



**MEREBROOK INFANT
SCHOOL**

ATTENDANCE POLICY

VERSION

Date	Author(s)	Notes on Revision/s
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1 INTRODUCTION

Regular attendance is important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined 'regular' attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Merebrook Infant School.

2 AIMS

This policy outlines the aims and expectations of Merebrook Infant School to support pupil attendance at school.

3 OVERVIEW

No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.

In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents/carers to ensure attendance at school as required by law.

Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents/carers may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents/carers, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.

The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

4 EXPECTATIONS

We expect the following from parents/carers:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually;
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework;
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.
- To ensure that they contact the school office either by telephone or the school website before 8.55am to advise the school if their child will not be attending school that day and the reason why.

5 RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively, for safeguarding purposes.

In cases where a problem may appear to be emerging, the Head of School may telephone the families concerned or invite parents/carers to meetings about attendance discreetly, to discuss the situation with them.

5.1 Recording Pupil Attendance and Absence

Parents/carers are asked to inform school on each day of absence before 8:55 am if their child is either ill or if they know that their child will be arriving late. If contact has not been made with the school by the parents/carers, they will be contacted by the school by telephone on each day of absence. Absences not explained can be marked as unauthorised. Should the school not require parents/carers to telephone about absence, e.g. when a child is expected to be absent for some time for hospitalisation etc., the school will inform parents whether they are required to telephone in. An accumulation of unauthorised absences may result in a FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) being issued.

When a pupil is late into school, i.e. after 8:55am for the morning session or after 1:00pm for the afternoon, it is important that their parents/carers sign in the pupil at reception on arrival. They will receive a late mark in the register.

It is essential that our contact details are kept up to date and ask that if parents/carers change either address or phone numbers then these details are communicated to the office so our records can be amended.

Where we are unable to speak to parents/carers by telephone, we will leave a message asking the parent to call the school. An email will also be sent when contact can not be made with the parent.

If parents/carers fail to communicate the reason for their child's absence to the school despite contact being made by the school, they may be subject to a home-visit by a member of school staff to establish the cause of absence and the whereabouts of the child.

5.2 Absence Management

It is the school that authorises absence. Parents/carers provide a reason for children being absent from School. It is at the discretion of the school as to whether this reason is acceptable or not. The School may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to each Parent or Carer who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child at School. This currently stands at £60 if paid within 21 days, but rises to £120 for those paying within 28 days. Merebrook Infant School follows the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct to ensure a consistent approach across the school.

5.2.1 Authorising Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. An absence can only be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness of the pupil concerned (not of the parent or another family member). For sickness and diarrhoea it is recommended by the NHS that pupils may return 48 hours after symptoms disappear;
- A medical or dental appointment;
- For the purpose of religious observation (one day only);
- An educational event / trip;
- Family bereavements;
- Fixed term exclusion;
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

It is important that you understand the circumstances when absence in term time will **not** be authorised by the school – such as:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible;
- Immediately before and during assessment periods;
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.

In cases of medical absence, where the school has initially authorised the absence but the issue persists, the school may request the parent to complete the GP stamp form (see appendix 1) or request other GP/medical proof of absence from the parent; this change should be communicated to the parent in writing or included as part of a meeting with the school.

5.2.2 Holidays and requests for a leave of absence during term time

We advise parents that Merebrook Infant School follows the guidance which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>:

Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This, however, will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Parents who wish to request a leave of absence during term time are asked to complete a *Leave of absence request form* (see appendix 2) and submit any supporting evidence with it. Forms can be obtained from the school office.

Parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. The school works within the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

5.2.3 Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised under the following circumstances:

- Shopping trips;
- Birthdays;
- Holidays in term time;
- Lateness after 9.05am when the registers have closed;
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified;
- No reason given;
- School staff have cause to believe that the note or reason given for absence is not genuine valid.

5.2.4 Attendance Monitoring

Attendance of all pupils is monitored by Merebrook's Business Support Assistant and Head of School. Every child's attendance is considered bi-weekly.

5.2.5 Absence Procedures

Merebrook Infant School applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

5.2.5.1 Attendance Below 95%

Parents will be contacted with a letter (see Appendix 3 – attendance letter 1) to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family via the School's Learning Mentor.

5.2.5.2 Attendance Below 90%

Parents will be contacted with a letter (see Appendix 4 – attendance letter 2) to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family via the School's Learning Mentors. This letter will also identify procedures that will be followed should the attendance figure continue to drop. A child attending school only 90% of the time or less is considered to be 'persistently absent' according to the Government's expectations of attendance.

5.2.5.3 Attendance of 85% or Less

If a child's attendance reaches this level, parents/carers will receive a phone call outlining the School's concerns. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the attendance figure, an action plan may be set up and parents will be invited into school to discuss the situation in greater detail. Following this regular review meetings will be arranged. The School may ask for medical evidence to support the reasons for failing to attend school.

5.2.5.4 Fixed Penalty Warning Letters and Prosecutions

A Fixed Penalty Warning letter (see Appendix 5) will be issued where there are at least 10 unauthorised sessions over 12 school weeks. The warning letter is effective for twelve school weeks but the FPN cannot be issued for at least three weeks after the warning to give time for attendance to improve.

For the standard S. 444 (1) prosecutions, there is a requirement for an overall attendance of below 90% with some unauthorised in the last 4 weeks. There are no limits to the number of times a warning letter can be sent. For the higher level, also known as the 'aggravated offence', a 444 (1A) letter needs to be issued. In these cases, there is a requirement for the parent/carer to have knowledge of the offence.

If the issuing of warning letters does not lead to the desired improvement, Colin Mayo (Senior Attendance Officer – Legal Interventions) should be contacted. At this stage, documentary evidence of the interventions already attempted should be provided by the school. If it meets the criteria, a FPN will be issued and a copy sent to the school. If the school would prefer a prosecution and a warning letter had been sent then Colin Mayo will write to the parent/carer(s) and invite them to an Attendance Interview. At that meeting, a review will not be planned, however, if there is no improvement then parents will be written to again and invited to a PACE interview. Information will be given at the Attendance interview about the PACE interview and the parent(s) right to legal representation.

The PACE interview will be carried out following the guidelines given to Local Authorities by the Department for Education. A police caution will be given to the parent(s) in accordance with Code C of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

Following the interview, the case will be booked into court. Colin Mayo will inform the parents of the court date and write a section 9 statement based upon the PACE interview and other, supporting information, which has been provided by the school and/or other agencies. This 'court pack' will be sent to parents two weeks prior to any legal proceedings.

5.3 Punctuality

5.3.1 Start of School Day

The playground is open from 8.30am and the doors open at 8.45am. Registers are taken at 8.55am.

The School gates will be shut at 8.55am. Any child arriving after this time will need to enter the school via reception. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked late on the register. The register will close at 9.05am. Any child arriving after 9.05am will get an unauthorised late mark. When unauthorised late marks are accumulated this could result in a FPN being issued or legal intervention.

Merebrook Infant School actively discourages late arrival at school by challenging those who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation. School will notify parents/carers of pupils who are persistently late and this may result in a meeting and an action plan.

The School may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to each parent/carer where the child has persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed. The school works within the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

If a child's punctuality is a concern, parents/carers will receive a phone call outlining the School's concerns. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the punctuality figure, an action plan may be set up and parents may be invited into school to discuss the situation in greater detail. Parents/carers will be informed that should their child continue to arrive late for school, they may be subject to a fine. Ten unauthorised lates, where a child arrives at school after 9.05am, after the register has closed, may result in a fine. This currently stands at £60 if paid within 21 days, but rises to £120 for those paying within 28 days.

5.3.2 Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% (90% or below) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

6 SCHOOL ORGANISATION

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education. In addition, there may be specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff such as the following:

6.1 Parents/Carers

Merebrook Infant School expects parents/carers to:

- Make contact with school on first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence thereafter, unless the School asks you not to do this, by the methods mentioned in section 5.1;
- Support their child and the school in achieving maximum attendance.

6.2 Authorised or Unauthorised Absence

6.2.1 General Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence.

All other absence must be regarded as **unauthorised**.

6.2.2 Approved Educational Activity

Where pupils are away from school but are undertaking an approved educational activity, this should be marked in the usual way but are counted as present for calculating data for the DfES absence return. To avoid confusion in emergency situations pupils who are off site should not be marked as present. The following activities fall within this category:

- Educational visits and activities, both in this country and overseas.

6.2.3 Other Circumstances

Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Head of School to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered.

6.3 Lateness

Schools should actively discourage late arrival by challenging young people who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation.

Registers will remain open until 9.05am. In the event of bad weather this period can be extended at the discretion of the Headteacher.

6.4 Ensuring Pupil Information is Up-to-date

Schools should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies are effective. It is the responsibility of the parent / carer to inform the office of any changes as they happen.

Appendix 1 - GP STAMP FORM

To the GP surgery,

I am supporting _____ and her/his family with school attendance matters. I would appreciate if you could confirm, by surgery stamp, when _____ attends the surgery to see a GP/nurse.

Thank you,

Date:

Surgery stamp

I _____ parent/guardian give my permission for the surgery to confirm that I visited the surgery with _____ on the above date(s).

Appendix 2 - LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Child's name: Class:

Address:

.....D.O.B:.....

DATES REQUESTED FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Start date: Finish Date:

(First day absent from school)

(Last day absent from school)

Reason for application:

.....
..

.....
..

.....
..

Signature of Parent / Carer:

Print name: Date:

FOR OFFICE USE:

Current attendance %: Total authorised absence this school year:

Total Unauthorised absence this year :

Leave of absence authorised

Leave of absence is unauthorised for the following reasons: Total Days.....

.....
.....
.....

Signed: Date:

Head of School

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

The staff and governors of Merebrook Infant School are confident that parents share our wish that all children make the most of their skills, talents and opportunities. Regular attendance at school is vital if we are to achieve this aim. **If you would like to request leave of absence during term time please complete the attached form**, after reading the guidance below.

Headteachers are not able to authorise leave of absence for holidays during school term time. The Secretary of State for Education has stated that **all holidays during term time** are unauthorised and could be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) of up to £60 per child.

Parents are advised not to seek approval for term time holidays from their child's Headteacher unless there is "exceptional circumstances", such as a family wedding, overseas funeral or other family event which is not deemed to be a 'holiday' and cannot be easily arranged outside of term time. It is at the discretion of the Headteacher of your child's school to grant leave in these circumstances.

Please be aware of the following prior to making an application:

- All leave must be applied for at least two working school weeks in advance of the first day of requested leave. Only in emergency situations will requests be considered in shorter timescales.
- We strongly advise you not to make any travel arrangements until the headteachers decision of the request for leave of absence is made final.
- Failure to request leave in the appropriate way, is likely to result in unauthorised absence and a possible fixed penalty notice (see further details below).
- The definition of parent generally includes all those with day to day responsibility for a child
 - All natural parents, whether they are married or not
 - Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
 - Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child

Important information about the Fixed Penalty Notice:

A fine becomes effective if a child has had more than ten unauthorised sessions or five days absence. Further details of the FPN are included below:

- A FPN can be issued to each parent, per child
- A fine of £60 is payable in 21 days and, if there is a failure to pay after that time, it rises to £120 payable in 28 days
- If the fine remains unpaid after 28 days then the parent(s) or carer(s) may be prosecuted under S444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 for the period of non-attendance and is subject to a fine of up to £1000 per parent.

More information is available on the Milton Keynes Council Website by visiting <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-for-parents/milton-keynes-council-school-attendance>.

Appendix 3 - ATTENDANCE LETTER 1

Dear Parents/Carers,

At Merebrook School we monitor pupil's attendance regularly. We are writing to you as it has been recognised that _____ has been absent from school for a period of time during this academic year resulting in an attendance rate of _____%.

In line with school policy, we write to parents with regard to pupil attendance when the attendance rate falls below 95%.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined 'regular' attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Merebrook Infant School.

Attending school every day is essential for your child and their learning and social development.

Holidays during term time will be recorded as unauthorised absence unless otherwise granted and this will affect your child's attendance record.

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day we can work with you and your family so please contact the school office to arrange this.

Yours sincerely

Miss T Hurwood
Head of School

Appendix 4 - ATTENDANCE LETTER 2

Dear Parents/Carers,

At Merebrook School we monitor pupil's attendance regularly. We are writing to you as it has been recognised that _____ has been absent from school for a period of time during this academic year resulting in an attendance rate of _____%.

In line with school policy, we write to parents with regard to pupil attendance when the attendance rate falls below 90%.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined 'regular' attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Merebrook Infant School.

Attending school every day is essential for your child and their learning and social development. Holidays during term time will be recorded as unauthorised absence unless otherwise granted and this will affect your child's attendance record.

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day we can work with you and your family so please contact the school office to arrange this.

Should your child's attendance fail to improve a meeting with myself or member of the senior leadership team will be arranged to discuss this further. This may result in an attendance action plan being put in place and you may be issued with a formal warning.

Yours sincerely

Miss T Hurwood
Head of School

Appendix 5 - FIXED PENALTY WARNING LETTER

Dear

1 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE WARNING LETTER

NAME:

DOB:

YEAR:

SCHOOL

I write to advise you that you could face a legal sanction if you fail to ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually.

During the period to the school was open for sessions and attended on occasions and/or was late after the register on occasions. Your child's overall attendance is %.

Section 7 of The Education Act, 1996 states that you have a legal duty to ensure your child's regular attendance at school; therefore, if your child's attendance does not improve the matter will be referred to the Local Authority who will commence legal proceedings. This could mean, under the terms of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, 2003, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to you and a fine of £60 will become payable in 21 days or £120 will be payable after 21 days but within 28 days. A Notice could be issued three weeks after the date of this letter, if there is no improvement in your child's attendance or punctuality. This warning is in place for 12 (twelve) schools weeks as set out in the Milton Keynes Code of Conduct for their issue.

Alternatively, the Local Authority will write to you to invite you to an Attendance Interview at your child's school. If there is no improvement after the interview, legal sanctions will commence and you will be invited to a formal caution interview as required by the PACE Act* which will lead to a prosecution in the magistrates' court under Section 444 (1) or Section 444 (1a) Education Act, 1996: if convicted you will receive a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment for an "aggravated" offence or a fine of up to £1000 and a criminal record for a Level 3 offence.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 6 - LATE LETTER

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing to you as it has been recognised that _____
has been late from school _____times week commencing
_____.

Attending school on time is essential for your child and their learning and social development.

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day we can work with you and your family so please contact the school office to arrange this.

Should your child's punctuality not improve we may organise a meeting with myself, or member of the senior leadership team, to discuss further which may result in an action plan being put in place.

Yours Sincerely

Miss T Hurwood

Head of School