

## Mortimer St. John's Church of England Infant School

Policy			
Committee	Curriculum	Date of Issue	November 2018
Status		Review Date	November 2019
		Issue Number	11

### **MORTIMER ST JOHN'S CE SCHOOL**

#### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

This policy is our school's intention for monitoring and recording attendance. It was compiled by the Headteacher, Staff and the curriculum committee and approved by the Full Governing Body. This policy will be reviewed by the date indicated on the policy.

#### **Principles**

Good attendance is central to raising standards and pupil attainment. The school has a duty to ensure that a child's time at school fosters learning and development; while parents/carers have a duty to make sure their children attend. Our school is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

#### **Definition of Authorised/Unauthorised Absences**

A child should only be absent if the reason is unavoidable. Allowing a child to be absent without good reason is against the law and parents/carers can be fined. Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers) as either authorised or unauthorised. For this reason information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are classified as mornings or afternoons away from school for which a good reason has been given; ie. illness.

Unauthorised absences are absences which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no request for absence has been granted. These include:

- Keeping children away from school for trivial reasons
- Truancy
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Late arrival at school too late to get a registration mark
- Day trips and holidays during term time
- Shopping, looking after other children, birthdays, weddings etc.

#### **Procedures to record absences**

Staff manually complete registers each morning and afternoon. Office staff will:

- monitor the consistent use by staff of the absence codes for recording absence;
- monitor the quality of data recorded by staff

This data is then entered into the office computer daily and, on a regular basis;

1. monitored against attendance targets;
2. analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence;

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3. the data will be used to devise an action plan and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions;
4. the link between an individual's attendance and their attainment is considered;
5. effective attendance management practices from other schools is considered and the sharing of our own practices;
6. benchmark school absence against other schools in similar circumstances;
7. West Berks/Ofsted advice on attendance is considered.

The school follows the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

### 1. Illness and other legitimate reasons

If a child is absent from school, parents and carers should contact the school by 9.30am on the first day of absence, in person or by telephone. As part of the school's duty to safeguard the children, the school will follow up an absence with a phone call on the 1st day, if not already notified. Absence may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement), for religious observation or for medical appointments arranged in school time, provided an oral/written explanation is received. When a telephone message has been received the message will be recorded on the register sheet for staff to action by recording on the register accordingly. Pre notified absences are also written into the register. Medical evidence of absence may be requested e.g. GP appointment card, prescription slip from GP.

At the Headteacher's discretion, evidence may be sought for proof of illness, flights, religious observance etc.

### 2. Absence from School

Periods of absence during term time are strongly discouraged due to the inevitable disruption caused to learning. Parents/carers do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for holidays.

Requests for leave of absence will only be granted by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances on a case by case basis. The school needs advance notice of any requests for periods of absence; this will enable class teachers to know in good time if a child is unable to participate in any educational visit, class assembly or major production etc.

When an application is made for absence during term time, the Headteacher gives consideration to:

- The nature of the parents/carers wishes.
- The timing of the proposed absence.
- The attendance pattern in the present and previous academic years.

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- The current attendance percentage.
- The child's progress.

Leave of absence forms are available from the school office or alternatively they can also be downloaded from the school website. All applications for leave of absence will be responded to by the Headteacher.

### 3. Holidays in Term Time

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. Holidays during term time will not be authorised by the school. In making a decision the Headteacher will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. Parents/carers may be asked to attend a formal interview to discuss the request in more detail.

School will not agree to leave of absence from education during term time under the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 95% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.
- At the beginning or end of a school term

### 4. Punctuality/lateness

Children must attend on time to be given a mark for a session. Parents/carers are expected to ensure that children are present for registration. Children not present for registration will be marked late. Arrivals after the register has closed but before 9.15am will count as present but recorded as late; those arrivals after this period will count as unauthorised. A record of all latecomers is kept by the school office. At least on a termly basis the Headteacher will write to those who are persistently late.

In exceptional circumstances e.g. Special Education Needs, a specific daily timetable may be agreed.

### 5. Extended Periods of Absence

Extended periods of absence beyond six weeks may result in pupils being taken off roll and the Local Authority will be informed that the child is missing from school. On return, parents/carers will be required to apply for a place at the school through West Berkshire procedures.

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### 6. **Persistent absence.**

Currently children who miss 10 per cent or more of possible attendances of their education are deemed to be Persistently Absent (PA). PA data for each school is published twice a year and this data will be looked at closely by the school and during an Ofsted inspection. The Headteacher will intervene and start speaking to parents/carers before a child nears the persistent absence threshold of 10 per cent.

The headteacher will intervene early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern by:

- making first day/first instance contact with parent/carer for all pupils absent without known reason (telephone, e-mail, text);
- analysing individual pupil data to identify quickly patterns of absence which cause concern;
- Parents/carers may be invited to discuss unexplained patterns of absence;
- setting clear trigger points for higher levels of intervention which are consistently applied;
- seeking advice and follow-up from the Education Welfare Service.

### 7. **A Fixed Penalty Fine.**

A Penalty Notice can be given in West Berkshire when a pupil has missed 20 half day sessions from school within a 10 school week period and these absences are unauthorised OR when a pupil has missed 10 half day sessions from school within a 10 school week period and the absences are unauthorised and due to a planned leave of absence or when a pupil is found present without reasonable justification in a public place during school hours during the first 5 days of their exclusion from school. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent or carer of the pupil.

If a Penalty Notice is not paid the parents or carer will be summonsed to appear in Court for an offence under Section 444 (A) Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure regular school attendance or for an offence under Section 103 Education and Inspections Act 2006 for failing to ensure their child is not in a public place

More information about the Penalty Notice Process can be found on the West Berkshire website [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk).

### 8. **Methods to promote good Attendance**

The school will promote the importance and legal requirements of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers by:

- i. explaining the link between poor attendance and reduced attainment;

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- ii. using school promotional material, parent evening and home/school agreements to engage parents/carers;
- iii. communicating clearly with parents/carers about the consequences of parentally condoned absence;
- iv. reminding parents/carers of their responsibility for ensuring the children's regular attendance, including their punctual arrival at school;
- v. reminding parents/carers of the potential sanctions for failure to meet their responsibilities (eg Penalty Notices);
- vi. providing information about the range of support services that parents/carers can access;
- vii. using school assemblies and other means to engage pupils.
- viii. publishing its absence figures to parents/carers to promote good attendance. Information will be included in a child's report at the end of every year.
- ix. Ensuring all parents/carers and children sign a Home School Agreement to agree to abide by school rules, including attendance, punctuality and absence notification.

### 9. Education Welfare officer

The school's designated EWO (Education Welfare Officer) regularly visits the school to discuss attendance issues. If there are attendance problems the school may draw these to the EWO's attention, who will try to resolve the difficulties by agreement. However, if other ways of trying to improve a child's attendance have failed the EWO can use legal proceedings.

Parents/carers may wish to contact the EWO themselves for advice. They are independent from the school and their telephone number is available from the school office or from the Local Authority.

School also liaises with the Traveller Support Team.

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Chair of the Curriculum Committee

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Date