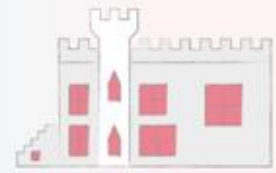




The Federation of North and South Cowton Community and Melsonby Methodist Primary Schools



Melsonby Methodist Primary School  
Live Life in all its Fullness



North and South Cowton Community Primary School  
Aspire, Inspire, Enquire

5<sup>th</sup> October 2022

Dear Parents and Carer,

## **RE: Attendance and Leave During Term Time**

Following the impact of the Covid pandemic, 'working together to improve school attendance' has become a national priority with the Department for Education (DfE) implementing updated guidance for the 22/23 academic year. In light of this, I have been working closely with the staff and Governing Body to ensure the updated systems are in place. The information I am sharing with you today is designed to inform you as parents and carers about the latest guidance released by the DfE and to highlight the procedures that will be implemented across the Federation as we move forward.

As a Federation, we have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across the school community. Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils and should therefore be seen as everyone's responsibility. It is important to highlight that overall attendance rates across both schools within the Federation are positive and demonstrates a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance however, there is always more that can be done! The latest DfE guidance indicates the responsibility for good attendance;

*Where parents decide to have their child registered at a school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.*

In light of this update from the DfE, I have structured this attendance update in the form of questions to help you understand the latest position and how the Federation will support children and families to continue to have a positive rate of attendance;

### ***What is the ideal attendance rate?***

Ideally, we all wish for every child to achieve 100% attendance. This means your child attends school for the entire 190 days of the school year. However, we do recognise that illness is likely to impact on this therefore, our realistic aim is for all children to have an attendance rate of 95% or above.

### ***What is a worrying level of attendance?***

If a child's attendance falls between 90% & 95% at any given time then this may cause some concern. There are likely to be legitimate reasons for this, therefore, we will work closely with you as parents & carers to help understand the context and reasons for a lower rate of attendance. It is important to note that early in an academic year, absence rates vary. Having one or two days absence at the start of the school year will highlight a different absence rate. We know and understand this so take into account the time of the school year.

### ***What is persistent absence?***

A child is deemed to have persistent absence if their attendance level falls below 90%. This level of attendance is very concerning and is something that is tracked across the school year both internally and through the Local Authority and DfE. We do recognise that there may be legitimate reasons for absence rates falling to this level and, as a Federation, we will work closely with you to do all that we can to help this improve.

### ***Can I take my child to a medical appointment and is it classed as a leave of absence?***

Yes - we are fully aware that families are unable to control when medical appointments may be issued and request that evidence of appointments are provided at the time of applying for leave. A leave of absence from must be completed for a medical appointment. Ideally, appointments to see your local doctor or dentist should be made outside of school times as you are able to have more control over these. If an urgent appointment cannot be avoided then medical evidence will need to be provided at the time of applying. This can be as simple as showing a member of our admin team the appointment notification card/text message confirming an appointment. Letters regarding medical appointments at a hospital must also be provided to support an application.

### ***What about a family bereavement?***

The death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event in any young person's life. The Headteacher has the discretion to authorise absence to attend funerals or associated events and any request would be dealt with sympathetically. In general, a period of authorised leave would be granted for the day of a funeral. Additional time is likely to be unauthorised.

### ***What about taking leave during term time to go on holiday?***

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. We consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. As head teachers should only grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. See Appendix 1.

### ***What is the procedure for applying for leave during term time?***

The detail around applying for leave of absence during term time is attached (Appendix 1). In short, an application should be made to the school at the earliest opportunity and ideally at least 6 weeks prior to the requested date of leave. Confirmation will be provided by the school if this request has been authorised or not. Parents and carers should not book any travel until confirmation has been provided. *Nb. We do recognise that not all requests can be made 6 weeks in advance.*

A leave of absence application form will need to be completed (Appendix 2). An electronic copy is available via the school website or by contacting the school office. A paper copy can be obtained from the school office at Melsonby or North & South Cowton if preferred.

### ***Do I need supporting evidence?***

Yes this is very important. Any additional evidence that can support an application for leave will help with the decision making. For example, a supporting letter from an employer indicating shift patterns or granted leave entitlement would provide useful evidence in applying for leave during term time. Notification from a Chain of Command of active deployment for Service personnel would also support an application if a member of the family has returned from active deployment. Medical notifications and appointment letters are essential if the absence is related to a medical reason.

### ***Will I receive a 'fine' if I take my child on leave without authorisation?***

North Yorkshire LA's Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices states that the unauthorised leave of absence can be accumulated over a period of 4 months but must meet the threshold of 10 sessions or more (5 days or more) for a Penalty Notice to be issued. If leave of absence is not granted and the period of time is for more than 5 days, it is highly likely that the LA will issue a Penalty Notice.

### ***What are the day to day processes across the Federation?***

If a child is marked absent in the register and the school has not been informed of the reason, we will make a 'first call'. This is carried out by a member of the admin team and takes place within the first 45 minutes of the school day. We will seek confirmation from a parent or carer as to why a child is

absent and to establish the length of time they may be away from school. This allows accurate recordings in the school register.

The management of leave of absence requests is carried out by the administrative team alongside the Headteacher.

***What if my child is late?***

We fully understand that events can result in a child being late to school. If this happens, we will establish the reasons and act accordingly. If a child is persistently late to school, Senior Leaders will invite parents to a meeting where strategies will be discussed to aid improvement. The school day in both settings starts at 8:45am. All pupils must **arrive before this time** in order to be ready for the day's learning.

***When does the register close?***

The school policy is to encourage punctuality but to also actively discourage lateness as it can seriously disrupt lessons. If a child is late and misses registration, a late mark will be recorded. If a child arrives after 9:15am then the lateness will be marked as unauthorised unless an acceptable explanation is given. The school will be sympathetic if this is for a good reason, however, if a pattern of lateness starts to emerge, parents will be invited to discuss the matter with a Senior Leader in order to reach a satisfactory solution. An 'authorised' late mark will apply if a child arrives after 8:45am but before 9:15am. Any pupils arriving after 8:45am MUST report to the School Office to record their arrival.

***Where can I find the latest attendance policy?***

Further information regarding attendance and the agreed policy across the Federation is available via the website.

As I am sure you will be aware and agree, promoting high levels of attendance is essential for every pupil to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. Working collaboratively, we can make sure every child achieves! With attendance rates being positive across both settings, I am sure we can build on this success.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Ian Mottram  
Interim Executive Headteacher

## Appendix 1- Application for Leave of Absence during term time form

### **APPLICATION FOR PUPILS LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

This form should be completed by the parent/carer and returned to school as far in advance as possible and at least **6 weeks** before the first date of the period of leave being requested.

Parents/carers must obtain the schools permission before making any arrangements for leave in exceptional circumstances, otherwise the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as a right. The Education Regulations state that applications for leave must be made in advance by a parent/carer with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each application is considered individually by the school.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment.
- Where inflexibility of the parent's leave or working arrangements is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production of confirmation from the organisation/company.
- Where leave is recommended as part of the parent's or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

**Please note: Headteachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional.**

This is not an exhaustive list and Headteachers must consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter. Where a Headteacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which do not fit the criteria, they may refer to the Local Authority for advice.

The decision of the Headteacher is final. Parents who take a child on leave in term time, without the permission of the school, risk being issued with a penalty notice fine for unauthorised absences.

Taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learn and can disrupt educational progress. Before completing this application, parents/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education.

Please complete the application form and return it to the school office if you wish to apply for leave of absence during term time. Appendix 2

Appendix 2:

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Name of pupil(s)	Class(es)

**I request permission for my child/children to be absent from school:**

Date from	Date to
<b>Total number of school days requested</b>	

**Exceptional circumstances for this request:** Please complete this section and explain the reason why your child/children will need to be absent from school in term time. **Please attach supporting evidence.**

Signature of parent/carer:	Date:

<b>FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY</b>			
Seen by		Date	
Decision & reason	Authorised	Unauthorised	Date Reply returned