Micklands Primary School

Attendance and Absence Policy

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Statement of intent

Micklands Primary School recognises that regular attendance is essential to pupils' education, wellbeing, safeguarding and future outcomes. Pupils benefit most from education when they attend school regularly and punctually.

The school recognises that barriers to attendance are often complex and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. We will therefore take a supportive, compassionate and individualised approach, working in partnership with pupils and families to understand and address barriers to attendance.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance and recognise the impact that the quality of education, behaviour, relationships, bullying, SEND provision, mental-health and pastoral support, safeguarding and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium can have on attendance.

We are committed to:

- promoting the importance and benefits of regular attendance;
- setting high expectations for attendance and punctuality;
- ensuring equality, fairness and reasonable adjustments where required;
- listening to pupils and families and understanding barriers to attendance;
- intervening early where attendance concerns emerge;
- working collaboratively with families, the local authority and other agencies;
- ensuring that absence is considered in the context of safeguarding and pupil welfare;
- using attendance data effectively to identify pupils and groups requiring support; and
- using legal intervention only where support has not been successful, has not been engaged with or is not appropriate.

Parents have a legal responsibility under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Education Act 1996;
- Education Act 2002;
- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963;
- Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024;
- DfE, *Working together to improve school attendance*;
- DfE, *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*;
- DfE, *Children missing education*;
- DfE, *Providing remote education*;
- DfE guidance on mental-health issues affecting a pupil's attendance; and
- DfE guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school.

This policy operates in conjunction with the school's:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Children Missing Education Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Anti-bullying Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy; and
- Complaints Policy.

2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board will:

- recognise improving attendance as a school leadership responsibility;
- ensure the school meets its statutory attendance duties;
- review attendance information regularly and provide appropriate support and challenge to school leaders;
- ensure the school's approach to attendance takes account of safeguarding, SEND, equality and other relevant duties; and
- ensure appropriate attendance training is provided to staff according to their role.

The headteacher is the school's senior attendance champion and will:

- provide strategic leadership for improving attendance;
- develop and maintain a clear vision for attendance;
- ensure this policy and associated procedures are implemented consistently;
- ensure attendance expectations are communicated clearly to pupils and parents;
- monitor attendance data and the impact of interventions;
- ensure emerging patterns of absence are identified and acted upon;
- ensure appropriate support is offered to pupils and families;
- work with the local authority and other partners where necessary; and
- oversee the appropriate use of formal and legal interventions.

The attendance officer and other designated attendance staff will:

- monitor attendance and punctuality;
- follow up unexplained absence;
- maintain accurate attendance records;

- communicate with pupils and families;
- identify pupils whose attendance requires support or intervention;
- coordinate attendance support and escalation procedures; and
- liaise with school leaders, the DSL, SENDCO, local authority and other agencies as appropriate.

The DSL will:

- consider patterns of absence in the context of safeguarding;
- ensure safeguarding concerns arising from absence are responded to in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; and
- work with attendance staff and external agencies where absence may indicate abuse, neglect, exploitation or another safeguarding risk.

All staff will:

- understand the importance of regular attendance;
- follow this policy and the school's attendance procedures;
- take registers accurately where this forms part of their role;
- remain alert to changes or patterns in attendance which may indicate a welfare or safeguarding concern; and
- report safeguarding concerns to the DSL in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually;
- notify the school promptly when their child is unexpectedly absent and provide the reason;
- provide accurate and up-to-date contact information, including more than one emergency contact number wherever reasonably possible;
- make medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible;
- request leave of absence in advance and only where exceptional circumstances apply; and
- engage with the school and any support offered where attendance concerns arise.

3. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

Authorised absence:

An absence which falls within one of the circumstances in which absence may be recorded as authorised under the national attendance-code framework, including illness, certain medical or dental appointments, religious observance and leave of absence granted by the school in accordance with statutory requirements.

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.

Persistent absence (PA):

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

Severe absence:

- A pupil missing **50 percent or more** of possible school sessions for any reason.

4. School day timings

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils. Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

The school day has a soft start at 8.30am-8.45am, and pupils will be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons by the end of this time. Parents are discouraged from entering the school building with their child, unless they are asked by a member of staff.

At 8.50am, the external school gates will be locked and all parents will be expected to have left the site by this time. The external doors to the classrooms will be closed and no child or parent will be granted access directly into the classrooms after this time.

Parents and children arriving after 8.50am will need to report to the school office where the child will be signed in and recorded as late.

The morning register will close at 9.20am. Pupils arriving after the morning register has closed will be recorded as absent for the relevant session using the appropriate national attendance code.

Pupils will have a morning break at 10.30am, which will last until 10.45am, and a lunch break at 12.20pm, which will last until 1.20pm. Pupils will be expected to have returned from each break and be ready to recommence learning at the stated times.

The afternoon register will be marked at 1.20pm. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time. Pupils arriving after the afternoon register has closed will be recorded as absent for the relevant session using the appropriate national attendance code.

5. Absence procedures

Parents and carers must notify the school as soon as possible on the first day of an unexpected absence, giving the reason for absence and, where possible, the expected date of return. Absence may be reported through Weduc or by contacting the school office on **0118 937 5500**.

Where a pupil is absent and the school has not received an explanation, the school will make contact with the parent or carer on the first day of absence. Where necessary, available emergency contacts will also be used.

The school will not wait for a fixed period before taking safeguarding action where there is reason for concern. The response to unexplained absence will take account of the pupil's age, vulnerability, known safeguarding concerns, previous patterns of absence and any other relevant information.

Where contact cannot be established, or the circumstances give rise to concern for the child's welfare, the matter will be escalated promptly to the DSL. Appropriate action may include contacting other professionals involved with the family, making a home visit where this forms part of agreed school procedures, contacting local authority children's social care and/or contacting the police where there is an immediate concern for the child's safety.

Repeated or prolonged absence will be considered as a potential safeguarding warning sign and will be managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Children Missing Education Policy.

The school will make statutory attendance and sickness returns to the local authority in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and current statutory guidance.

A pupil's name will only be removed from the admission register where one of the statutory grounds for deletion applies. Where joint reasonable enquiries with the local authority are required, the pupil will not be removed until those requirements have been met.

6. Attendance register

The school will maintain admission and attendance registers electronically in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

The school will use the **national attendance and absence codes prescribed by current legislation and statutory guidance**. Staff responsible for registers will receive appropriate guidance on the correct use of codes.

Where the reason for absence is not known when the register is taken, the appropriate temporary code will be used and replaced with the correct code once the circumstances have been established.

Pupils receiving remote education while absent from school will continue to be recorded in accordance with the national attendance-code requirements; participation in remote education does not in itself mean that a pupil is present at school.

Where an entry is amended, the register will retain the original entry, amended entry, reason for the amendment, date of amendment and the name of the person making the amendment.

Attendance and admission register entries will be retained for **six years from the date on which the entry was made**, and register back-up copies will be retained in accordance with statutory requirements.

The school will provide attendance information and returns to the Department for Education and local authority as required by legislation and statutory guidance.

7. Authorising parental absence requests

The school will authorise absence only where permitted by legislation and current statutory guidance.

Leave of absence

Leave of absence during term time will only be granted where the school considers that **exceptional circumstances** apply.

Requests must be made in advance to the headteacher and should explain the circumstances and dates requested. Each request will be considered individually on its own facts and circumstances.

Where leave is granted, the headteacher will determine the number of school days for which leave is authorised.

Family holidays and leisure travel will not normally constitute exceptional circumstances.

Leave cannot be granted retrospectively. Where leave has not been authorised, the absence will be recorded using the appropriate unauthorised absence code and may be considered under the national framework for attendance legal intervention.

Illness
Absence due to genuine illness will normally be authorised. Parents should notify the school in accordance with the school's absence procedures.

The school will not routinely request medical evidence for every illness. Where there are genuine and reasonable doubts about the authenticity of illness, or where absence is prolonged or recurrent, the school may request appropriate evidence in accordance with statutory attendance guidance.

Medical and dental appointments
Parents should arrange routine appointments outside school hours wherever reasonably possible. Where an appointment must take place during school time, the pupil should attend school for as much of the session or day as reasonably possible.

Religious observance
Absence will be authorised where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Additional leave may be considered under the exceptional-circumstances provisions where appropriate.

Performances and regulated activities
Absence relating to participation in performances, regulated activities or employment will be managed in accordance with the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014 and the relevant local-authority licensing arrangements.

Where a licence specifies the dates on which a pupil may be absent, those dates will be recorded using the appropriate national attendance code. Where the school retains discretion to grant leave, the headteacher will consider the request in accordance with the applicable statutory requirements.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils
Where a pupil is travelling for occupational purposes in circumstances covered by the national attendance-code framework, absence will be recorded using the appropriate national code.

The school will work with families to support continuity of education and regular attendance when the pupil is not travelling.

8. SEND- and health-related absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND, disabilities, physical-health conditions or mental-health difficulties may face additional barriers to attendance.

The school will work with pupils, parents and relevant professionals to understand and address these barriers and will make reasonable adjustments where required by the Equality Act 2010.

Attendance expectations will remain high for all pupils, but support and intervention will be individualised and will take account of the pupil's needs and circumstances.

Support may include:

- reasonable adjustments to the school environment or routines;
- pastoral or trusted-adult support;
- support at transition points or less structured times;
- adjustments identified through an EHC plan, individual healthcare plan or other support plan;
- phased reintegration following a period of absence;
- liaison with health, SEND and other relevant professionals; and
- support to maintain access to education during periods of illness where appropriate.

A temporary part-time timetable will only be used in **very exceptional circumstances**, where it is in the pupil's best interests and is part of a plan to support the pupil to access full-time education. It will have a clear purpose, agreed review arrangements and an intended end date, and will be recorded using the appropriate national attendance code.

Where a pupil's mental or physical health is affecting attendance, the school will follow relevant DfE guidance and work with the pupil and family to facilitate attendance so far as reasonably possible.

Where a pupil is likely to be unable to attend school because of health needs for **15 school days or more**, whether consecutive or cumulative, the school will work with the local authority regarding its responsibilities for arranging suitable education.

Where health-related absence or difficulty attending school also raises a safeguarding concern, staff will follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

9. Leave during lunchtimes

Pupils may only leave the school site during the school day where appropriate arrangements have been agreed with the school.

A parent or authorised adult collecting a pupil during the school day must follow the school's signing-out procedures.

Where a regular arrangement is requested, this must be agreed by the headteacher and may be reviewed or withdrawn where there are concerns about attendance, safeguarding, punctuality or the pupil's welfare.

The school will maintain an appropriate record of pupils leaving and returning to the site.

10. Truancy and unauthorised absence

Suspected truancy will be taken seriously and responded to promptly.

Where a pupil is unexpectedly absent from a lesson, session or school, staff will first establish the pupil's whereabouts and ensure that any immediate safeguarding risk is addressed.

Parents or carers will be contacted where appropriate and the circumstances of the absence will be established.

The school will consider whether truancy indicates an underlying barrier to attendance or a safeguarding concern. Where safeguarding concerns arise, the DSL will be informed and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy followed.

Unauthorised absence will be recorded using the appropriate national attendance code.

Where unauthorised absence reaches the national threshold for consideration of a penalty notice, the school and local authority will consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in accordance with the national framework and local code of conduct.

Support will normally be considered before legal intervention unless support is not appropriate in the circumstances.

11. Pupil missing from school site

If a pupil is discovered to be missing from the school site during the school day, staff will act immediately.

The headteacher or most senior available member of staff and the school office will be informed without delay.

An immediate, coordinated search will be undertaken, taking account of:

- the pupil's age and developmental level;
- SEND or communication needs;
- known vulnerabilities or safeguarding concerns;
- the circumstances in which the pupil went missing;
- likely locations; and
- any immediate risks posed by roads, water, strangers or other hazards.

Parents or carers will be contacted promptly.

The police will be contacted immediately where there is reason to believe that the pupil may be at immediate risk of harm. The school will not wait for a predetermined period before contacting the police where the circumstances indicate an urgent safeguarding risk.

Where appropriate, relevant professionals, including the pupil's social worker, will also be informed. When the pupil is located, their immediate safety and welfare will be assessed. Parents and relevant agencies will be updated.

The incident will be recorded and reviewed to identify the circumstances, any safeguarding concerns and any changes required to risk assessments, supervision or school procedures.

Any safeguarding concern arising from the incident will be managed under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

12. Attendance intervention

In order to ensure that the school responds effectively to emerging attendance concerns, the attendance officer, supported by the SLT, will:

- identify emerging patterns of absence and lateness at an early stage;
- seek to understand the individual barriers affecting attendance;
- coordinate appropriate support for pupils and families;
- monitor the impact of attendance interventions;

- liaise with the DSL, SENDCO, local authority and other agencies where appropriate; and
- escalate concerns in accordance with the Attendance Support and Escalation Process set out in this policy.

The school will use attendance data, in line with the Monitoring and analysing absence section of this policy, to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging.

These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

Where barriers to attendance persist, the school will work with families under the Early Help framework to co-ordinate support and avoid escalation where possible.

The school may recognise positive engagement with attendance, including improvement and punctuality, in ways which are inclusive and do not disadvantage pupils whose absence relates to disability, medical needs or other circumstances outside their control.

13. Working with parents to improve attendance

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. children's social care.

The school will ensure that there are two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance.
The school will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the school will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, e.g. bullying, the attendance officer will work with the headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g. the DSL and SENDCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the attendance officer will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

14. Persistent absence (PA)

Persistent absence is defined as missing 10 percent or more of possible school sessions. Severe absence is defined as missing 50 percent or more. The school will not wait for a pupil to reach either threshold before offering support where an emerging pattern of absence gives cause for concern.

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Young carers
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend school. These include:

- Offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meeting with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Leading check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Assessing whether an EHC plan or IHP may be appropriate.
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The school will focus particularly on pupils who have rates of absence over 50 percent, and will work with the LA and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these pupils are facing.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care.

Persistent or severe absence may be a warning sign of abuse, neglect, exploitation or other safeguarding concerns. Where patterns of absence or other information give rise to a safeguarding concern, the DSL will consider the appropriate safeguarding response without waiting for attendance interventions to be exhausted, in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Children who are persistently absent, but not known to social care, may still be at risk of unmet emotional, medical or safeguarding needs. Attendance reviews will take this into account and ensure early support or escalation is triggered.

Attendance Support and Escalation Process

Attendance intervention will be proportionate to the pupil's circumstances and will not necessarily follow a rigid sequence. The school will normally use the following graduated approach:

Stage 1 – Early identification and communication

Where an emerging pattern of absence or lateness causes concern, the school will contact the family, explain the concern, seek to understand any barriers and offer appropriate support.

Stage 2 – Targeted attendance support

Where attendance does not improve, the school may arrange a meeting with the pupil and parents or carers to identify barriers, agree actions and review the support required.
Where illness is a significant factor, the school may seek appropriate evidence where there are genuine and reasonable doubts about the authenticity of illness or where evidence is needed to understand what support is required. The school will not routinely require medical evidence for every illness.

Stage 3 – Formal attendance support
Where voluntary support has not resulted in sufficient improvement, the school may agree a formal attendance plan or contract with the family and involve the local authority or other services as appropriate.

Stage 4 – Legal intervention
Legal intervention will be considered where attendance support has not been successful, has not been engaged with or is not appropriate.

The school will work with the local authority in accordance with the national framework and local code of conduct.

Formal measures may include:

- a Notice to Improve;
- a penalty notice;
- an Education Supervision Order;
- prosecution under the Education Act 1996; or
- another statutory attendance intervention available to the local authority.

The national threshold for considering a penalty notice is **10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks**. Reaching the threshold does not mean that a penalty notice will automatically be issued; the circumstances of the case and whether support is appropriate will be considered.

Where a penalty notice is issued, the applicable national penalty levels and limits will apply.
The school will maintain records of attendance support and intervention so that any decision to pursue formal action is properly evidenced.

15. Monitoring and analysing absence

The school will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence, for:

- The school cohort as a whole;
- Individual year groups;
- Individual pupils;
- Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds;
- Other groups of pupils, e.g. pupils with SEND, LAC and pupils eligible for FSM;
- Pupils at risk of PA.

Attendance data will be considered alongside relevant safeguarding, SEND, behaviour, pastoral and attainment information where this is necessary and appropriate to understand barriers and identify support.

The headteacher will conduct a thorough analysis of the above data on a half-termly, termly and full-year basis to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

- Patterns in uses of certain codes;
- Particular days of poor attendance;
- Historic trends of attendance and absence;
- Barriers to attendance.

The governing board will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

The school will also benchmark its attendance data against local-, regional- and national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement, and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools.

16. Training of staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training. The governing board will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Training will cover at least the following:

- The importance of good attendance;
- The range of factors and barriers that may contribute to absence;
- The legal requirements on schools, e.g. the keeping of registers;
- The school's strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance;
- The school's procedures for multi-agency working to provide intensive support for pupils who need it.

The governing board will provide dedicated and enhanced attendance training to the attendance officer and other staff with specific attendance functions in their role – this will include training regarding interpreting and analysing attendance data and supporting pupils to overcome barriers to attendance.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

17. Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year.

The headteacher and governing board will review this policy at least annually and following significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance or local attendance arrangements.

The effectiveness of the school's attendance strategy will be evaluated using attendance data, patterns of persistent and severe absence, pupil and parent information, safeguarding information and the impact of attendance interventions.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **31st August 2027**.