



Merrydale Infants School  
Attendance Policy

Chair's signature...Mrs E Surtees

Head's signature.....Mark Tipple-Johnson

Date.....2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020

Review date.....July 2021

At Merrydale Infant School we work in partnership as a community to create a learning environment where everyone is valued, cared for and happy. We believe that offering our children a creative and stimulating curriculum based on first hand learning experiences makes learning fun and challenging for all. By building confidence, independence and encouraging risk taking, we are developing important life skills, a lifelong love of learning, and success for all. We have the highest expectations of all our children.

The school believes that communication between home and school is a crucial factor in ensuring the best outcomes for children and that parents/carers need to actively participate in the procedures and systems set up by the school. Parents/carers should ensure that their child is punctual to school, dressed in the appropriate uniform and ready to learn.

The school has a legal responsibility in monitoring and recording levels of punctuality and attendance, both of which promote a basis for each child to achieve their potential. The school has different codes at its disposal to use for differing types of attendance and absence but it will either equate to a present mark, an authorised absence or an unauthorised absence.

Under section 199 of the Education Act 1993, the parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at a school and failing to attend it regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law, unless it can be demonstrated that:

- The pupil was absent with leave.
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.

### **Punctuality:**

The school day starts and ends at differing times for our children

Nursery- 8.30am to 11.30am & 12.30-3.30pm

F2 8.55am – 3.10 pm

Infants 9.00am – 3.15pm

It is a parent/carer responsibility to ensure that children arrive promptly and are collected promptly at the end of the school day. Children that are late for the start of the school day not only miss valuable learning time but also disrupt the education of other children in the class.

Children arriving late should enter the school via the front entrance. Parents/carers are required to sign the child in using the electronic system at reception and the reason for the lateness. This also ensures an accurate record of who is in the building should there be a need to evacuate the premises.

The registers close 15 minutes after the start of the school day. Lateness before the registers close will be authorised (L code) and lateness after the registers close will be coded as unauthorised (U code) It is important to note that as a U code is an unauthorised absence this can trigger formal absence action via the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

## **Attendance and Absence**

Parents/carers are requested to contact the school on the first day of absence to advise of the reason for absence and an expected return date. Parents/carers can telephone, email, visit in person or send a note with another child. Absence of three consecutive days will be authorised but as from day 4 medical evidence is required

When the child returns to school it is expected that written confirmation of the absence is provided, this will be kept in the child's file. Failure to provide written confirmation can result in the absence being unauthorised. If written confirmation of the absence is not received within five days of the child's return to school an absence slip will be sent home (see appendix 1) If the absence slip is not returned to the school office within five days the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is not for the school to assume the reason for absence.

Only *the school* can approve an absence, not parents/carers. The fact that a parent/carer has offered a notification about the absence does not oblige the school to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason.

Health appointments, eg, GP, dentist, optician, hospital, should be arranged during school closure periods wherever possible. Should this not be possible, evidence of the appointment will need to be provided so that the absence can be authorised (M code) It is expected that a child will be in school before/after an appointment wherever possible.

Medical evidence may be requested for absence due to illness. This does not mean that a letter from the GP is required. It is acceptable to present the empty bottle/packet of medication to the office staff who will take a photocopy and keep this in the child's file.

If a child has medication due to illness it does not necessarily mean that they need to be absent whilst the course of medication is completed. Designated first aid trained school staff are able to administer prescribed medication with parent/carer consent. Staff are not permitted to administer medication that has not been prescribed although a parent/carer is welcome to visit to administer such medication during the school day.

If your child has an elevated temperature and any other symptoms are minor, please administer Calpol or a suitable alternative and bring the child to school. Not all ailments/illness require school absence and the school follows the NHS guidance on such matters (see appendix 2). However, if your child is unwell during the school day designated first aid trained staff will make a decision as to whether the child needs to be at home. If this is the case the school will request that the child is collected. On such occasions this absence will be authorised (I code). Should there be ongoing concerns relating to a child's health and well being the school may consult with the School Nurse.

### **Religious Observance:**

The absence of pupils for one day set aside exclusively for religious observance, when the festival falls on a school day, is classified as an authorised absence (R code). Parents/carers need to request the leave in writing in advance. It is not for the school to assume which pupils are participating in religious observance.

**Exclusions:**

Where it is necessary to exclude a child and no alternative provision is made available this absence will be authorised (E code).

**Leave of Absence Requests:**

Parents/carers seeking permission for term time absence are required to complete an absence request form in the first instance (see appendix 3). The form is available from the school office. This will be considered by the Headteacher, who may consult with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and governors. Parents/carers may be required to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the request.

The Headteacher is not able to authorise leave of absence unless both of the following apply:

- a) An application has been made in advance by the parent/carer AND
  - b) The Headteacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application
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  - If your child has unauthorised leave of absence (G code) you may either be issued with a Penalty Notice of £120 per parent per child (discounted to £60 if paid within 21 days) or your case could be referred, by the Local Authority, directly to the Magistrate's Court.
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  - If a child is absent and no leave of absence form has been completed the school may request a home visit be undertaken by the Education Welfare Officer. Alternatively, parents/carers may be sent a letter asking them to advise of the reasons for absence and evidence relating to the reason for absence may subsequently be requested. Parents/carers may be issued with a Penalty Notice or referred directly to the Magistrate's Court if they do not provide the evidence requested by the school/Education Welfare Officer
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**Leaving The School:**

Parents/carers are requested to inform the school as soon as possible when it is known that a child will be leaving outside of usual transfer points (eg, nursery to F2, F2 to infants). The school will require additional information and evidence to pass on to the Local Authority who have statutory responsibilities regarding removing children from the school roll. The school will require the following information/evidence:

- a) Date of leaving
- b) Destination address (however temporary)

- c) Means of travel, supported by travel documents as appropriate (eg. flight tickets, ferry tickets)
- d) Name and address of the intended new school (if known)
- e) Contact telephone numbers and email addresses of parents

If parents wish to assume responsibility for their child's education they will need to submit this in writing to the school who will refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service.

**Addressing Ongoing Unauthorised Absence:**

The school has an attendance target of (insert target percentage) and aims to work with parents and partner agencies to achieve this target. Should the school become concerned about the attendance of a child, in most cases, the first formal contact will be a letter sent home with an attendance certificate alerting them to the concerns. Should the attendance not improve the matter will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer and a referral may follow. The Education Welfare Officer may send a letter to parents/carers, request a meeting in school or undertake a home visit to address the presenting issues. If there is still no improvement in attendance, legal action may follow.

Should a parent/carer become aware of an issue that is affecting punctuality/attendance they should approach the school so the issue may be discussed and supportive action put in place, if appropriate. The school can refer to support agencies within Leicester City council and to external agencies.

If a parent/carer would like a copy of their child's attendance certificate please request this from the school office.

The School Nurse for Merrydale Infant School is Dawn Batson, she can be contacted on (insert telephone number) or at (insert email address)

The Education Welfare Officer for Merrydale Infant School is Dawn Chapman, she can be contacted on 0116 4545510 or at dawn.chapman@leicester.gov.uk.