



September | 17

Upland Primary School Attendance Policy

Introduction

“Pupils value their education and rarely miss a day at school”

OFSTED Framework 2015

The school’s ethos is a key factor in the attendance of pupils but schools alone cannot have all the answers. Much can be accomplished when pupils, parents, governors and the Local Authority work in partnership to address the many and varied issues relating to poor attendance.

Independent research has shown that the single most effective tool in improving attendance is the implementation of same-day contact. A first day response to non-attendance emphasises to pupils and parents that unauthorised absence is taken seriously and will be challenged.

Successful school attendance policies will involve the entire staff, ensuring teachers and other staff members have a clear understanding of their role in a whole school commitment to promoting optimum attendance for all pupils.

The SEAAS (South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service) is committed to working in close partnership with schools, colleagues in other agencies, and parents to improve and maintain high levels of school attendance throughout the borough.

Parental attitude is a key influence on a child’s school attendance and there is much they can do to encourage, even reluctant pupils, to attend.

“The best schools create a culture where pupils enjoy coming to school and feel that attendance is worthwhile. In these schools, lessons are a positive experience; pupils feel valued and make progress. Pupils returning from absences are welcomed and efforts are made to ensure that missed work is completed and understood. Parents value the school and comply with its attendance procedures willingly”

OFSTED Framework

The government expects that every child should attend school for at least 96% of the time. In line with this, it is the policy of Upland that any child whose attendance falls below 96% will become subject to the attendance procedures detailed below.

The school has employed the services of SEAAS to help deliver this policy and to monitor attendance.

Upland is uses the Fast Track process, see appendix 1

Aims

- To maintain a high level of attendance.
- Reduce the number of unauthorised absences

- To ensure that pupils whose absence is a cause for concern are promptly investigated.
- To monitor lateness and to reduce the incidence of persistent lateness.

At Upland School, we are committed to practice which protects children from harm. Staff and volunteers in this organisation accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

Strategies for maintaining good attendance and lateness

Registration

The law provides four classifications for attendance.

- **Present:** pupil is on school premises at time of registration;
- **Approved Educational Activity:** pupil is engaged in an approved, supervised activity off-site;
- **Authorised absent:** pupil has the authority of the school to be absent either given in advance (e.g. a hospital appointment) or afterwards (e.g. notification of illness); and
- **Unauthorised absent:** no explanation received or unacceptable reason given.

For statistical purposes Approved Educational Activities and education provided off site count as a present mark.

A decision on whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised rests solely with the school, neither the parent nor the LA have the power to make this decision, although the LA may make recommendations.

The Attendance Register

The law requires that schools take an attendance register twice a day. Pupils should be in class by 8.55am in the morning and 1pm in the afternoon for FSU and KS1 Children and 1.30pm for KS 2 Children. A pupil arriving after 8.55am is to be marked late.

- The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It also contributes data to pupils' end-of-term reports.
- An accurate, efficient and consistent registration system is crucial if poor attendance and punctuality within a school are to be tackled. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day.
- All staff involved with the registration process should be aware that the law is very specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping the register should be viewed as of the utmost importance and not an issue to be relegated to the bottom of a list of priorities.

Marking the Register

- No pupil should be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is called. However, if the registering teacher gives permission for the

pupil to leave the room but remain on school premises during registration the pupil may be marked as present.

- Spaces must not be left in the register.
- Where a pupil arrives late but the register is still open, the pupil should be marked as late but counted as present for that session with the 'L' code.
- Where a pupil misses registration without an appropriate explanation (arrives after registration has closed) the absence must be marked as an unauthorised absence using the 'O' code.
- Where a pupil misses registration but provides an adequate explanation, she/he should be marked as late but counted as an authorised absence for that session with the 'C' code.
- Under no circumstances should a pupil mark the register.
- The decision to authorise an absence should be made within a maximum of two weeks from the date of the absence.

All registers should contain the following pupil details:

- Full Name
- Date of Birth
- Address
- Contact Telephone Number

Attendance registers should be kept for at least three years. However, the Head's professional association recommends that all pupil records should be kept for at least ten years (*Croner's Legal Guide*).

All pupils should be marked present (/ \) or absent (O) at the time the register is taken. Should a pupil arrive during registration but has already been given an absent mark, this will be replaced with a present mark of L if the child arrived before 9.25am or a U if the child arrives after 9.25am and counted as a present.

Lateness

- Pupils arriving late for school report to the school office and are recorded as late in the register.
- Letters are sent out to parents/carers of persistently late pupils and this can count towards a child's unauthorised absence, resulting in SEAAS involvement.

Absence from School

- On the first day of absence parent/ carers are requested to telephone the school to explain why the pupil is not attending. This message will then be conveyed to the class teacher.
- If a message is not received then the school will contact parents/carers, to ascertain why the child is not in school.
- On return to school a note should be sent into school, on the day they return, explaining why the pupil was absent.
- If information is not received then a reminder will be sent from the school office.

Authorised Absence

- When a child is ill and the parents write or phone to inform us of the absence.
- When the child has a medical examination or a Doctors appointment, or with another professional body such as Social Care, CAMHS, however we would prefer these appointments to be before or after the school day wherever possible.
- Where for family reasons the child is forced into an absence. (This does not include days for shopping, birthdays, family visits).
- When a child is being educated off site.
- When a child is formally excluded from school.

Un-authorised absence

- We do not authorise parents taking children out of school for holidays in term time. If a child is taken on an unauthorised holiday the school may consult with SEAS to consider whether a penalty notice should be issued for this absence.
- Any absence not covered by an absence note is classed as unauthorised.

Rewards

- Weekly attendance cup for the class who achieves the highest attendance for the week, an on- going attendance display that builds on the success for each class. This is also celebrated on the weekly newsletter.
- 100% attendees for a full academic year are presented with an Attendance Award.

The Role of the Teacher

- To ensure the register is maintained in the appropriate manner.
- Communicate any concerns to the Head teacher.
- Use the attendance sheet to discuss poor attendance punctually with parents where required.

Health & Safety

- In the event of fire or a fire drill the register must be brought to the assembly point by an Administrative Assistant
- Teachers will use the register to confirm that every child registered that day is present at the assembly point.

Family Holidays and Extended Trips Overseas in Term Time

- **It is a myth that parents are entitled to take their children out of school, for a holiday, during term time.**
 - 'With effect from September 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make it clear that Head Teachers **MAY NOT** grant any holidays or other absences during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- If a parent/carer wishes to make a request for exceptional circumstances, they should make a written application at the earliest opportunity. The Head Teacher

and senior staff will consider each request and inform the parent/carer as soon as possible, in writing, whether the request has been granted.

- Please be aware that if a request for exceptional circumstances is not granted, any absence from school during the requested dates will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If such an unauthorised holiday during term time is taken, the Head Teacher will consider issuing a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child that is taken out of school. Standard information provided with each Penalty Notice states that £60 is payable within 21 days of the Notice being issued, rising to £120 if paid between the 22nd day and 28th day. If neither of these sums is paid within these periods, the school will ask the Local Authority to consider a prosecution for an offence contrary to Sec. 444(1) Education Act 1996.

Family Bereavements

The death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event in any young person's life. The school will respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals or associated events. The head teacher has the discretion to authorise such absences. Where a pupil is absent for more than the agreed period, early contact will be made with the family and, where appropriate, SEAAS.

Days of Religious Observance

The Education Act 1996 provides that an offence is not committed where the absence of a pupil of compulsory school age results from participation in a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the **parents** belong. Such absences are classified as *authorised* absence. Parents/carers should give advance notice of religious observance days.

Excluded Pupils

- Where a pupil has been excluded for a **fixed period** he or she will remain on the school roll. Since the absence results from specific action by the head teacher, i.e. the decision to exclude, it will be treated as *authorised* absence.
- Where a pupil has been **permanently excluded**, his or her absence will be treated as *authorised* while any review or appeal is in progress. On conclusion of that process, if the permanent exclusion is confirmed he or she will be struck from the school roll. This will normally happen on the school day immediately following confirmation by the appeal committee of permanent exclusion, or upon expiry of the time allowed for appeals to be made.
- Irregular attendance including persistent lateness does not constitute grounds for exclusion.

Approved Educational Activity

"Approved educational activity" covers specified types of supervised activity, undertaken off-site but with the approval of the school these include field trips and educational visits, in this country and overseas and sporting activities.

The key features of approved educational activities are that they are:

- **Educational** and directly linked to the school's programme
- **Approved** by the head teacher and
- **Supervised**, either by school staff or someone authorised by the school.

Dual Registration

A pupil can be dual registered for example is on the register of both a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and the school. This facilitates the phased return to school of a pupil temporarily assigned to a PRU. Where such arrangements exist the pupil may be marked as Educated Off-Site (i.e.: counts as present) while he or she is attending (and being marked present at) a PRU, and vice-versa. To avoid the possibility of misunderstandings, arrangements of this nature will be formalised in writing. Provision will also be made for exchange of information when the pupil fails to attend.

Dual registration is permitted when a pupil is in attendance at a pupil referral unit (PRU), attends a special school part-time or temporarily receives education in hospital special school. However, where a pupil is registered at a PRU and a school, the name of the pupil will not be removed from the admission register of either the unit or the school without consent of both the Local Education Authority by which the unit is maintained and the head teacher of the school.

Groups of Children at Particular Risk

Certain pupils are at particular risk and may need additional support and in such cases referral to the EWS may be considered appropriate outside of the standard criteria.

These groups include:

- Those with Special Educational Needs
- Children in the care of the local authority
- Children from ethnic and cultural minorities
- Travellers
- Young carers
- Those from families under stress
- Children facing emotional/psychological difficulties

Children who are Looked After (LAC)

Following the implementation of "Quality Protects" and the publication of DFCS Guidance – Education Protect 2000, additional requirements were placed on schools and the authority in order to support this vulnerable group. The LEA in its Corporate Parent role must ensure optimum school attendance for CLA. As part of that role the EWS must be made aware of any attendance issue in line with the following criteria.

Action will be taken as appropriate.

- Intervention is recommended when absences total 10 days in any one academic year.
- The prevention of absences from school of more than 25 days and a reduction in the number of unauthorised absences.
- Schools should notify the authority of all absences over 5%.
- Explanations for **all authorised and unauthorised** absences should be reported yearly.

Out of Borough Pupils

Pupils who attend Bexley schools but who “live out of Borough” (recent changes to Kent County Council working practices negates the following process for pupils residing in Kent)

- Level 1 and 2 will apply. (See below)
- In some cases it may be appropriate for SEAAS to undertake some in-school support meetings. However each case will be treated on an individual basis and may be addressed through formal supervision periods
- Where school based intervention has proved insufficient to impact on the pupil’s attendance the school should formally refer the case using the SEAAS referral form, unless the appropriate Authority has made their own referral form available. The SEAAS representative will progress the referral with the home Authority in line with cross Authority protocol.
- The School should enjoy a comparable service from neighbouring Authorities in their response to formal referrals. Where no response has been received within 10 school days the matter should be brought to the attention of SEAAS who will follow up the enquiry.
- In cases where there continues to be no apparent intervention from the home Authority SEAAS will investigate the matter further with the Manager of the home Authority’s Service.

Travellers Children or Traveller Families

- Parents of Traveller children will not be guilty of an offence under the Education Act 1996 for non-school attendance if they can demonstrate that:
 - He/she is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him/her to travel from place to place.
 - That the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits, and
 - If the child has reached the age of six, he/she has made at least 200 attendances during the period of 12 months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted.
- Traveller children on a school role who leave to travel, but are expected to return will be marked as an Authorised Absence.
- The law now allows Traveller children to be dually registered. The school that they normally attend when not travelling will be regarded as their base school. They can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school. Base schools must keep a place open for pupils and record their absence as authorised while they are away travelling.
- If however they are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise), or in a house and are not attending school, the absence should be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

Missing Pupil Database

There is a national database for recording the details of pupils that leave a school but for whom no receiving school is recorded. When, after all the usual checks including consultation with SEAAS, the school removes a pupil from roll but does not know where the pupil has gone it will place the pupil on the database. The database is accessed via www.teachernet.gov.uk.

Education other than in school

If a parent/carer wishes to educate their child other than at school, they should inform the school in writing. Upon receipt of the letter the school may remove the pupil from the roll and **must send a copy of the letter** to the Educational Welfare Service (EWS); this triggers a referral to the Consultant from School Support Services with responsibility for Education Otherwise than in School. They will then arrange to visit the family to establish that the parents are complying with Sec 7 of the Education Act 1996 and providing an efficient and suitable education for their child.

Removal from Register

A pupil may be removed from the school roll when:

- A school attendance order naming the school has been amended to name another school by the LA or revoked.
- The pupil has been registered at another school. (Except in cases of Dual Registration)
- The pupil has ceased to attend and the school have received written notification from the parents that he or she is receiving education otherwise than in school.
- The pupil has ceased to attend and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school.
- The pupil has failed to return to school within 10 days of the expiry of extended leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday unless the absence is because of sickness or some other unavoidable cause.
- The pupil has been continuously absent for at least four weeks and, after reasonable enquiry, neither the school nor the LA as been able to locate the pupil *or* he or she is detained by a final court order.
- The pupil is known to have died.
- In a maintained school, he or she has been permanently excluded but only when the appeal process has been concluded or the parent has given notice in writing that they do not intend to appeal.
- Having been admitted to the school for nursery education, he or she has not transferred to the reception class.

Strategies and Procedures to Tackle Poor Attendance / Lateness

It is the policy of Upland that any child whose attendance falls below 96% will become subject to the attendance procedures detailed below. The school has employed the services of SEAAS to help deliver this policy and to monitor attendance. This includes punctuality.

Upland uses the Fast Track process, see appendix 1. All the stages identified below form part of an on-going process, which could ultimately lead to legal penalties.

Pupils whose attendance falls below 96% with authorised absence will be monitored at regular intervals to ensure that the circumstances remain unchanged and those issues regarding the impact that such low attendance has on their progress and attainment can be identified. It will also provide the opportunity to discuss what steps can be taken to address these issues.

School based intervention

1. The school will make contact with parents / carers by telephone on first day of absence if no reason for absence has been provided.
2. Where follow up is necessary the school will:
 - Write to parents /carers to ensure they are aware of an problem;
 - Ensure parents / carers are aware of the school lateness strategies and procedures;
 - Periodically remind parents / carers of the school's procedures for notification of absences
 - The school will raise the awareness of the implications of poor school attendance through
 - Newsletters
 - Parents / carers meetings
 - Induction Meetings
 - Home-school agreements
 - Rewarding good attendance and punctuality
 - Acknowledging improved attendance
3. Where a parent or other agency makes a request for SEAAS support directly to the Service, intervention will be initiated by the SEAAS attached to the school.
4. Where school based intervention is considered the appropriate level, SEAAS expertise and advice will be sought. SEAAS will assist the school in identifying possible alternative strategies. At this level no formal referral will be made. However action points may be agreed and a meeting arranged.

School based intervention in conjunction with SEAAS

1. A meeting will be arranged in school with parents/carers and a governor and a SEAAS representative to discuss attendance and associated problems, SEAAS and the governor will work in partnership with parents / carers and pupils to identify and address underlying causes of non-attendance e.g.
 - SEN
 - Medical needs
 - Bullying
 - Family difficulties
 - Social problems
 - Disaffection
 - Lateness

- 2 A school / home contract will be developed to encourage an improvement in attendance / punctuality.
- 3 Where a parent or other agency seeks advice or support directly from SEAAS, school based intervention may be considered appropriate. In such cases the SEAAS representative will advise the Head Teacher.
- 4 In order to identify the appropriateness of a referral the SEAAS representative will consider the following criteria:
 - Have all school based intervention strategies been adopted / considered?
 - Has a 'Pastoral Support Plan' (PSP) been considered and put in place?
 - Is an 'Individual Education Plan' (IEP) appropriate?
 - Has consideration been given to a 'Parenting Contract'?
 - Have the parents been advised that a referral could be made to the SEAAS?
 - Is the SEAAS representative the correct agency to undertake the task?
 - Is the timing appropriate?
 - Are there other Agencies that are more appropriate?
 - What is the desired outcome of the referral?
- 5 SEAAS support for school-based intervention include in school register swoops – used to identify **all** pupils absent on a designated day and in school late gates.
- 6 SEAAS actions at this stage may include:
 - Writing to the parents /carer
 - Speaking with parent/carers by telephone
 - Home visits
 - Meeting with the pupil in school
 - Meeting with the parents/carers in school. These meetings may also include the pupil and or school staff in appropriate cases
 - Drawing up a contract between school / SEAAS /parents /pupil

Formal referral

1. Pupils will be considered for formal referral in any of the following circumstances:
 - Block absences of more than 20 sessions without explanation or with unsatisfactory reasons
 - Irregular attendance with frequent unauthorised absences
 - Prolonged poor attendance pattern, extending to half a term or more
 - Pupils with less than 96% attendance in any 4 week period
 - Vulnerable pupils exhibiting poor or irregular
 - Suspicious absences possibly accompanied by a parental note but without medical corroboration
 - Known truants
 - School refusers
 - Absences connected with possible child protection issues
 - Pupils with persistent lateness

- Those exhibiting a sudden deterioration in their attendance levels, where no reasonable explanation is given
2. In such cases the school will work with SEAAS to ensure that the factual evidence needed is available. The information is vital to inform future SEAAS work and is essential for case management and review, and to provide statistical data for Schools, Governors and the LA.
- Evidence needed includes a copy of the pupil's school attendance data and copies of letters and details of other Service/Agencies involvement.
 - In order to ensure the health and safety of the SEAAS representative details of any known risk factors associated with the pupil, the pupils' family or the geographical location of the home must also be included.
 - The SEAAS Representative and the school will agree a desired outcome on a case-by-case basis.
 - School staff will be reminded regularly that in order for legal action to be initiated absences **must be recorded as unauthorised** as authorisation of an absence by the school constitutes a statutory defence to Sect. 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Referrals

Where there are school attendance concerns, prior to a referral, the client will work within school to improve attendance and write to the parent / carer, using an agreed format.

When a Referral is received, a decision will be taken by SEAAS staff on whether the Referral should be treated as a "Fast Track to Attendance" Referral or a "Standard Attendance" Referral. SEAAS will work within a 6 week timeframe to provide the school with answers to the attendance issues and provide one of the followings outcomes:

- ***Closing the case due to sustained improvement in school attendance***
- ***Continuation and/or further review of the Action Plan, support and advice***
- ***A Penalty Notice Warning***
- ***Referral to the Local Authority for a prosecution for an offence Con. Sec. 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.***
- ***Referral to the Local Authority for an application for an Education Supervision Order Sec.447 Education Act 1996.***

Fast Track to Attendance Referral

- Pre-referral process completed.
- Referral received. Administration completed. Decision made to treat as a Fast Track to Attendance referral.
- Where possible, contact made with parent/carer by telephone. Parent/carer invited into the school for a Fast Track to Attendance Panel meeting. Invite letter sent to parent/carer.
- Meet with parent/carer at Fast Track to Attendance Panel meeting. Agree an Action Plan to improve attendance.
- Write to the parent/carer, enclosing a copy of the Action Plan and inviting them to a Fast Track to Attendance Panel Review Meeting.
- Meet with parent/carer at the Fast Track to Attendance Panel Review Meeting.
- Report to the appropriate Lead on Attendance, advising them on any information obtained and future course of action –

The Head Teacher will receive a regular update and concluding report on the attendance and related issues of all referrals to SEAAS.

Appendix 1: **FAST TRACK PANEL MEETINGS**

FRAMEWORK

This framework concentrates on early intervention and aims to ensure a faster and more effective approach to the implementation of strategies for tackling poor school attendance.

Fast Track is not about punishing parents – it is a time-managed approach which allows the school, parents, and pupil to work together to improve school attendance.

FAST TRACK PROCEDURES

1. Early identification by school.
2. School carries out its pre-referral responsibilities.
3. A referral is made to SEAAS **Absence must remain unauthorised whilst referred to the SEAAS and Fast Track, if there are medical reasons for absence, a medical certificate must be produced.**
4. The SEAAS Representative, will (within 5 working days) attempt to make contact with the family, and carry out an initial assessment.

5. The SEAAS representative will send out the School Attendance Warning letter to parents.
6. The first Fast Track Panel Meeting will be arranged. Invitation letters will be sent to parent(s), appropriate venue within school. **20 minute interviews should be arranged.**
7. The Panel will be made up of a Governor who will Chair the Meeting, The SEAAS representative .A date for the next review should be agreed at this stage.
8. At this initial Fast Track Meeting panel members will be introduced by the Chair, who will then explain why the meeting is being held. The SEAAS representative will be asked to initiate a short discussion regarding the reasons for the pupil's absence and advise the parent(s) about the Fast Track Review and the options that will be considered at that meeting. An Action Plan will be written up, agreed and signed by all. It will be noted on the Action Plan if the parent refuses to sign or co-operate and also if they are not present. **If a parent fails to attend the meeting an Action Plan will be written in their absence.**
9. **SEAAS will write to parents/ carers the following day after the initial Fast Track Panel Meeting has taken place**, sending a copy of the Action Plan and inviting the parent(s) and pupil,(if applicable) to a Review Meeting in 6 weeks time
10. The Governor will again chair the Review Fast Track Panel Meeting. He will introduce the Panel again and advise the parent(s) that the Action Plan is still in place.
11. There could be three decisions from this meeting.
 - Case Closed.
 - A further review in 6 weeks time.
 - Legal intervention

SEAAS will write to parent(s), **the following day** to confirm Review Fast Track Panel decision. Education Welfare Service, if appropriate, carries out legal intervention.

Fast Track Planning

Following each Fast Track Panel meeting the following need to be discussed with the named person in the school who deals with the Fast Track correspondence.

Next Panel Meeting.....

Invites to Initial & Reminders to go out by.....

(2 weeks before Panel date)

Last date for referrals for next Fast Track Panel.....
(4 weeks before meeting - count back)

Copy of all letters sent out

Copy of action plans and letters following panel meeting to be sent out by SEAS within two days of meeting.

Check List

The School should have systems and procedures for:

- Registering pupils (pupils must be registered twice during the day, once at the beginning of the morning session and again in the afternoon session)
- Categorising absence
- Collating and analysing attendance data to identify trends and enable action to be taken
- Determining in which exceptional circumstances leave of absence will be granted for holidays during term time
- Monitoring attendance and punctuality
- Dealing with late arrivals
- Dealing with unauthorised absence
 - when contact will be made with parents,
 - how and when standard letter systems will be used,
 - what measures will be taken to re-engage disaffected pupils,
 - what rewards/incentives will be used to encourage attendance,
 - what sanctions will be taken
- Referring cases to SEAS - when, how and, by whom
- Reintegrate pupils who have been absent
 - providing pastoral support
 - providing intervention programmes to address missed learning
 - using learning/peer mentoring

Develop a clear written policy on attendance.