



Merrydale Infants School  
Attendance Policy

Chair's signature...Mrs E Surtees

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## Attendance

At Merrydale Infant School we believe that all children should be challenged and encouraged to reach their full potential and have their achievements celebrated. We work in partnership as a learning 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.

Merrydale Infant School aims to work together with parents in order to ensure the achievement of high levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils.

- Punctuality and regular attendance at school are major contributors to the ongoing success of our children
- Attendance is the responsibility of all parents/carers, staff, children and governors
- Parents and children need to understand the benefits of being in school
- Communication between school and home is a crucial factor
- Parents/carers need to understand and actively participate in the procedures and systems set up by the school
- These procedures need to be clearly stated and consistently applied by all staff that have responsibility for the monitoring of attendance
- To comply with local authority & DfE guidance

The school promotes excellent attendance by:

- Keeping appropriate attendance records and monitoring patterns of absence
- Having clear procedures for absenteeism which are thorough
- Being consistent and effective about the implementation of the policy
- Deciding on the most effective use of staff to implement the system and providing appropriate resources for the task to be undertaken effectively.
- Following up individual cases of unauthorized, prolonged or persistent absence.

Establishing the reason for absences on the basis of discussions/information from parents/carers

- Consulting with other professionals such as the EWO as necessary
- Providing regular and appropriate training for staff
- Informing Parents/carers of all children in if their child's attendance drops below 90% in writing or if there are other attendance concerns
- Meeting with parents to discuss children's attendance where there are concerns

## CATEGORISING ABSENCES

### Authorised and Unauthorised

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.

Only the school can approve an absence, not parents. The fact that the parent has offered a notification about the absence does not oblige the school to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason. The school will investigate further, and if doubt remains, or where no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence must be treated as unauthorised.

### Lateness

A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his/her continuity of learning but also that of others. The school has a clear policy on procedure for lateness and parents are informed of this during induction sessions and in the prospectus. Registration is carried out electronically at the start of the day at 9.00am by class teachers and at the beginning of the afternoon session from 1pm. Registers will close at 9.15 am and 15 minutes after the afternoon meeting respectively. After such times, a child will be classed as late and marked as L in the register.

Our nursery class ( Moonbeams ) registration is between 8.40am – 9.00. The register will close at 9.15am. In the afternoon the registration is between 12.30- 12.50pm. The registration will close at 1.05pm

Where pupils miss registration altogether and fail to provide an adequate explanation they will be marked as an unauthorised absence for that session. The school will take account of the individual circumstances for each case, but persistent failure to arrive on time without a valid reason will result in a letter to the parents and where appropriate, a meeting with the head teacher and / or EWO.

Lateness before the registers close will be coded L ( late) . Lateness after closure will be coded U ( unauthorised) . Children returning to school after medical/dental appointments will be coded M ( medical)

If a child is persistently late i.e. coded U (arriving after the registers have closed) could receive a penalty notice.

### Persistent Absence

Persistent absence can have a serious negative impact on pupil learning and is often associated with lower levels of progress. Where a child has high levels of absence, this may meet the thresholds for persistent absence. Persistent absence is defined by the DfE as missing 10% or more of school sessions.

Persistent absence is tracked each half term by the Head and Deputy Head teacher and will almost always warrant a referral to EWS and other agencies.

### Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments

If the school is satisfied that a child is absent as a result of illness, the absence is treated as authorised. Medical appointments should **not** result in a day's absence and the child should be returned to school immediately after the appointment. Leave from school for medical or dental appointments may be given where evidence has been received from the parents. Where a child is present for registration, but then has to attend an appointment, the school will record that, although registered, the child is not physically present. Similarly the school will record the presence of a child who is not in school for registration but returns later from an appointment.

### Family Illness/Inability to Bring Child to School/Family Bereavements

The school will respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals or associated events. The DfE would not expect schools to grant leave, except in exceptional circumstances. Authorised leave is at the discretion of the Head teacher.

### Days of Religious Observance

The absence of pupils to participate in **one day**, set aside exclusively for religious observance, when the festival falls on a school day, is classified as an authorised absence. Parents need to request this leave in writing in advance. It is highly unlikely that more than one day will be authorised for religious observance. This adheres to local authority policy guidelines.

### Excluded Pupils

Where a pupil is given a fixed term exclusion, this will be recorded as authorised absence.

## Requests for Holiday Leave During Term Time

You will need to request a meeting with the Head Teacher to discuss a leave of absence.

No absence will be authorised unless the meeting has been requested and taken place. Please be aware the school can only authorise absence for exceptional circumstances even if your child's attendance is good.

Where it is not possible to obtain a leave of absence i.e. it is necessary to travel at very short notice, leave of absence may be agreed retrospectively. It will only be agreed retrospectively, if the leave of absence is considered by the head and chair/vice chair of governors as for exceptional reasons.

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice fines issued for unauthorised absence that occurs after 19 August 2024

- Penalty Notice fines will be issued to each parent, for each child who was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave will result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.
- Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days, and for fewer days where this has happened before.
- Penalty Notice fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of absence in a 10-week period.
- The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.
- The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days. (No option to pay at £80 level)
- The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued. The case will proceed to the Magistrates' court. Magistrate's fines can be up to £2,500 per parent, per child.
- If your child has an absence of 20 days or more, the Local Authority has advised that a Penalty Notice is unlikely to be issued, and the matter is likely to proceed to the Magistrates' Court for prosecution action instead. The Local Authority has advised that where a parent is found guilty, or where the case is proven against the parent, that this is likely to result in a fine and the parent receiving a criminal record. This is because parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school where they are on roll regularly.

If the school has reason to believe a child was absent and had been away/on holiday etc, where this information is from a third party (eg from the child or other children in the class, or neighbour), the school will confirm to the parent/s in writing that they understand the child was on holiday and therefore, they may be issued with a Penalty Notice (per parent for each child) or, their case will be referred by the Local Authority directly to the Magistrates' Court. (If a parent doesn't come back at that point to challenge the information and prove the child wasn't taken away on holiday, the letter sent can be used as evidence in court.)

## The Partnership Between Parents and School

Parental responsibility extends beyond securing regular school attendance. Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed in school uniform and ready to learn. The school aims to work in partnership with families to ensure the best possible personal and academic outcomes for all its pupils. Where there are issues affecting a child's ability to attend school regularly or on time the school will make early contact with parents and carers and offer support and guidance where appropriate.

## **REPORTING ABSENCES**

### Procedures for when a child is absent from school

#### Parental Response on the first day of absence

- On first day a child is absent, parents/carers must inform the school by phone, a note, email or in person, as soon as is practicable, giving reason for absence and likely date of return
- After the close of register, office staff will analyse absence information
- The office staff will phone home to request a reason for the absence. Telephone calls will be logged.
- The school will decide if the absence is to be designated as authorised or not.

#### School Response

- The school's response to an unauthorised absence or lack of notification will be speedy and consistent.
- A telephone response will be made on the first day of absence, by office staff. This must be logged.
- The tracking of absence patterns and monitoring daily absences is the responsibility of all staff.
- Monitoring of attendance data will alert staff to individual problems which will be highlighted to the EWO.
- If the pattern of absences does not improve, a letter will be sent by the school, prior to a referral to the EWO.
- Where there is a problem with communication/language an appropriate member of staff will discuss the school's policy and procedures with individual parents/carers. This will be logged for future reference.

### Children leaving premises during school sessions

- Parents/carers must report to the office when collecting or returning their child.
- Date, time of departure and arrival and reason for leaving are logged.

- Parents must endeavour to arrange medical/dental appointments for out of school hours where possible.
- First aiders sending children home will log the reason in the medical log book and will inform the class teacher which will be logged for future reference

#### THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

- The EWO visits the school monthly to monitor attendance below 90% and children who are persistently absent
- Printouts are compared each month to track patterns and progress
- Whole school attendance data and class summaries are used for monitoring individual and class patterns.
- Statistical analysis leads to a recommendation for referral.
- Individual attendance sheets are printed out, showing lateness, holidays, sickness and unauthorised absences. This is a legal document.
- The EWO communicates with parents/carers in response to unacceptable attendance of statutory school age children.

The school is required to report to the EWS on continuous absences of not less than 2 weeks and on those pupils who fail to attend regularly. EWOS should be consulted where the school is experiencing difficulty in determining whether absences are justified.

The school provides data information to the EWO to inform discussion at monthly meetings.

#### Roles and responsibilities of the Governing Body

The Governing body has overall responsibility for ensuring the Attendance Policy is effectively and rigorously implemented.

#### Lateness

School finishes for our KS1 children at 3.15pm. If children have not been picked up from their classroom by 3.20pm they will be taken to the school office. Late parents need to come to the school office to pick up their child. If a parent arrives at reception after 3.30pm a charge will apply. We recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances which will lead to a parent / carer being unable to get to school on time and parents must notify school by 3.00pm at the latest so that their child/children can be reassured.

The same charges will apply for our nursery (Moonbeams) and Foundation children beginning 10 minutes after the close of their afternoon session.

Children being picked up late regularly (2 occasions or more) after school (from 3.30pm) will initially incur a charge of £5.

after 3.30pm – 3.45pm = £5 charge

From 3.45pm – 4pm = £10 Charge

After 4pm = £15 Charge and a further £15 charge every 15 minutes thereafter.