents/Carers

- To ensure that their child attends the school, punctually, dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn.
- To ensure their child attends every day the school is open unless they are too ill to do so.
- To avoid keeping their child away from the school for any other reason than illness or authorised explanation
- To avoid arranging term time holidays
- To immediately inform the School Attendance Office if their child is unable to attend (by 8.30 where possible), including the reason for absence and expected date of return.
- If no indication of a return date has been given, parents/carers should contact the school on each day of absence.
- Provide medical absence if absence is 5 days or more. Absence after and including 5 days will be unauthorised without medical evidence

2. Elements of the Policy

Local Governing Body

The Governing Body is required by law to ensure that the registers are kept accurately. They are also required to publish annually a report to parents which includes the school's attendance figures.

The School will improve attendance by:

- ensuring all registers are completed accurately
- fostering good relationship with parents and carers
- fostering good relationships with the Education Welfare Service and relevant external agencies.
- only removing pupils from the school roll when s/he has legally left
- encouraging pupils to attend through the provision of work which is appropriate to their needs
- identifying patterns of non-attendance and those pupils who have an irregular pattern of attendance for intervention and support by the Education Welfare Office EWO
- liaising with parents/carers to support improved individual attendance targets – any pupil under 92 % will be monitored, anyone under 90% will trigger EWO intervention
- providing a clear statement of attendance on the pupil's reports
- providing clear guidance to parents/carers regarding holidays in term time
- holding regular multi –agency meetings to discuss pupils causing concern
- ensuring that parents/carers know the necessity of providing suitable and detailed communication, e.g. a note, email or phone call, to explain absence either by letter or in the Pupil Planner
- informing the Governing Body of the level of attendance as part of each KPI Report.
- providing information for the prosecution of parents whose children do not attend school and who do not have a substantive reason
- monitoring through the Inclusion Panel- Data analysis, pupils who are looked after children, Pupil Premium and other vulnerable groups including SEND
- monitoring Persistent Absence (PA) figures

3. Registration Procedures

The Tutor / Teacher – must complete the register accurately and save within the first 10 minutes of lesson 1 and registration (remembering that the register is a legal document). If pupils arrive late to registration then the tutor must re-open the register and mark with an “L” and enter how many minutes late and save again. They must follow-up absences with the pupil, by reminding the pupil that a note is required explaining the absence. Absence notes should be sent direct to the Attendance Office.

When marking a register any discrepancies in attendance need reporting to the Attendance Officers immediately.

Subject Staff – must complete the class register for each and every period including double and triple lessons, please remember period 1 is the equivalent of morning registration.

Pupils arriving late should be marked with an ‘L’ and enter how many minutes late. If a pupil has an explanatory note mark the register with an appropriate code. Lesson registration is a vital element in tracking post-registration truancy and records will be used by the EWO in communications with parents and as evidence in legal proceedings.

Educational Visits and Sports Fixtures – Paper registers must be taken prior to departure and a copy sent to Attendance Officer. Pupils will be given their marks for lessons in that session. SIMS activities must also be completed for all after school events.

Signing Out – Any pupil who leaves the school premises during the day should go to Pupil Services where s/he will be given an 'Authorised Absence Pass' which gives permission for the pupil to be off the site. Parental/official verification for the reason for leaving the site will be sought/looked at before pass is given. The Authorised Absence Pass must be shown if a pupil is challenged outside the school by the police or Education Welfare Service. They must then sign out on the electronic system in reception.

Deputy Head of Houses will check attendance on a weekly basis ensuring that:

- a) absence /e-mails/ notes are being provided and phone calls are logged (in conjunction with Tutors and Attendance Officers)
- b) codes/explanations for absence are being inputted by the attendance officer
- c) any patterns of absence are identified and investigated
- d) poor attenders/pupils with problems in school likely to affect their attendance are identified for intervention
- e) reasons for non- attendance are investigated with pupils, parents/carers/EWO where there are concerns and the appropriate action taken – monitoring will begin initially by form tutor and further 'investigation' will be done by Attendance Officer, then Deputy Head of House and finally EWO
- f) if a pupil is likely to be absent for a known period of time and it is deemed appropriate by the school, work will be organised for the pupil
- g) if a pupil's absence is supported by a hospital consultant or a specialist medical team a referral to Home Tuition Service will be completed
- h) if a pupil is returning after a long absence from school, the possibility of a phased return should be considered.

Attendance Officers – have responsibility for:

- a) ensuring registers are being completed and informing SLT link at appropriate stages (where there are persistent concerns)
- b) clearing and entering absence notes, (ensuring correct codes are used) absence emails and phone calls re absence and scanning onto SIMS
- c) collating leave of absence /holidays forms for SLT
- d) making necessary amendments to SIMS data
- e) providing daily absence update and persistent absentee data to the Pastoral Team
- f) actioning first day calling as directed by SLT
- g) providing attendance data to Heads of House (weekly)
- h) providing data for governing Body (termly KPI)
- i) providing data for the LEA and DFE returns
- j) providing data to Senior Leadership Team (weekly)
- k) reporting any hardware difficulties to ICT Systems Managers
- l) providing punctuality data for Pastoral Leader (weekly)
- m) providing 100% attendance certificates (termly)

Education Welfare Officer – is responsible for:

- a) monitoring attendance levels of all pupils
- b) meeting on a regular basis with Assistant Headteacher and Senior Leadership Link to discuss pupils with under 90% attendance, including reporting to Inclusion Panel on persistent absence patterns and Pupil Premium attendance
- c) feeding back to staff information as appropriate
- d) liaising with parents/carers to identify any problems which may be affecting attendance and offer support if appropriate to parents/carers/pupils
- e) supporting pupils with difficulties in school
- f) making home visits if appropriate to meet with parents/carers
- g) informing parents/carers of legal responsibility for regular attendance and possible sanctions – via standardised letters where attendance has become a concern, penalty fines and prosecution
- h) following up with the EWO's line manager where a decision is made to take action against parents/carers for the non-attendance of a pupil
- i) monitoring attendance and implement Fast Track Procedure if appropriate
- j) adopting a multi-agency working practice to ensure support for parents/carers/pupils
- k) attending child protection conferences/core group meetings under the direction of Social Services or SLT.
- l) taking part in truancy sweeps under direction of the police or SLT

Education Welfare Officer will use a wide range of strategies to monitor and improve attendance of all pupils, for example:

1. Parenting Contracts
2. Penalties
3. Fast Track Procedures
4. Prosecution
5. Education Supervision Orders

Parents/carers – have a legal responsibility

“All parents/carers who have children of compulsory school age, are responsible in law for ensuring that their children receive an efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs which they have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”
Section 7 Education Act 1996.

This responsibility includes:

- a) ensuring that their children attend punctually, regularly and stay in school
- b) ensuring a good attitude to learning and support the Home-school Agreement
- c) working in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of the child
- d) in exceptional circumstances as stated below, requesting leave of absence for holidays during term time via a Holiday Form, well in advance of the requested dates

4. Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the School has given approval for absence in advance or where the explanation given afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for the absence. Parents/carers may not authorise absence; only the school can do this.

Parents/carers should contact the School Attendance Office (by telephone, email or text) on the morning of absence (preferably before 8.30 am), giving a reason and an expected date of return. Wherever possible, pupils should attempt to arrange non-school activities outside of the school day.

The following is a list of reasons for absence which would be authorised:

- A medical appointment
- A family bereavement and/ or attendance at a funeral
- A religious observance
- A visit to a College, either to attend an open day or for an interview
- A careers interview
- An appointment with a Youth & Family Support Service personal advisor/CAMHS/MIND counsellor
- Moving house (1 day only)

For each of the above, evidence will be required e.g. an appointment card or letter if possible.

5. Term Time Holidays (School Unauthorised Absence)

New legislation came into effect on 1 September 2013 which means there is no longer a provision in law for the Headteacher to authorise an absence for the purpose of a term time holiday other than in a very limited set of exceptional circumstances outlined here:

- 1) Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad, or other employees where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with the school holidays
- 2) Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional when a family need time together during or after a 'crisis'

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Head of School must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

- 1) The first term of any academic year (applies to all pupils)
- 2) Year 9 options time (for pupils in Year 9)
- 3) At any time during Years 10 and 11 (for all pupils in these year groups)
- 4) At any further times as specified by the school
- 5) Pupils whose attendance is classified as persistent absence

6. Persistent Absence

A pupil will be defined as a Persistent Absentee when they have been absent from school for 10% or more. The Department of Education reduced this threshold from September 2015 from 15% previously. Persistent Absence is a serious problem for pupils, leaving pupils at a considerable disadvantage. Pupils who fall below 92% threshold will be monitored and supported to improve their attendance. Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% PA threshold will be supported by Education Welfare Officer and their attendance will be reviewed by Assistant Head for Inclusion. Where appropriate, Attendance Action Plans will be drawn up by the Education Welfare Officer in consultation with parents/carers and relevant external agencies, such as CAMHS.

7. Penalty Notices

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) the local authority and schools have statutory powers to tackle poor school attendance and/or unauthorised absences. An unauthorised absence is any absence that the school has not given permission for or where an explanation has not been provided by the parent.

Penalty Notices may be used as a deterrent to prevent a pattern of unauthorised absences developing. They will be issued by post directly to the home of a parent after a warning, or in the case of absences without acceptable cause, warnings may not be given. This may include pupils caught on truancy sweeps, excessive or unauthorised family holidays and persistent late arrival after the close of registration.

If a parent's/carer's term time holiday request is declined, and they still take their child out of school, each parent within the household may be issued with a £60 penalty notice for each child you have taken out of school. If a penalty notice remains unpaid after 21 days it will increase to £120. If after 28 days it remains unpaid the parent will be summonsed to appear before Magistrates to explain why their child has unauthorised school absences and they may be liable for a fine of up to £1000.

Parental Guidance on New Legislation

We advise that parents/carers do not plan for their child to be absent without contacting the school first to obtain prior approval. Headteachers cannot retrospectively authorise absence from school under any circumstance. A penalty notice may be issued for any unauthorised absence due to holidays.

If a parent believes at any stage that their child's absence from school may leave them liable for prosecution or a penalty notice, it is important for the parent/carer to take action without delay to secure their regular attendance. Support and guidance on attendance is always available and if parents/carers have any questions about this, or need any help to achieve an improvement, they are encouraged to contact the school to discuss any issues.

8. School Leaver Year 11

Year 11 Leavers official school leaving date will be the date of their last examination. Year 11 pupils are expected to register and attend school during the examination period to access subject specialist support. Revision support is provided within school for every pupil during the examinations. Attendance forms part of the criteria for the prom whereby all pupils in Year 11 are expected to meet the 96% attendance threshold. We are aware of exceptional circumstances and will take these into account when making final decisions.