

# MIDDLESTOWN PRIMARY ACADEMY



## Attendance Policy

Last reviewed: December 2016

Next review: December 2017

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **INTRODUCION**

There is a direct correlation between Attendance and Attainment and Middlestown Primary Academy are committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for all our pupils. We believe that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best placed to maximise their opportunities for improved attainment.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Reduce absence and lateness, and raise awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- Include all school staff, parents, pupils and Governors in School Attendance Matters strategies.
- Develop a robust electronic data handling system, enabling school staff, the LA and DfE to access statistical data in order to work effectively in partnership.
- Work effectively with parents/carers and partner agencies, using a range of strategies to improve the attendance of individual pupils and the whole school.

### **THE LAW**

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents, therefore have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's school attendance. Failure can lead to legal action being taken by the LA in the Magistrates Court, or the need to issue Fixed Penalty Fines. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent **knowingly** allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

### **ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**

Any absence from school is detrimental to a child's education and progress. It disrupts learning, routines and progress. Government research shows that 17 days lost learning in one school year can lead to a drop of one grade at GCSE and SAT level.

School will follow up unexplained absences by contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence. Parents/carers may be invited into school to discuss attendance issues if there is a cause for concern. School will agree with the Education Welfare Service (EWS) at what point a referral to the Service will be made.

Please refer to appendix one for details of all absence codes that are used.

### **AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

Some absences are unavoidable, usually due to illness, bereavement or difficult family circumstances. Where a child is going to be absent then the parent/carer must contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day and on any subsequent days of absence. If reasons are not provided for absences on subsequent days then these absences may be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

It is the decision of the headteacher if an absence is to be authorised or not. The fact that a parent/carer has provided an explanation (either in writing, by telephone or in person) in

relation to a particular absence does not mean that the headteacher has to accept it. If after investigation the reason is not accepted it will be marked as 'unauthorised' and the parents / carers will be informed.

Absences **may** be authorised if:

- It has been authorised in advance due to exceptional circumstances.
- Illness or unavoidable cause has prevented the pupil attending school.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parents' belongs.
- Close family bereavement.
- Absence due to a hospital appointment, medical evidence should be provided here possible.
- Sporting or educational related exams that are run by a recognised body, for example ballet exams. Evidence of the exam details will need to be provided to the school office.

Non urgent appointments at doctors or dentists should be made outside of school hours if at all possible.

### **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

These are absences which are not permissible in Law, eg birthdays, shopping trips, days out and Term Time Holidays, and absences where no explanation has been received. The School will discuss unauthorised absence with the EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) and further action may be agreed.

### **HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME**

In compliance with the DFE Regulations, Middlestown Primary Academy will not authorise holidays taken in term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**, these do not include:

- Availability of cheap holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Overlap with beginning and end of term
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods.

All requests for exceptional circumstances will be carefully considered. Applications should be made to the headteacher at least four weeks before the absence is due to start, absences due to holidays will not be authorised retrospectively. An absence request form can be found on the school website or requested from the school office.

Each request for holiday absence will be considered individually, when making the decision whether to authorise the absence, the following factors will be considered:

- The circumstances of the request
- The of length of the proposed leave
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- The proximity to any SATs examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up
- The pupils educational needs

- General welfare of the pupil
- When the request is made

If the request is refused but the holiday is taken, this absence will be recorded as unauthorised. A referral to EWS for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued will be made if the absence means:

- The child's absence falls below 95%; and / or
- The absence results in at least 10 sessions (5 days) being missed

The school works in partnership with the EWS regarding the issue of Fixed Penalty Fines. Where a fixed penalty notice is imposed it will be £60 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days. If paid between 21 and 28 days the fine rises to £120 per parent/carer per child. If it is not paid within the 28 days the case is referred by the Local Authority to the Magistrates Court.

### **FIRST DAY RESPONSE**

On the first day of absence if no contact has been made by the parent / carer then in the first instance the school office will attempt to contact the parent / carer to establish a reason for the absence. Where no contact is made then attempts to contact the emergency contacts provided will be made. In the event of no reason being obtained then the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

After three days of no contact then a home visit will be made by two members of staff, to include one member of the Senior Management Team. The home visit may include speaking to neighbours to try to ascertain the reason for the absence.

If after five days of absence with no contact, a referral may be made to EWS and a fixed penalty notice issued.

If after 10 days of absence where no contact has been made then a referral for a 'Child Missing Education' will be made to the EWS. In extreme cases the child can be removed from roll.

### **PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

Persistent absence is where pupils exceed a threshold of missed sessions. A possible session is a single morning or afternoon when the pupil could have been at school. The current threshold for determining persistent absence is 10%, that is when 38 or more sessions have been missed.

### **MONITORING PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

Levels of absence are monitored by the school on a regular basis. Case management processes will be initiated where absence levels indicate a cause for concern or the levels indicate that the pupil may become a persistent absentee. They may also be initiated if individual pupil circumstances are identified that require personalised strategies.

There are a range of school and LA strategies that can be deployed to improve attendance, including the Fast Track to Attendance programme and Parenting Contracts. The strategies

used will depend upon the individual pupil and the circumstances surrounding the absences. A fixed penalty notice may be issued where there is no improvement after these strategies have been put in place.

There will be cases where long periods of absence are unavoidable due to exceptional circumstances. Where this is the case then a different approach will be taken, this will mainly be around re-integrating the pupil following long periods of absence. This will be agreed with parents/carers on an individual case basis.

## **PUNCTUALITY**

The Law states that children should arrive at school on time, everyday. School opens at 08:55 am and the expectation is that children should be there ready to learn for that time. Poor punctuality is unacceptable and leads to persistent lateness.

A child who arrives after this time but before close of registration will be marked as 'late'. Any child who arrives late, after the close of registration at 09:05 am will be marked as unauthorised.

Levels of lateness are monitored by the school and where a child is persistently late the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation. Referrals may be made to the EWS. A range of school and LA strategies can be deployed to improve attendance, including the Fast Track to Attendance programme or Parenting Contracts. A fixed penalty notice may be issued where there is no improvement after these strategies have been put in place.

## **ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **SCHOOL**

- Set high expectations for pupil attendance, and monitor individual and whole school attendance on a weekly basis.
- Identify causes of concern with regard to pupil attendance.
- Deal with issues which may lead to non-attendance in a timely manner.
- Make initial contact with parents where there is unexplained absence.
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss where there is cause for concern.
- Work in partnership with the LA, and with EWS particularly.
- Maintain electronic registration data systems effectively, recording reasons for absence and deploy them robustly to facilitate presentation of reports.
- Provide attendance data for parents and governors.
- Promote attendance at all levels – within school, the community, the LA, regionally and nationally.
- Celebrate excellent and improved attendance.

### **PARENTS/CARERS**

- Ensure pupils arrive at school on time everyday appropriately dressed and ready to learn, and that routines are in place at home to support this.
- Instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- Be aware of the School Attendance Policy.

- Contact the school as soon as possible if absence is unavoidable for example illness, to provide an explanation for the absence.
- Obtain and provide evidence where possible to support medical absence.
- Avoid term time holidays, and attempt to minimise school time appointments.

### **PUPILS**

- Arrive at school, on time everyday with correct equipment and ready to learn.
- Comply with school regulations regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Discuss any concerns they may have with staff regarding attendance and punctuality.

### **Education Welfare Service (EWS) and Local Authority (LA)**

- The EWS will work in partnership with the school to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level, either through a referral system or using the Fast Track to Attendance Programme; and at whole school level using proactive strategies and Action Plans.
- The EWS will work with children and families to ensure their school attendance and safeguarding is maintained.
- EWS will provide advice and guidance with regards to Children Missing Education, Child Employment and Licensing.
- EWS will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
- EWS will undertake legal action on behalf of the School.
- The LA will support the school with networking and training events and with individual School Audits and Action Plans.

### **Responsibility for Implementing the Policy**

The responsibility for ensuring that the school adheres to this policy rests with the Headteacher. This policy, together with the attached appendices is to be reviewed on an annual basis.

## **APPENDIX ONE – ATTENDANCE CODES**

**Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:**

### **Code B: Off-site educational activity**

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work.

### **Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment**

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question.

### **Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment**

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

### **Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity**

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

### **Code V: Educational visit or trip**

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

### **Code W: Work experience**

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

### **Authorised Absence from School**

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

**Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:**

### **Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

**Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made**

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

**Code H: Holiday authorised by the school**

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

**Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)**

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

**Code M: Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

**Code R: Religious observance**

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

**Code S: Study leave**

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

**Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether

the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

### **Unauthorised Absence from School**

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

#### **Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.**

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

#### **Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided**

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

#### **Code O: Absent from school without authorisation**

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

#### **Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed**

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

### **Administrative Codes**

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

#### **Code X: Not required to be in school**

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

#### **Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances**

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

**Code Z: Pupil not on admission register**

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

**Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure**

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.