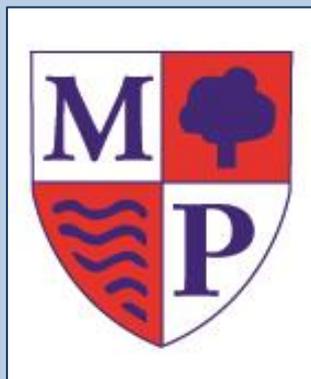


Mersey Park Primary School Attendance Policy



Signed: Jan Lambeth (Attendance Governor)

Date: September 2019

Date for review: September 2020



Rights Respecting School: Article 28

Every child has the right to an education

Mersey Park Primary School

Attendance Policy



Introduction

This is a successful and happy school and every child plays their part in making it so. However, for our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and all children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that we make sure that every child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Our whole school attendance target Mersey Park Primary School is 97%

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.

What is expected of the Parents/Carers

Children at Mersey Park Primary are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, pupils will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents/carers are not supportive or effective in these areas.

Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly, and is in school for every lesson after they have registered. 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.

Parents/Carers are expected:

- To ensure children attend school every day unless they are too unwell;
- To trust that school staff will contact parents/carers during the school day if a child is too unwell to be in school;
- To inform school, by phone, email or note, if a child is unable to attend, on the first day of absence;
- To continue to inform school on a daily basis if absences continue beyond a single day;
- To make all medical appointments outside school hours whenever possible;
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time (8.50am – 9.00am). A reason should be offered for any lateness;
- To ensure that their child is collected on time at the end of the school day;
- To work closely with the school and the Attendance Service to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance;
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be refused except in exceptional circumstances;

- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as SATS;
- To provide evidence, if requested, if there are repeat absences for medical reasons.

Absence Procedures:

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent parents/carers must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, by telephoning the school office (0151 647 8197);
- Continue to keep school informed if absences continue beyond a single day;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence.

If your child's attendance falls below 93% you may be asked to meet with the Headteacher or Attendance Panel to resolve the problem, but you can approach school staff at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school.

What to do if your child is reluctant to attend school:

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work or homework, bullying, friendship problems or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some case you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

Make sure that your child gets plenty of sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that your child leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school; chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch.

Medical Evidence:

Though we always ask you for a note when your child has been absent, we may need more evidence, particularly if there are repeat absences for medical reasons.

We will accept the following as medical evidence:

- Doctor's certificate;
- Appointment card - date stamped;
- Medication in the name of the child;

- Prescription;
- Text message from doctors or NHS confirming an appointment;
- Care of the chemist – date stamped slip to show medical advice has been sought;
- Appointment letters from hospital, doctor or dentist.

This is not an exhaustive list.

In some cases, we may need to ask parents/carers for permission to get the School Nurse involved and/or a Doctor if there are particular concerns about health-related absences.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Lateness can also encourage absence as some pupils would rather not attend school at all, rather than have to arrive late.

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 8.50am and we expect your child to be in at that time.
- Registers are marked by 9.00am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.
- At 9.30 am the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be present on site, but this will not count as a present mark in law and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.
- Any late pupils should enter school through the main entrance. The administration staff will ask the parent/carer to sign their child in using the electronic system.
- If a child arrives unaccompanied by a parent/carer the staff will ask the pupil to offer a reason for lateness and this will be followed up by a phone call.
- If lateness becomes a regular occurrence parents/carers will receive a phone call to enquire about reasons and offer support as necessary.
- If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting in school to agree an action plan. If support is declined or the plan is not followed, and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness, an Education Penalty Notice may be issued.

What is expected of the pupils

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

Pupils are expected:

- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually;
- To promptly arrive in class for both morning and afternoon register;
- To inform a trusted adult if there is a reason they are not happy to attend school;
- To be aware of their attendance targets and work towards meeting them.

What is expected of the School

School attendance will be positively supported wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount.

School is expected:

- To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of;
- To meet the legal requirements set out by Government;
- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance;
- To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence and patterns of absence;
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences on the register using the correct attendance code (see table Appendix 1);
- To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance;
- To encourage open communication channels between home and school;
- To develop procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees;
- To develop procedures leading to a formal referral to the Attendance Service;
- To adequately provide for pupils with health difficulties, including mental health, within the bounds of resources available;
- To give parents/carers data on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- To regularly update governors about school attendance and attendance concerns;
- To report to parents/carers each term on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
- To celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- To reward good or improving attendance or punctuality.

If a child is absent:

- We will telephone parents/carers to advise that their child is not in school and we have not been given a reason why;
- We will telephone any other persons on the pupil's contact list if we are unable to make contact;
- Parents may receive a home welfare visit from either school staff or Merseyside Police in order to ensure the safety of the pupil and family members.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

- Mrs Thomas, our headteacher, who decides on the classification of absences and puts cases forward for prosecution or Penalty Notices.
- The school governors, with Mrs J Lambeth (Vice Chair of Governors) as attendance link governor, are responsible for overseeing school attendance and checking policies and procedures. Mrs J Lambeth may also attend Attendance Panel meetings.
- All Class teachers, who monitor their pupil's attendance and set the weekly attendance targets for their classes.
- Mrs Tootell, our deputy headteacher, who monitors school attendance, supports pupils to improve their attendance and punctuality and makes referrals to the Attendance Service.

- Mrs Hardy, our Home/School Liaison Officer, who makes first day absence telephone calls and supports families to improve attendance and punctuality.

Stepped Interventions

97% to 95%	Early Warning	Early warning letters, phone calls home, monitored by class teachers
95% to 93%	School Monitoring	Letters to targeted families, 1:1 meetings, home visits
93% to 90%	School Intervention (stage 1)	Attendance Report Card, letter home explaining the issuing criteria for Education Penalty Notices, continued school support
90% and below	Attendance Service and School Intervention (stage 2)	Attendance Panel, Parenting Contract, Attendance Report Card, Meeting with Attendance Officer and possible Education Penalty Warning or Notice which could lead to prosecution
<p>Unauthorised attendance that falls below 75% is a very serious concern. School would seek advice from social care.</p>		

The electronic registration system provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant and provide information to assist the school to strategically manage attendance issues. The Attendance Service will also have access to this information and will use the reports to support their role.

Strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality

- Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
- Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports, and at the Home/School Discussion evenings in October and February.
- Positive verbal reinforcement is given to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time and attendance actions are developed to help them catch up with any missed curriculum and promote future attendance.
- A weekly attendance league will promote and celebrate class attendance and 'Daley Bear' will be awarded to the class with the best attendance each week.
- 100% attenders in the winning class will enter a family prize raffle.
- A weekly £5 for 5 reward will be awarded to a randomly selected child if they have 100% attendance that week. If not, the £5 will rollover.

- Parents will be informed of the school's policy on attendance when their child first starts at the school and an updated attendance leaflet will be sent out each year.
- Attendance expectations will be included on the home/school agreement.
- Parents will be regularly informed of the whole school attendance target and the current position in meeting that target.
- Attendance Panels will be offered as a means to support parents/carers of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. The Attendance Governor may also attend these meetings. At an Attendance Panel Meeting a Parenting Contract will be written, which includes a statement by the parents/carers that they agree to comply with whatever requirements are set out in the plan;
- Education Penalty Notices will be issued through referral to the Attendance Service where parents/carers do not engage with the school to support an improvement in attendance.
- 97%+ attendance will be celebrated at the end of each term and 100% certificates are awarded each term.
- 100% attendance will be rewarded at the end of the year, with reference made to pupil's having 100% attendance in consecutive years.
- Attendance displays in public areas will promote and celebrate good attendance and punctuality.

What is expected of the Local Authority

The Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children.

The LA is expected:

- To provide an Attendance Service to support schools and parents/carers to fulfil their legal duty. The Attendance Service is the enforcement agency of the LA, as well as providing guidance and support through its Attendance Officers;
- To use sanctions such as Education Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court if the Parenting Contract is unsuccessful.

Types of absence

Every session (half day) absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Acceptable reasons for an authorised absence:

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause;
- The child lives over a certain distance from the school and either the LA has failed to make suitable arrangements to register the child at a nearer school or the LA has failed to make suitable transport arrangements;
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith;

- The child is absent 'with leave'. This refers to leave being granted by the school if authorised for exceptional circumstances.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. It is this type of absence which can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings and includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy during the school day;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- Parents/carers own health issues;
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

In the case of unauthorised absences, an Education Penalty Notice may be issued. Head Teachers may submit a written request to the Education Social Welfare Service using the appropriate proforma asking for an Education Penalty Notice Warning Letter to be issued to parents/carers. If improvements in attendance are not evident then an Education Penalty Notice may be issued.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) is when a pupil misses 10% or more (19 days) of their schooling across the full school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing great harm by creating gaps in a child's learning. Research shows that these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. Therefore, we need parent's/carer's and pupil's complete support to address this.

Priority will be given to any pupil either at the PA level or at danger of reaching it and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately so that together we can put a plan in place to get that child back into school. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

Holidays in Term Time

In line with Local Authority and Government guidance, leave of absence in term time will only be considered in the most exceptional of circumstances. The principles for defining exceptional are: rare, significant, unavoidable and short, with unavoidable meaning an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to a leave of absence in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave of absence must be made in advance on the leave of absence request form which can be obtained from the school office.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as an Education Penalty Notice. If we contact a parent/carer who has not put in a request for leave of absence and the dialling tone would indicate that they are abroad, school will request an Education Penalty Notice as this meets the criteria below (C).

Education Penalty Notices

Education Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer for the following reasons:

- A. The child has had 10 or more sessions of absence in a period of no more than one term or two half terms and meets the terms of prosecution under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 and the Local Authority has previously issued a warning letter giving the opportunity to improve attendance over a 15 day period.
 - B. The child has 10 sessions of unauthorised leave of absence in term time and the Headteacher has advised the parent in writing that the leave of absence does not constitute the Headteachers view of an exceptional circumstance.
 - C. The child has taken leave of absence in term time without parents requesting authorisation from the school.
 - D. The child arrives late after the registers are closed (using code U) on 10 or more separate occasions in any one term.
 - E. An exclusion has taken place and the parent has allowed the child to be present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of a fixed or permanent exclusion.
- In B, C and D subsequent unauthorised absence may not be subject to a penalty notice as the parent will be made aware that to repeat this would be committing an offence and the Local Authority may prosecute for a repeat offence.

Education Penalty Notices will be issued by post. Payment of an Education Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid after this time but within 28 days. Education Penalty Notices will be issued to each parent for each child. The exception to this would be where a parent has taken a child on unauthorised leave of absence without the consent of the other parent.

The Local Authority retains any revenue from the Education Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs. Non-payment of an Education Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the notice and may trigger a prosecution of parents/carers by the Education Social Welfare Service under Section 444 Education Act 1996. There is no right of appeal by parents/carers against a penalty notice.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents/carers are asked to provide written confirmation to the school office, the following information:

- New address and telephone numbers (if moving house);
- Date of the move (if moving house);
- Name, address and telephone number of the child's new school;

- Start date at the new school.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try to locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other safeguarding agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Monitoring and review

This policy is monitored termly by the head teacher, who reports to governors regularly about the effectiveness of the policy and school's current attendance data. The attendance policy is the governors' responsibility, and they review its effectiveness annually.

Related policies

Code of Conduct for Education Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absences and Exclusions

Appendix 1

Attendance codes

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the electronic register as required and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences.

Code	School Meaning	Statistical Meaning	Note
/	Present (AM)	Present	
\	Present (PM)	Present	
B	Off-site educational activity	Approved Educational Activity	Used for a supervised educational activity that has been agreed by the school. Not to be used where a pupil is at home completing school work.
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Authorised absence	Exceptional circumstances
D	Dual Registered – at another educational establishment	Neither absent nor present for statistical purposes	Pupil scheduled to attend at the other school at which they are registered
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised absence	Alternative provision must be made from the sixth day of any fixed period
G	Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher	Unauthorised Absence	Cannot be changed retrospectively
H	Holiday authorised by the school	Authorised absence	Exceptional circumstances. Application made in advance.
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	Authorised absence	Parents/carers should notify school on the first day of absence. Can ask parents to provide medical evidence (e.g. prescription, appointment card) if the authenticity of illness is in doubt. Can record absence as unauthorised if not satisfied but should advise parents of this decision.
J	At an interview at another educational establishment	Approved Educational Activity	Interview to transfer to another educational establishment
L	Late arrival before the register closed	Present	Registers close at 9.30am
M	Medical or dental appointments	Authorised absence	

N	Reason for absence not yet provided	Unauthorised absence	Amend once the reason is known. This should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely. If no reason is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O
O	Absent from school without authorisation	Unauthorised absence	Given if school is not satisfied with the reason given
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity	Present	Approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence	May need to seek advice from the religious body
S	Study Leave	N/A	
T	Gypsy, Roma, Traveller absence	Authorised absence	Travelling for occupational purposes. Agreed with the school but not known if the pupil is attending elsewhere. If it is known where the child is attended they should be dual registered.
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Unauthorised absence	
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity	Includes residential trips
W	Work experience	N/A	
X	Not required to be in school	Attendance not required	When non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Attendance not required	School site closed, transport provided by the school or LA is not available, local or national emergency results in widespread disruption to travel
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Attendance not required	Register set up in advance of pupils joining the school
#	Planned whole or partial school closure	Attendance not required	Bank holidays, up to five INSET days and use of school as a polling station
-	Should attend	No mark recorded	