



Merrylands Primary School

Attendance Policy

July 2015

Explanatory Statement

This school policy has been produced for the whole school community in order that we are all clear with regard the rights, responsibilities and rules relating to the attendance of pupils at this school. If children do not arrive at school they cannot be educated. Furthermore, good attendance promotes the best learning opportunities, punctuality and reliability; all valuable attributes for a successful working life after leaving school.

Statement of Intent

Merrylands Primary School aims to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve utmost attendance and punctuality in order that all pupils take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Persistent absence is a serious problem for pupils. Much of the work children miss when they are off school is never made up, leaving pupils at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. That is why it is vital as a school we tackle absenteeism and punctuality.

Rights and Responsibilities

School

- Merrylands Primary School expects pupils to attend school regularly, on time and properly equipped and ready to learn.
- Merrylands Primary School will encourage good attendance and will communicate with parents as soon as possible if there is a problem with attendance or punctuality.
- Merrylands Primary School staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism and lateness.
- Merrylands Primary School will include in reports to parents on achievement, pupil's attendance at least annually.

Pupils

- Pupils will ensure that they attend regularly and on time.
- Pupils will attend all lessons punctually.
- Pupils can expect to be welcomed and receive assistance following periods of absence in order to catch up.
- Pupils will be listened to and respected.
- Pupils will have individual records of attendance/punctuality acknowledged by the school.

Parents

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child regularly and punctually attends school, properly dressed (see Dress Code Policy) equipped and in a fit condition to learn.

Parents are responsible for immediately informing the school of the reason for any absence by telephone call on the first morning of any absence before 9.30 am in order for the absence to be authorised if deemed appropriate (this should be confirmed in writing when their child returns to school).

If attendance problems do develop, the school expects parents to work actively with school staff.

Parents do not have a right to take children on holiday in term time. **Leave of Absence** must be granted in advance by the school. Any application will be considered against the pupil's attendance record, family circumstances and timing within the school year with regard to assessments and examinations.

Parents can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record.

Registration (including lateness)

Registration Procedure

Registration begins at 8.55 am and 1.00 pm (KS1) or 1.45 pm (KS2) each school day and registers will be closed after 20 minutes.

Each pupil should be called by name and should respond as prescribed – ‘Here’, ‘present’, etc.

If a pupil arrives after registration has closed, they should report to reception and inform the member of office staff on duty.

Pupils arriving after registration has closed, without an acceptable reason, will be marked as having an ‘unauthorised absence’ for that session.

Registers

The register is a legal document and must be marked accurately, recording a pupils attendance or absence and in the latter case if authorised or unauthorised.

The registers will be marked in ink and where an alteration is necessary this must be clearly identified showing both the original entry and change. Correction fluid must not be used.

Registers will be returned to the school office at the end of the registration period for safety and will be secured but accessible in case of an emergency.

The register is a legal document and a certified extract of the register can be used as evidence in legal proceedings against parents for failing to ensure their child’s regular attendance or in seeking an Education Supervision Order in respect of a pupil.

Registers will be archived for the appropriate number of years following completion at the end of the school year.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Absence for the following reasons will be authorised where parents have confirmed the absence in writing on the child’s return to school. (The school should review the procedures if parents are not literate):

- Sickness/ill health
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (appointment cards to be made available)
- Days for religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as a bereavement
- If permission for absence has been granted in advance by the Headteacher
- Transport arranged by the LEA has failed to arrive where the pupil lives beyond statutory walking distance.

Absence will be recorded as unauthorised when due to:

- Shopping
- Haircuts
- Missed bus
- Slept late
- No uniform
- Looking after brothers or sisters or unwell parents
- Minding the house

- Birthdays
- Holidays not approved
- Other

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

Where absence has not been explained

First Day

- If a pupil is absent at morning registration an attempt to contact the home will be made by a designated member of staff, unless a message about the absence has been received.

Ongoing absence or lateness

- The school will always follow advice from the LEA on matters of attendance, absence and lateness and always work within current guidelines.
- Where a pupil is absent for more than three days and no explanation is offered, a member of office staff will write to the parent.
- Pupils who are late to class or registration may be required to make up the time after school (with or without parent's consent).
- Where a pupil is persistently late or absent the Headteacher will write to the parent inviting them to a school-based meeting to discuss the situation.
- A second letter will be sent to the parents if the lateness or attendance does not improve. A meeting with the Headteacher will be arranged if no improvement is seen in two further weeks.
- All notes from parents regarding a pupil's absence will be stored on the pupil's file and retained for the appropriate number of years.
- Pupils returning from an absence without a note within three days will have a letter sent home by office staff.

Strategies for promoting attendance/punctuality

- Office staff undertake a 'first day' telephone calling should parents not contact the school before 9.30am to give a reason for their child's absence.
- In the belief that pupils are more likely to attend regularly if the curriculum is lively and meets their needs the curriculum will be regularly reviewed by teaching staff.
- Attendance statistics will be collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices.
- Expectations are made clear to parents with regard to attendance and punctuality in School Newsletters, the Home School Agreement, and School Prospectus and, when appropriate, the School Profile.
- Opportunities to maintain awareness through newsletters, parent's evenings and pupil reports will be used.
- Parents, pupils and staff will be regularly reminded of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- The school will award certificates and prizes to all pupils whose attendance/punctuality is either excellent or much improved.
- Pupils whose attendance falls below 85% will be set targets for improvement. These will be regularly reviewed by the Headteacher.
- Pupils with a known attendance problem being admitted to school will be interviewed with their parents and targets for improvement will be set.
- Parents will be kept regularly informed of all concerns regarding attendance and punctuality as appropriate.
- Parents will be informed in advance with regard to the next year's term and holiday dates and dates of special periods, for example test weeks, so that families can avoid unnecessary absences at crucial times.

- Requests for leave of absence for the purpose of family holiday will only be authorised if there is a special reason and then only if the pupil's attendance is above 95%. The maximum period for an authorised holiday is ten school days.
- Only one holiday can be authorised within a single school year.
- The Headteacher will refer all cases of unauthorised leave of absence to the EWO Service and in certain circumstances Penalty Notices may be issued.
- The Headteacher will make termly reports to the governing body on the issue of attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils who have been absent for an extended period of time will be reintegrated back into school through a structured and individually tailored programme.
- All issues, which may cause a pupil to experience attendance difficulties, are to be promptly investigated by the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher/Parent Liaison Officer will have regular meetings with the Education Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The Headteacher/Parent Liaison Officer will hold 'attendance meetings' with parents with children achieving less than 85% and attendance plans will be put into place. The possibility of legal action will be investigated should the attendance targets not be met within three weeks.

Performance Indicators and Review Process

Working in partnership with the school Education Welfare Officer and School Governors the Headteacher will set annual attendance targets for the school. Attendance targets will be monitored annually and the results conveyed to staff, parents and governors.

This policy will be reviewed annually.