



Mendlesham Primary School

Attendance Policy

Agreed by Governors: SEPT 2021

Review due: SEPT 2023

Introduction

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

1.1 Mendlesham Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils 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 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, parents and carers, teaching and support staff, The Trust (John Milton Academy Trust) and the school's Local Advisory Board (LAB) – 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 This policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community are aware of the policy and have access to it.

Responsibilities

School's Responsibility

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 children 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 Lead** - The Executive Headteacher (Attendance Lead) will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Attendance Lead will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the LAB and Trust, and are made regularly available to staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance). Reports regarding attendance are produced for each LAB meeting. She/he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. He/she is also responsible for passing on information regarding attendance to the Education Welfare Office (EWO) and to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Team where appropriate.

2.3 **Class Teachers** – The Class Teacher is responsible for completing the register each morning and afternoon. Morning registers open at 8.55 and close at 9.05am, afternoon registration opens at 1pm and closes at 1.10pm. A mark will be made in respect of each student during registration. Any pupil who is not present at this time will be marked as an unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment/correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Executive Headteacher or Head of School. The Class Teacher is responsible for informing the Executive Headteacher or Head of School of any concerns and providing background information they are aware of relating to a pupil's absence. Issues regarding poor attendance or anomalies in attendance will be discussed at parents by phone to establish

whether a pupil has well-being issues affecting attendance and further at parents' evenings where appropriate. Support from within and outside school will be sought if this is the case.

2.4 Administration Staff – Staff in the school office are responsible for collating and recording registration and attendance information, taking messages from parents and passing them on to class teachers, contacting parents/carers of absent children where no contact has been made. They also keep an overview of pupil absences, looking for poor overall attendance, anomalies or patterns in attendance as well as unusual explanations offered for non-attendance by pupils or parents/carers. Administration staff produce a weekly report analysing attendance and highlight any individuals falling below 92% overall attendance to the Attendance Lead. They are then responsible with the Attendance Lead for sending out letters to parents/carers regarding poor attendance.

2.5 Staff Training – The Attendance leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive adequate training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. Leave of Absence during term time

3.1. Authorised Absence

As a guide, the school is likely to authorise absences in the circumstances below. Where indicated requests for leave should be submitted using the JMAT Absence Form

- where the school is satisfied that the pupil is too ill to attend
- where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand)
- where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
- where the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong;
- where the pupil lives in catchment, but more than 2 miles (under 8 years old) or 3 miles (8 years or over) from school and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority.
- where the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent/carer is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
- in other exceptional circumstances e.g. the wedding of a close family member or a family bereavement and for a very limited period;
- where a licence application for an approved performance or event has been submitted to the school and Local Authority and the school has authorised the absence;
- where exceptional holiday leave is granted as outlined in section 3.2

3.2 Authorised Term time holiday

There is no automatic right to any leave of absence during term time.

The Executive Headteacher/head of School cannot grant permission for leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Executive Headteacher/Head of School will not in any case authorise any requested absence from school that is longer than one week (10 sessions/five days).

In addition to the circumstances described in section 3.1, the Executive Headteacher/Head of School may consider; but is not obliged to authorise request for leave of absence, for example:

- The parent/carer is a serving member of the armed services (Army, Navy, RAF) whose specific tours and duties prevent them from taking holidays in normal school holidays.
- The parent/carer is a member of the emergency services (Fire, Police, Ambulance, Coastguard) who are unable to take leave any other time due to a 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)

Any exceptional circumstances should be made clear on the JMAT Absence Form which must be approved in advance for the absence to be considered authorised. The Absence form is available from the school office and must be completed in advance for any type of absence, other than illness.

3.3 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

4. Unauthorised Absence

Absences will not be authorised where:

- No explanation is given by the parent/carer
- The school is not satisfied with the explanation of an absence
- The pupil is staying at home to mind the house or care for a relative
- The pupil is shopping during school hours
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional circumstances e.g a birthday, family gathering or family celebration
- Oversleeping or lateness due to a social event
- The pupil is absent from school due to a family holiday without prior permission or where insufficient notice has been given for a PAF to be processed
- The pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or parent/carer is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence

5. Penalty Notices

A Penalty Notice will be issued for any unauthorised absence or series of absences within one term. In line with amendments made to The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007, parents should note the following:

- The Executive Headteacher/Head of School will request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents, when pupils are taken out of school for 7 sessions (sessions are half days) or more (i.e the 4th day of absence) without school authorisation. This absence may represent a single occasion or an accumulation of absences over a term.
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is currently £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 42 days, the Local Authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.
- Penalty Notices are issued to each Parent/Carer for each child

6. 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 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 risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will take immediate action by contacting the parent and putting our concerns in writing. The Education Welfare Officer will also be contacted for advice.

7. Collection and Analysis of Data

The Attendance Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the LAB and Trust. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection. Attendance data will be submitted to the LAB and Trust 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 in line with DfE requirements to the Local Authority.

8. Strategies and Systems for Managing and Improving Attendance

Attendance and lateness has a high profile at Mendlesham Primary School and is regularly discussed. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

Mendlesham Primary School has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences:

8.1 First Day Calling

Mendlesham Primary School has a system of first day calling in place. This means that parent/carers will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage those pupils absent without a good reason or those absent without their parent's knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with the parents on the first day of absence, the other contact names will be telephoned.

The SDP (Senior Designated Person) or Alternate Designated Person will be informed on the first day of absence if no contact can be made with parents and the Safeguarding policy will be followed.

8.2 Absence Letters

If a child falls below 90% attendance without the school being aware of a serious/on-going medical condition, parents/carers will be sent a letter notifying them of the importance of good attendance and the current percentage attendance for their child.

8.3 Meetings with Parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence, with or without explanation, the school will invite the parents/carers to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absence. Plans will be put in place with the parent/carer and pupils to resolve any difficulties and improve attendance. It will be made clear to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of good reasons for them.

8.4 Referral to the Education Welfare Officer

If there continue to be unauthorised absences the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer as required.

8.5 Lateness and Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same manner as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

If pupils arrive late for school, but before the register closes on several occasions the Head Teacher will write to parents explaining the need for punctuality.

For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows exactly who is in the building. Pupils arriving late must therefore report to the school office. It is imperative that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure. For the same reason, it is important that pupils leave the premises legitimately (i.e. for a medical appointment), or those returning to school later in the day, report to the school office on their departure.

9. LAB and Trust Responsibilities

The LAB and Trust shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school. Members will work closely with the Executive Head Teacher/Attendance Leader/Head of School to support and challenge the school in matters of an attendance nature.

10. Pupils' Responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. Pupils should attend their lessons on time, ready to learn.

11. Parents/Carers Responsibilities

Mendlesham Primary School expects parents/carers will:

- Ensure their children attend the school regularly
- Not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence and not condone unjustified absence from school
- Understand that the school's decision is underpinned by the LAB, Trust and Local Authority procedures and systems, and as such have the child's best interest at heart.

Parents/Carers will also be expected to:

- Notify Mendlesham Primary School on the first day of absence by 8.40am. On their child's return to school, inform the office in writing as to the reason and length of the absence.

- Work in partnership with the school, for example, by attending parents' meetings and consultations, and by taking an interest in their children's work and activities.
- Contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. Mendlesham Primary School will endeavour to support parents in addressing their concerns.

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.