



Mendlesham
Primary School
LEARNING FOR LIFE

Mendlesham Primary School

Attendance Policy

Updated: Feb 2023

Review due: Feb 2025 or sooner as required

**Please read in conjunction with
JMAT Safeguarding Policy & Local Procedures
Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
Behaviour Policy**

1. Introduction, aims and objectives

1.1 Mendlesham Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils / students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

1.2 The whole school community – pupils / students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and Local Improvement Board (LIB) – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

1.3 The policy has been drawn up after consultation and is based on current Government and Local Authority Guidance and Statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

1.4 The purpose of this policy is to inform all members of our school communities of the following:

- How the school encourages and enables good attendance
- How the school monitors and reviews attendance
- How the school monitors punctuality and lateness
- Authorised and unauthorised absences
- Leave of absence in term time
- Why attendance and punctuality matter

1.5 Rationale - Children are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have and we will endeavour to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support regular attendance. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

1.6 There is a relationship between attendance of pupils and their development, attainment and progress.

1.7 The school is committed to promoting good attendance as part of its dedication to ensure quality educational provision to give its pupils the best start in life.

1.8 The Education Act 1996 states that:

S.576: "Meaning of "parent". In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person— (a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or (b) who has care of him."

S.7: "Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age. The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable— (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

S.444: "Offence: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil. If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence."

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at Mendlesham Primary School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

2.2 Attendance Leader – Tessa Sait – 01449 766224

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person, known as the Attendance Leader, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared weekly with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the LIB half termly. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

2.3 Staff Training

The School Attendance Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately

2.4 Class teachers

i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers. It is the practice at Mendlesham Primary to register all pupils (including those under compulsory school age).

ii) The register will be called promptly between 8.50 am and 8.55 am and at 1.00 pm - 1.05pm (Monday to Friday) by each teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

iii) The registers will close 15 minutes after they open in both the morning and afternoon session. Any pupils who arrive after the register **closes** will be counted as ABSENT and will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness.

2.5 The LIB and Trust

Termly figures and reports are submitted and discussed by the school's LIB and subsequently by the Learning and Performance Committee of the Trust Board. Local Boards will support actions to ensure that levels of attendance are good with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students at the school.

2.6 Parents and Carers

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and fulltime education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child).

Mendlesham Primary School, in line with Local Authority protocols, expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum
- not expect the school to agree automatically to any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school

Parent/carers are also expected to:

- notify school on the first and each subsequent day of absence as early as possible from 7.30am. The number is **01449 766224**
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day
- arrange, wherever possible, dental or medical appointments outside of school hours
- advise the school of any absence for appointments beforehand, for example, providing medical evidence to the Attendance Lead via the school office
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parent/carers' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their children's work and activities
- accept that parent/carers do not have the right to take students out of school for holidays in term time
- complete an exceptional leave of absence form at least 15 school days before the date
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives.

2.7 Pupil Responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher or the Attendance Officer.

It is the pupil's responsibility to:

- attend school regularly;
- be punctual to registration and lessons, arriving with correct equipment and ready to learn
- follow school procedures if they arrive late for school (enter the school via the office and provide a reason why they are late)

3. Absences

3.1 As a guide the school is likely to authorise absences in the circumstances below:

- Where the school is satisfied that the pupil is too unwell to attend
- Where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours where possible and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send them to school beforehand)
- Where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the families controlled e.g. extreme weather conditions
- Where the absence occurs on the day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil and parents/carers belong
- Where the pupil lives in catchment but more than three miles from school and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the local authority
- In other exceptional circumstances e.g. the wedding of a close family member or a family bereavement and for a very limited period
- Exceptional circumstances for term time holiday outlined in 5.3

3.2 Absences will be unauthorised when:

- No explanation has been given by the parent / carer
- The school is not satisfied with the explanation of the absence
- The pupil is staying at home to mind the house or care for a relative
- A pupil is absent because of parent / carer work commitments or trips

- The pupil is absent for other reasons e.g. a birthday, concert, festival or show, sporting matches/games, family gathering or celebrations, oversleeping or lateness due to a social event
- The pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission, or where insufficient notice has been given for the absence request to be processed
- The pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent / carer is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence
- A pupil has been collected (or has asked to be collected) from school without following procedures

3.3 If a student accumulates ten or more sessions of unauthorised absence over an academic year, the Education Attendance Service will be involved and a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued

4. Punctuality and Lateness

4.1 Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time and be in the classroom promptly, every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class if they are late. Pupils who arrive late whilst the register is open will be marked as such with the number of minutes late recorded (See paragraph 2.4 iii).

4.2 Persistent lateness is defined as six or more late marks recorded in one academic year and will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. Where students are developing a pattern of lateness, parents/carers will be contacted by the school with the aim of resolving the matter. If punctuality does not improve, a late mark (code L) will be replaced with an unauthorised mark (code U)

5. Term Time Holidays

5.1 School term dates and holidays are published a year in advance and holiday periods exist at Half Term as well as Christmas, Easter and in the Summer.

5.2 Mendlesham Primary School's policy is not to grant a leave of absence for holidays other than in the most exceptional circumstances (5.3). A leave of absence form must be submitted in advance for the intended holiday. Request to the school should be made prior to booking and the school requires 15 working days in order to make a response

Mendlesham Primary School will not authorise a holiday:

- during periods of National tests i.e. SATs
- where a student's authorised absence is above 4% for any reason

5.3 Mendlesham Primary School will only consider authorising holiday leave in the following circumstances:

- For Armed Service Personnel (Army, Navy, RAF) whose specific tour and duties prevent them from taking holidays during term time
- For Emergency Services Personnel (Police, Fire, Ambulance, Coastguard) who were unable to take leave at any other time due to national event or a period of national significance
- A family need to spend time together during or after a significant period of emotional crisis (which should be supported by at least one external agency)

5.4 All requests of leave of absence for holiday must be submitted using the leave of absence form - see appendix 2. In any case, term time leave of more than 10 sessions (5 days) cannot be authorised.

5.5 Approved Educational Activity

Where a pupil is engaged in an off-site approved educational activity, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register

6. Intervention Strategies

We understand that attendance figures will be heavily skewed by even a single absence in the first half term. Therefore, our intervention strategy will not be implemented (i.e. letters being sent) until the second half of the autumn term (after October half term). However, there may be circumstances where this is brought forward or where meetings will be the immediate strategy (i.e. if a letter would not be productive).

6.1 Mendlesham Primary recognises that early intervention can help to prevent poor punctuality and attendance. We recognise that a range of pupils may experience difficulties and we will always strive to help and support wherever possible. Our aim is for all students to secure 100% attendance and assistance is available through our Early Help Offer.

6.2 Within the context of support and assistance being provided at an early stage, the school adopts a staged response to student attendance involving the Education Welfare Service:

- **Stage 1: Attendance below 92% is closely monitored**
- **Stage 2: Attendance falling below 90% a first letter is sent home**
- **Stage 3: If attendance does not improve, offers of early help including in school support such as meetings with parents, referral to the school nursing team or other agencies takes place**
- **Stage 4: If attendance continues to fall and parents/carers have not engaged with support at stage 3, a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will be made**
- **Stage 5: If attendance continues to fall parents/carers will be invited into school for a review meeting and to agree a plan for improvement**
- **Stage 6: If attendance continues to fall and/or parents/carers do not engage with EWO/meetings with attendance lead at school, a fixed penalty notice is likely to be issued**

(Where parents/carers do not attend the meeting with the Education Welfare Service, a further letter is sent requesting contact within 3 days. Where this is not forthcoming, the school will move automatically to Stage 6).

7. Penalty Notices for Absences

7.1 We have a duty of care shared with the Local Authority to challenge poor attendance. From 1st September 2014 Suffolk's Education Attendance Service began issuing Penalty Notices. Penalty Notices will be issued for Mendlesham Primary School in the following situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- A pupil has been identified for the first time as having eight sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in the current academic year; this includes being persistently late
- Where a child takes a holiday during term-time which is not authorised by the school

7.2 If a referral is made for a Penalty Notice, this will result in a fine of £60 per parent/carer per child increasing to £120 if not paid within 21 days. This applies to all parents/carers with parental responsibility. Unauthorised holiday leave for parents/carers for two children would amount to £240 rising to £480 if unpaid within 21 days.

7.3 If penalty notices are not paid within 42 days, the Local Authority is obliged to prosecute.

8. Systems and (Strategies) for Managing and Improving Attendance

8.1 Attendance has a very high profile at Mendlesham Primary School and is regularly promoted during assemblies and in class. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and at school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment. Weekly attendance figures are displayed within the weekly school newsletter. Mendlesham Primary School has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences within a week.

8.2 Response to Absence (attendance officers – Donna Simonds, Rebecca Riches)

- First day - If a student is absent without explanation (i.e. the parents/carers have not reported an absence by 9.00am) then parents/carers will be telephoned to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify any students who may be absent without their parent/carer's knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parent/carers on the first day of absence, the school will send an email/text reminding parents/carers of the importance of attending school and requesting a response.
- We will call all known contacts recorded for the pupil to establish their whereabouts for safeguarding reasons. We may also contact sibling educational establishments for the same purpose. The Attendance Lead will be informed. If we have reason for concern for a child's safety, we will contact MASH (multi agency safeguarding hub) for advice.
- Second day - If the student's absence remains unreported and no response has been received to the day one email, then contact by phone will be pursued over the course of the day. If we remain concerned about your child's well-being/safety, we may ask police or a social care contact to make a home visit/welfare check.

8.3 Where absence is linked to illness, medical evidence will be required for any absence beyond six sessions (3 days). If medical evidence is not forthcoming, any further absence (beyond day 3) will be regarded as unauthorised and a fixed penalty notice will be issued in line with this policy.

8.4 The school's Attendance Officer and the Attendance Lead with responsibility for attendance will meet regularly to identify students with attendance which is falling below 92%.

8.5 Concerns relating to attendance will be communicated via a staged response (see section 6.2). Letters will vary according to the severity of the pupil's absence at the time. The intention of the letters is to maintain effective channels of communication and to work together to resolve the issues at hand.

8.6 We would ask all parents/carers to respond and engage with the school regarding attendance concerns. Should there be a concern that communication may be breaking down, or that strategies are not being followed, a senior member of staff may contact parents/carers and invite them to a meeting. The meeting may also be attended by a member of the Local Board.

8.7 The school's Attendance Officer and the Attendance Lead with responsibility for attendance will always try and work supportively with pupils and their families. Strategies may include time limited, part-time timetables or alternative provision.

8.8 Celebrating good attendance. Mendlesham Primary School values good attendance (95%+). We further encourage children by;

- Weekly attendance celebrated in assemblies
- Class attendance celebrated in newsletters
- Best class special privileges
- Improved attendance letters

9. Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across a year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to the child's education and the school needs the parent's/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences and the reasons given for it thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached Persistent Absence mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will take immediate action by contacting the parent/carer and putting our concerns in writing. The EWO will also be contacted for advice. See intervention strategies section 6.

10. Collection and Analysis of Data

The Attendance Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the LIB. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection. Attendance data will be submitted to the LIB at least termly.

Attendance is monitored on an individual basis. It is also monitored by gender, ethnicity, pupils with SEND and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

Accurate attendance returns will be made and returned to the DfE and the Local Authority as required.

Conclusion:

It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure that children attend school regularly. It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. We can therefore only do this if children attend regularly. There is a direct and proven correlation between poor attendance and children's attainment which impacts negatively upon their future life chances.

It is the school's legal responsibility to safeguard the children in its care and report any child who is or is in danger or missing education (CME)

Appendix 1 – Registration codes

CODE	DESCRIPTION
/	Present AM
\	Present PM
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual Register)
C	Other Authorised Absence (not covered by any other appropriate codes)
D	Dual Registration (pupil attending another establishment)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)
F	Extended Family Holiday
G	Family Holiday NOT agreed
H	Family Holiday Agreed
I01	Illness only (not Medical or Dental Appointments)
J	Interview
L	Late
M	Medical / Dental appointment
N	No Reason yet provided
O	Unauthorised not covered by any other code
P	Approved sporting Activity
R	Religious Observances
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller Absence
U	Late (after register closes)

V	Educational Trip or Visit
W	Work Experience
X	Non-compulsory school age absence- or Covid related absence
Y	Enforced school closure
Z	Pupil not yet on roll
#	School closed to pupils

Appendix 2 – Leave of absence request



Absence Request Form

JOHN MILTON ACADEMY TRUST (You are not required to use this form for medical, sporting/performance or emergency absences)

Parents/carers applying for their child to have leave from school should complete this form and return it to school for authorisation well in advance and no less than 3 weeks (15 working days) before the requested date. Absences during term time will not be sanctioned routinely because the effect of such absences is damaging both for students and staff. The Government has also made it clear that parents should not take their children on holidays in term time and **there is no legal right to do so**. Even when the requested leave may constitute "exceptional" circumstances, attention will be given to current attendance and previous applications for leave. Please note that staff will not be able to set or mark work for students taking holiday leave.

Name of pupil/student:			
Year and Form Class:		Date of birth:	
Name of Parent / Carer:			
Occupation of Parent / Carer:			
Address of Parent / Carer:			
Telephone Number(s):			
Dates requested:		Total number of school days:	
Name of sibling(s):		School(s):	
Reason requesting time off during term time: (please have due regard to the absence policy of the school)			
Did s/he have leave of absence during term-time in the previous school year?			Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>
Signature of Parent / Carer:		Date:	
<p><i>If an absence is not authorised but is taken anyway, the case will be referred to the Attendance Service. The Local Authority will then issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence of seven or more sessions*. This will apply whether the sessions are taken together or as separate absences over a period of time. This penalty must be paid in full and is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days, doubling to £120 if paid within 28 days. If payment is not paid in full within 42 days of issue, the Local Authority may begin legal proceedings. This may lead to a fine of £1,000. All absences, authorised and unauthorised, are transferable between schools and remain on a pupils records. (* please note that a session is either the morning session or the afternoon session. 1 day = 2 sessions)</i></p>			

Once completed please return this form to Bacton Primary School by post or by email: admin@bactonschool.org.uk

For school use only:

Attendance Details:	Total sessions (half-days) of absence this year:		Request Authorised:	YES
Current Attendance %:	Total sessions of unauthorised absence this year:			NO
Reasons for Decision:				
Referral to Attendance Service:		Date:		
Headteacher/Senior Leader signature:				



Bacton
Primary School



Cedars Park
Primary School



Mendlesham
Primary School



Stowupland
High School



The John Milton
Sixth Form