

# Mandale Mill Primary School



## Attendance Policy

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**Making an Impact on Lifelong Learning**

## Statement of Intent

The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is vital to a good education. Securing it is therefore a high priority of Mandale Mill Primary School, its governors, parents and the pupils themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils lessen the impact of the education provided for them. Pupil absence may seriously disrupt the continuity of teaching for themselves and others. The aim of the school is to facilitate their pupil's regular and sustained attendance by providing a full and efficient educational experience for all their children. All partners have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

## The Statutory Framework

- Education Act 1944 - Establishes the duty of parents to ensure regular attendance of pupils.
- Pupil's Registration Regulations 1986 - Establishes the criteria for the maintenance of attendance registers.
- Education Act 1996 places a legal obligation on the Local Authority to provide education suitable to a child's age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs they may have. Also, Section 444 states that "The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law".
- The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997 (amended) provides the new registration categories of Approved Educational Activity. (Amending Regulation 3(2), (3), (5) of the Education Regulations 1995).
- **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 amend the 2006 regulation. From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 all reference to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days is removed. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. The Headteacher will consider any applications for leave of absence on an individual basis.**
- Education Act 2002 (Section 53) enables an overall absence target to be set, covering authorised and unauthorised absence, supporting school improvement and raising community awareness of the issue (September 2003).
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 amended section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to allow parents to be issued with a penalty where they failed to ensure their child of compulsory school age (5-16) and school registered had regular attendance.
- Education (Penalty Notice) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 increases the amount payable from a parent when a penalty notice has been issued. This applies to any parent who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child who is of compulsory school age and who is a registered pupil at a school or who fails to ensure their child who is subject to an exclusion from school is not found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.
- Education (Penalty Notice) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 reduces the timescales for paying a penalty notice bringing attendance penalty notices in line with other types of penalty notice. Parents must from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. Penalty notices are issued per parent per child.
- Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2016 also requires parents of excluded pupils to ensure that their child is not found present in a public place during school hours in the first five days of their exclusion.
- This Code of Conduct was reviewed following the case of Isle of Wight Council (Appellant) v Platt (Respondent) [2017] UKSC 28 which was heard in the Supreme Court in 2017. That case clarified the definition of "regular attendance" and found that "regular" means in accordance with school rules. If the school requires that a child attends i.e. the school have not authorised a request for leave of absence during term time, then the parent/carer commits an offence if he/she takes the child out of school.
- Section 576 Education Act 1996: Definition of a Parent - The education-related provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 apply to all parents who fall within the definition set out in this section of the Education Act 1996. This defines 'parent' as:
  - All natural parents, whether they are married or not.

- Any person who, although they are not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person – having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child is considered to be a parent in education law.

### **Registration**

There is a legal requirement upon schools to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of **each morning and afternoon sessions, pupils are marked present or absent**. The Education (Pupils' Attendance Record) Regulations 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is **authorised or unauthorised**. This is done electronically. The registers are taken at the start of the first session at 9am and the start of the second session at 1pm. Pupils present will be marked by a diagonal line. Pupils not present will be marked by an N. Teachers should complete the registers in the first 5 minutes of the two sessions. Registers will be saved and shut down immediately after they are taken. The School Office staff have primary responsibility for monitoring the attendance of pupils in each registration group, for collecting information explaining absences, for maintaining an accurate register and for contacting home to obtain reasons for attendance and punctuality.

### **Lateness**

It is school policy to record **a late mark for children who arrive at school after class registration has taken place**, but before the close of the registers (**10:00am**).

School policy is to **encourage punctuality by opening the doors at 8:45am to allow children to come into school ready to learn promptly and to support families with greater flexibility when dropping off multiple children**. Doors close at 9am **and** registers are taken. Children will be recorded as being late once registration has taken place.

It is school's policy to actively discourage late arrival. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather or occasional transport difficulties), registers may be kept open for a reasonable period. For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line must be taken on late arrivals. To do otherwise undermines the whole purpose of registration and may serve to encourage other pupils to arrive late. Particular attention will be paid to emerging patterns of late arrival.

Where a pupil does arrive late and misses registration, they enter the school via the main school office. His or her presence on site will need to be noted for purposes of emergency evacuation. **It is the responsibility of the parent to confirm their child's arrival via the electronic signing in system.**

In responding to lateness, we will of course, take account of the individual circumstances of each case. In some instances, enquiries may reveal that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances. Pupils who persistently fail to arrive on time with valid reason will be monitored and if required will be reported initially to the headteacher or **deputy head**. If this does not appear successful then parents will be invited into school to discuss the situation. Further action may include the involvement of the Local Authority Attendance Officer.

### **Absence**

Authorised absence is where the school have given approval in advance for the child to be absent, or where an explanation provided afterwards has been accepted as suitable reason for absence.

Absence may be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical or dental appointments;
- Days of religious observance;
- Exclusion;
- Family bereavement;
- Involvement in a public performance;
- Exceptional circumstances (determined on an individual basis).

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation have been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

**Absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:**

- No explanation offered by the parent/carer;
- The explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. days out);
- Family holidays.

Persistent absence is absence of 10% or greater. Mandale Mill Primary School require medical evidence for all incidents of illness, medical or dental appointments if a child's attendance is below 95%. Acceptable forms of evidence include medical appointment letters, copies of a prescription or prescribed medication, letter from a medical professional or GP appointment card. If your child has a long term health condition which results in absence of 10% or more, **medical evidence will be required to support this.**

Once the school receives an acceptable reason for an absence, it will be authorised by inserting the correct symbol. Reporting by telephone, verbally to a member of staff or a note are all acceptable. If **after two weeks** no satisfactory reason has been given the absence will be treated as unauthorised. **Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents.** The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, in itself, oblige the school to agree to it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or where no explanation is forthcoming at all, the absence must be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally-condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil, school will involve the LA Attendance Officer at an early opportunity.

Occasionally, there are instances where there is an excessive amount of authorised absence; this can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection; the school will be alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence. The school may authorise absence retrospectively where satisfied as to the explanation offered. **Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided will be treated as unauthorised.**

**Holidays in term time**

Guidance from the Government has been altered (September 2013) so that Head Teachers do not have the power to authorise term-time absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents do not have an automatic right to demand holidays for their children.

Any application for leave of absence should be made in advance and in writing to the Head teacher. **Parents will be required to attend an initial meeting to discuss the purpose of the leave of absence request. A decision will be made during this meeting as to whether the request meets the school's exceptional circumstances criteria.** Where a request is due to a health need or work commitments a parent may wish to provide supplementary evidence. All documentation should be presented on official letterhead paper from an employer or healthcare professional, including the name of the organisation and a named contact person. **In the event the absence is unauthorised, parents will be issued with a statutory letter confirming this and advising the absence will be subject to a referral for a fixed penalty notice.** The minutes of this meeting will be recorded and will submitted as evidence where a referral to the Attendance Team is necessary.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Pupils will:**

- attend school regularly;
- arrive on time;
- be prepared for the demands of that day;

- feel comfortable in chatting to a member of staff if they are experiencing problems at home which may affect their attendance.

#### Parents/Carers need to ensure:

- their child attends school;
- they contact school on their child's first day of absence, advising of the reasons for absence;
- their child arrives at school punctually;
- their child is appropriately dressed and properly equipped for the day.

#### Intervention at School Level

##### Stage 1 - Monitor

This section describes the role of school in relation to improving attendance.

- 1.1 The Class Teacher has primary responsibility for taking the school register and for entering into the electronic register any notes explaining absences.
- 1.2 After the close of registers, the school office will begin the First Day Response procedure where children who are absent without known reason are contacted; this is to ensure, in the first case, that they are safe. **Where school is unable to make contact with a parent, a home visit will take place on the first day of absence.** Any late pupils will be marked by the school office as late on the register, the reasons for lateness and the minutes late will also be recorded.
- 1.3 The Class Teacher can do much to encourage regular attendance and punctuality. If a teacher is concerned about absence, then the pupil is **referred to the PSAs who will in turn discuss the circumstances with the Deputy Head.**
- 1.4 Each half term, school reports on children's attendance. School have an active list of children who require medical evidence because their attendance has fallen below 95% **or they are subject to an Attendance Plan.**
- 1.5 School reports attendance to parents on a termly basis via the termly report. The child's registration certificate is accompanied by a letter from school.

##### Stage 2 - Attendance Concerns

- 2.1 Home will be contacted, preferably by phone in the first instance; this will be done by the school office staff.
- 2.2 A record should be kept of all contact and conversations on the electronic register.
- 2.3 Parents/carers are encouraged to visit school to discuss attendance and strategies for improvement, it is important to establish the reasons for poor attendance (general health, home circumstances etc). School will **either issue an initial monitoring letter or initiate an Attendance Meeting** for any child who falls below 95%. **School reserves the right to determine the most appropriate course of action. All children subject to monitoring will be required to produce medical evidence in order for absence to be authorised. Failure to do this will result in absence remaining unauthorised.**
- 2.4 During an Attendance Meeting an attendance plan will be agreed setting out clear targets. School staff will detail how contact with the parent and pupil will take place and who will make the contact. This may be a weekly support meeting, a home visit or this is not feasible, a telephone contact as a minimum in order to fully support families. Early Help should be considered at this stage. Minutes of this meeting will be recorded and will be submitted as evidence should a referral to the Attendance Team be necessary.
- 2.5 A date for review of attendance will be set, no more than 4 weeks later.
- 2.6 If attendance has improved, then a letter of commendation will be sent home, **the pupil will continue to be monitored until their attendance exceeds 95%. At this stage the pupil returns to Stage 1.**
- 2.7 If attendance has not improved, then options may include:
  - Contact home to discuss the review and set a further review date.
  - Discuss with the parent areas of concerns and where other support might be appropriate.
- 2.8 **Any child who accrues 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in an 8 week period will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Team.**

2.9 The Attendance Team will make a decision to either: follow the Stockton local authority penalty notice procedure or arrange an Attendance Case Conference.

When making a referral to the school's Attendance Officer, it is important that the following information is included:

- action taken to date by the school;
- copies of letters to parent(s)/carer;
- details of home visits – dates, outcomes;
- copy of school's attendance improvement support plan;
- copy of the Early Help Assessment and details of review (provide reason if this is not in place);
- up to date attendance print out;
- details of other agency involvement;
- fully completed referral form;
- details of person/s with parental responsibility;
- signed and dated by the head teacher.

Details of the procedure followed by the **Attendance Team** may be found on the Local Authority's website.

All attendance monitoring and subsequent action, including home visits will be documented on CPOMs. This provides school with a clear chronology of concerns and action taken.

### **Attendance and Punctuality Rewards**

We take the following steps to reward good attendance and punctuality:

#### *Individual Children*

Children participate in MFC Foundation's attendance initiative. Certificates are awarded for 100% attendance over a five week period.

#### *Classes*

Rewarded from the Attendance Bank on a weekly basis. £5 for 100%, £2 for 97% and over and £1 for the winning class. Bonus amounts are given for specific progress.

#### *Year Groups*

Year group attendance is rewarded through MFC Foundation's initiatives.

Additional rewards for attendance include: pairs of match day tickets for MFC; stadium and training ground tours and additional sports events.

#### *Families*

Children who attend every day and on time will be entered into a draw to win a shopping voucher to reward families for the important role they play in ensuring good attendance and punctuality.



- Article 3: All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.
- Article 28: Every child has the right to a good education.