



# Millhouse Primary School Attendance Policy



## Introduction

At Millhouse Primary School we want to ensure that our pupils are able to take the fullest possible advantages of all that we have to offer. Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to fulfil their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored with the school seeking to work actively with parents and other agencies to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We aim to strive towards every child reaching our 96.5% attendance target to ensure that each child can get the best out of the educational opportunities provided. Working in partnership with parents and other agencies, we do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate and robust procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Research shows there is evidence of a strong link between good attendance and increased attainment. Pupils who regularly attend school make much better progress both socially and academically. Regular attendance enables pupils to adapt better to routines, school work and friendship groups. As a consequence those pupils will have a positive experience of learning and have a more successful transition from primary to secondary and beyond to further education and training.

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'.

## Responsibilities

**In order to manage and promote regular school attendance, parents/carers should:**

- Understand their legal responsibilities by ensuring regular school attendance with regard to the Section 444(1) and 444 (1A) Education Act 1996 and Section 36 of the Children Act 1989.
- Understand their responsibility to keep the School/Academy up to date with at least 2 emergency contact details as required by the Children Missing Education requirements and in line with the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance 2018.
- Make sure their child attends school regularly and on time, appropriately dressed and equipped and in a fit state to learn.
- Impress to their children the importance of regular school attendance by keeping absences to a minimum and ensuring that children are only out of school when they are too sick to attend.
- Establish effective communication with school and swiftly address any worries their children may have about coming to school, so that we can work together to resolve this.
- Let the school know, by telephoning the school office before 9.30a.m, on the first day of absence from school, why their child is absent and when they are expected to return, keeping school informed if the absence is likely to continue so that school and partner agencies can ensure that amendments or alternatives can be made to provision if required.



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- Provide school with any medical appointment cards, and where ever possible make appointments out of school hours; where this is not possible parents will ensure that children attend prior to or following their appointment.
- Seek permission from school prior to any absence that is not medical.
- Not take their child on holiday during term-time.
- Not extend weekend breaks into the school week.
- Attend any meetings called by school/ Academy and partner agencies to discuss attendance.
- Notify school if they intend to remove their child permanently from the school for any reason.

### **In order to manage and promote regular school attendance, school will:**

- Make suitable arrangements for the safe, daily reception of children.
- Be consistent in their attendance practices.
- Keep and mark registers accurately.
- Follow up any unexplained absences via phonecalls/ letters home.
- Monitor individual students' attendance in order to:
  - a) Celebrate good and improved school attendance and reward this through competitions, certificates and events
  - b) Notify parents when we are worried about their child's attendance – this may be via a phone call or letter home.
- Keep parents updated on the School/Academy's overall attendance and individual pupil's attendance, via letters home, newsletters, social media, the website.
- Report to parents how their child is achieving in school and how their child's attendance is impacting on this, via regular parent evenings.
- Notify the Local Authority (LA) of pupils who have poor attendance, leave school to be educated at home, go missing, or are excluded.
- Notify the LA and/or the Department for Children, Families and Schools (DCFS) of absence figures for the school and, where necessary, individual pupils.

### **The Head teacher will:**

- Ensure that everybody at school treats attendance as a priority.
- Promote the importance of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Keep parents updated on attendance and the School/Academy calendar, via letters home, newsletters and the website.
- Be available to discuss attendance concerns with pupils, parents, staff and governors.
- Remind parents at least annually of attendance procedures.
- Analyse attendance data.
- Oversee attendance procedures.
- Report to the Governors on attendance at least three times per year.



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**In order to manage and promote regular school attendance Governors will:**

- With the Head teacher, monitor, evaluate and review the attendance procedures regularly.
- Set targets for attendance.

**In order to support school and academies in managing and promoting regular school attendance the Education Welfare Service will:**

- Work in partnership with the School/ Academy through Service Level Agreements for additional support and collaborative working as part of the statutory functions.
- Attend meetings called by the School/ Academy to address with parents any worries the school and Education Welfare Service may have about a child's attendance.
- Support the school in promoting attendance by attending parent evenings and events.
- Receive referrals from school to address matters of poor school attendance by:
- Visit parent's homes to undertake an assessment of need and to challenge and resolve matters of poor school attendance.
- Involve other agencies where appropriate, such as Public Health (school nurses)

In situations where all other strategies have failed to improve school attendance, the Education Welfare Service will enforce Section 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and the Children Act 1989, which may result in a fine up to £2,500; a Parenting Order; a community order; or a custodial sentence.

## **School Times**

We open classroom doors at 8:45am to allow pupils to enter school calmly in time for the start of morning registration at 9.00am.

School finishes at 3.30pm. Children should be collected promptly unless they are attending an after school activity. In the unlikely event that a child is not collected at the end of the school day and we cannot contact parents/carers or emergency contacts, social services will be contacted.

## **Registration**

School must keep attendance registers for all pupils on the school roll. The class teacher will call the register twice a day (9:00am and 1:00pm) and every pupil will be marked as present, absent or engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site. It must be shown, by the use of approved codes, whether an absence is authorised or not.

## **Lateness**

Children and parents know they are expected to bring children to school on time. This is detailed on the school website and parents are reminded in newsletters as needed. Pupils arriving after 9.00am and before 9.30am will be marked late. Pupils arriving after 9.30am will be marked with an unauthorised absence mark unless there is an acceptable reason for lateness when they will be



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marked with an authorised absence mark. Parents bringing their children to school late will need to visit the school office so that they can be signed in and will be asked to provide the reason for the lateness. The number of minutes late is recorded in order to measure the impact of lost education due to late arrival. In the case of regular late arrivals, letters are sent to the parents or a phone call may be made to the home. The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will be involved as appropriate for persistent lateness.

### Non-Attendance

Children are noted as absent from school via the computerised register system.

Parents are expected to inform school of the reason for absences, however, it is school who make the decision whether to authorise or unauthorise the absence. School will make this decision based on the information available to them. Parents are encouraged to provide as much information as possible and information such as appointment cards, medication or application for leave of absence will assist school in making this decision. Precise reasons for absences due to illness need to be given in order for the school to authorise.

Re-occurring unauthorised absence will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and this can lead to legal interventions and a formal assessment (refer to Appendix 1 for more details).

### Applications for Leave of Absence during Term Time

In accordance with government and Local Authority guidelines, Millhouse Primary School will not authorise a leave of absence in term time unless for exceptional circumstances. All such applications will need to be on the school application form, which is available on the website or from the office. In instances where parents do not complete a leave of absence form, the absence will automatically be unauthorised.

Applications will need to be **at least four weeks before the expected absence**, and include the reason for the request. The applications will be considered by the headteacher. The school has the discretion to allow up to ten days leave in **exceptional** circumstances such as:

- Service personnel on active duty
- Bereavement or Family crisis

Family holidays will generally not be considered to be exceptional circumstances. Therefore, under this policy, holidays in term time are unlikely to be authorised leading to the possibility of the issue of fixed penalty notices.

The headteacher and chair of governors will meet regularly to consider leave of absence requests. Working within the LA guidance, the leave of absence will either be authorised or unauthorised and parents informed within five working days of the meeting between the headteacher and chair of governors with reasons for the decision. If parents choose to go ahead with the leave of absence when unauthorised, a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued through the Local Authority. Per child, this will be £60 if paid within 21 days; payment after this time but within 28 days is £120. Failure to pay a fixed Penalty Notice will render parents liable to criminal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.



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## **Issuing of fixed penalty fines**

Under the new LA Code of Practice on the issue of penalty notices for schools and academies (September 2019) (Appendix 1) a fixed penalty fine can be issued if any of the following three conditions applies:

- A pupil has accrued five or more consecutive days of unauthorised leave of absence (holiday in term time)
- If due to sporadic unauthorised absences, then, other than in specific circumstances, the liable parent/carer will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a maximum of 15 school days to effect an improvement. If there are further absences within the 15 day monitoring period then a Penalty Notice may be issued
- An excluded pupil present in a public place without justification, during the school hours of the school day where the pupil is on roll, during the first five days of each fixed period or permanent exclusion

## **Absence for participation in a performance**

In these instances Millhouse Primary School will follow Local Authority's guidance and by-laws, working in partnership with Education Welfare Service to ensure that any performance absence is within the parameters of the law.

## **Rewards**

In order to promote attendance in a positive way to the children in school, the school attendance mascot – SAM (School Attendance Matters) – is awarded as part of an end of week assembly to the class with the highest attendance. The class is then rewarded with 5 minutes extra playtime/ time on the climbing frame. Children who have full attendance each term are given a termly attendance certificate and their achievement celebrated in Special Mention Assembly.

For children who achieve full attendance for a whole school year, a certificate is awarded and a prize is presented in the last assembly of the year.

## **Safeguarding**

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. The following policies all link into our Safeguarding policy to ensure that we are working together to safeguard children:-

Attendance  
Behaviour  
Anti-Bullying  
Health and Safety

We have also adopted the LA policies on Children Missing Education, Elective home Education and leave of absence during in term time.

All these policies have been endorsed by our governing body, who support the school in all attempts to improve the attendance and safeguarding agenda.

**Millhouse Primary School Governing Body**

**July 2019**