



Attendance Policy

Approved by the Governing Body in:

Spring 2016

1. Statement of Intent

Monkfield Park aims to work together with parents/carers to ensure that all children registered at the school attend both regularly and punctually.

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority. 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 school attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

2. Parents/carers' Responsibilities

- (i) Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full time basis to make the most of the educational opportunities available. In Reception, children are expected to start full time after two/three ½ days during their first week of the Autumn term, but in exceptional circumstances a later start date can be negotiated with the Headteacher. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school punctually, appropriately dressed and equipped, and in a fit condition to learn.
- (ii) The school gates will open at 8.40 a.m. The 'hands up' signal will be given at 8.55 a.m. as a sign for children to line up and enter the classroom with their teacher. Registration begins at 9.00 a.m. and the classroom doors will be locked at this time. Parents/carers should ensure that their child arrives at school in time for the start of registration (9.00 a.m.). If a child arrives after 9.00 a.m. the parent/carer should report directly to the school office where they will need to sign the child in and give a reason for the lateness. The child will then be given a small card to give to their classroom teacher to indicate their lateness.
- (iii) Parents/carers should ensure that if their child is going to be absent from school for any unanticipated reason such as sickness, they should contact the school by 8.50 a.m. on every morning of absence. This may be done by phone, email, letter or in person.
- (iv) Parents/carers are requested to inform the school of any circumstances which might affect the child's attendance.
- (v) Parents/carers may not authorise their child's absence - only the school can do this on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents/carers. Should parents/carers fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence the school will record such absence as unauthorised.

3. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at 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

The Department for Education has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences, which are through unavoidable causes:

- (i) When a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) Days of religious observance notified in advance;
- (iii) Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement of a very close relative, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as “Approved Sporting Activity” that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged **out of school hours wherever possible**.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the staff at the school do not consider reasonable and for which no ‘leave’ has been given. These are an offence by the parent/s. Unauthorised absences are where:

- (i) no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- (ii) the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The following activities are examples of what would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- (i) taking unauthorised holiday;
- (ii) returning late from a holiday;
- (iii) unexplained absences;
- (iv) truancy before the register has been marked;
- (v) minding the house;
- (vi) avoidable transport issues;
- (vii) caring for relatives
- (viii) awaiting repair people;
- (ix) shopping;
- (x) haircuts;
- (xi) a birthday or family celebration;
- (xii) keeping children off school without a good reason.

The guidance makes it clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised.

Please note that a request for a term-time holiday is NOT a parental right. Leave will very rarely be granted in exceptional circumstances but arrangements should not be made without the school's agreement in advance. Taking leave without permission is "unauthorised" absence and can be subject to a Penalty Notice fine or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority.

All applications will be treated on an individual basis, by a panel of governors. The panel will take into account the child's previous attendance record and the likely impact of any missed time on the child's educational progress, exceptional reason for the holiday and social stability. Such applications should not exceed 10 school days per school year. Requests for periods of leave which coincide with SATs (Years 2 through to 6 inclusive) will not be granted. Parents/carers will be informed of the decision of the panel by letter. If a school does not agree an absence, and the child is taken out of school, the absence will be unauthorised.

Issues of which Parents/Carers need to be aware:

- (i) If the school does not agree to grant leave and parents/carers take their child on holiday then this will be counted as unauthorised absence (truancy). Should leave be granted but the child remains absent for longer than agreed, this extra time will be recorded as unauthorised absence (truancy). Should a child fail to return to school within 4 weeks of the agreed return date and there is no contact from the parents/carers the school, in consultation and with the agreement of the Education Welfare Officer, will remove the child's name from the school roll.
- (ii) Parents are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may offer parents a formal Parenting Contract or refer the child to the (Education Welfare Officer) from the Local Authority.
- (iii) He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement wherever possible but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use legal proceedings if required, including Penalty Notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents or pupils may wish to contact the (EWO) themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. These are called "persistent absentees"

by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category.

4. School Responsibilities

- (i) The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance with the statutory requirements. The school will set an annual target for attendance.
- (ii) Registration opens at 9.00 a.m. and at 12.55p.m. for KS1 and 1.20 p.m. for KS2. Registration will close at 9.10 a.m. and at 1.05pm for KS1 and 1.30 p.m. for KS2. After closure of registration a child will be recorded as authorised absence if an acceptable reason is received or unauthorised absence if an unsatisfactory reason is received.
- (iii) Appropriate staff will complete registers in accordance with the guidance contained in the staff handbook. The School Business Manager will inspect registers to ensure that these are being satisfactorily maintained and to ensure that any potential attendance difficulties are identified at an early stage.
- (iii) Should a member of staff have particular concerns about an individual child's attendance or punctuality, a note should be raised directly with the Headteacher.
- (v) Should a child be absent the staff member registering the class or office staff will enter the appropriate code in the register. Should no explanation be received from the child's parent/carer, the school office will endeavour to make contact with the parent/carer under the first response system from 9.30 a.m. onwards. Individual causes of concern may trigger more rapid procedures to be implemented.
- (vi) Only notes concerning absences about which there are concerns/queries should be brought to the attention of the Headteacher, who may then choose to speak to the parents/carers concerned.
- (vii) The administration staff will regularly review attendance data and will use this data during meetings with the Headteacher and/or the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify respective tasks and follow-up actions for the school and/or the EWO. If a member of staff becomes aware of circumstances affecting a child's attendance they will endeavour to contact the parent/carer to discuss this and will notify the Headteacher.
- (viii) The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular, punctual attendance:

- a clear attendance statement will be entered in the school prospectus;
- newsletters sent out to parents/carers throughout the academic year covering holidays, first response, attendance targets, lateness and incentives. The Headteacher will report to the governing body on attendance half termly;
- Investigations will take place for individual children whose attendance falls below 96%, e.g. unexplained absences, high levels of illness. As a result of the investigation a three-step letter system may be used to try to improve the child's attendance. If no improvement is seen, the child's attendance will be referred to the EWO. The EWO will then contact the child's parent/carer to discuss the rate of absence.
- Where attendance falls below 96% due to high levels of illness, the school may request to see medical evidence which demonstrates that the child is unable to attend school. Failure to do so may mean that future absences will be marked as unauthorised.
- Children who have been absent for any extended period of time will be re-integrated into school through a structured and individually tailored programme;
- The following measures will be put in place to encourage and reward good attendance: children with 100% attendance to be rewarded with a certificate presented in assembly each term and annually. Each term, the class with the best attendance will be given an appropriate award, to be determined by the Headteacher. (The record of the best and worst attender of each class will not be included in the calculation.)

The people responsible for attendance matters at Monkfield Park are: Mrs Jarman and Mrs Howell.

5. Review

This attendance policy will be reviewed in accordance with the School Development Plan and any changes in legislation. The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parent. Please work with us.