

## MOUNT CHARLES SCHOOL

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

Issued: September 2018  
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#### Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Children need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Mount Charles School recognises its responsibilities to ensure children are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of children who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at Mount Charles School, miss just over 4 half-terms of learning or 19 full school days in each year.

#### Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, parents and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve children's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise the awareness of parents, carers and children of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with children, parents and staff, so that all children realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which children feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in children a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers and our attendance officer, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and children.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, children, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting children who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.
- Weekly presentation of a trophy for the class with the best attendance and additional break time given as a reward.
- Children with 100% attendance for a half term receive a certificate. It is celebrated in assembly, on our good news screen and in our newsletter.
- Children with 100% attendance for the whole year receive a special certificate and are awarded with a treat (for example a school trip or an organised activity). Where children have chronic health conditions these will be taken into account when special certificates are awarded.

## Definitions

### Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible).
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. Where the absences are not authorised we will inform parents of this.

### Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. (Unauthorised holiday constitutes an unauthorised absence.)
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.
- If the absence is unauthorised the Education Welfare Services will be notified of the absence and consideration may be given to a Penalty Notice or legal proceedings for non-attendance. A Penalty Notice is issued to each parent/carer of each child taken out of school and that this carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid within 28 days if the fine is not paid on time, it may result in legal action being taken against parents/carers. **Parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Legal action under Section 444(1) can result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months imprisonment.**

Further information on avoidable absences and the Law can be found in Appendix A.

## Procedures

Our school will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and children.

- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual children's attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Admissions and Attendance Officer any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Cornwall LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Attendance Officer and the Leadership Team.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### ***Attendance Officer & Pastoral Care Manager***

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the Education Welfare Service.
- Meeting parents/carers in danger of being issued a first warning.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher.
- Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation via text message (e-Schools).
- Ensuring attendance issues are raised by teachers at parent consultation evenings where necessary.
- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Texting parents of absent children where no reason for absence received.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

### ***Teachers***

- Class Teachers are the child's first point of contact and will monitor daily attendance.
- Class Teachers will discuss attendance during parent consultations or at individual parent meetings.
- Class Teachers will raise concerns with the Attendance Officer and Pastoral Care Manager where necessary.

### **Governors**

- Attendance data will be shared with Governors during Governor meetings.
- A named Governor for attendance will maintain an overview of policies and procedures in relation to attendance.

## **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter/prescription paperwork or packet.)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

## **Registration**

The school is open from 8.30 am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any student who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 8.50 am and by 1.05 pm. (Attendance code / and \ for students who are present.)

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## **Lateness**

Any student who comes into school after 8.55 am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those students who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each student (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.15 am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.15 am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (attendance code M). Routine dentist or doctor's appointments should be made outside of the school day.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness:

- Our Learning Mentor will meet with the parent/carer to create an action plan to improve punctuality.

## **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence (and no response to a text message) the absence is recorded as unauthorised (attendance code O).

## **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then the Attendance Officer will send a text home on a daily basis. If no response to texts is received and the child remains absent, then the Headteacher will make a decision about whether the child is referred to the Local Authority as a possible Child Missing Education.

## **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school. For further details of support available please see the Supporting Children with Medical Needs Policy.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

## **Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of the Headteacher to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year. Instead, the Headteacher will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

Should parents be considering a holiday during term time a holiday request form must be completed BEFORE the holiday is booked.

Where a holiday is not authorised consideration will be given to requesting a penalty notice from the Local Authority for this period of absence.

## **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. Parents should ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed.

Concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the Attendance Officer has a responsibility to make a referral to the Education Welfare Service. A first warning will be issued, then an educational planning meeting will take place, before a final warning. From this point if there are no further improvement court proceedings will begin.

## **Monitoring Attendance**

The Attendance Officer, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Educational Welfare Officer and Pastoral Care Manager to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings, such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns.

## Appendix A

### AVOIDABLE ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

**IMPORTANT:** Please read carefully the information below.

**WARNING:** If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice\* per parent per child, or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 Education Act 1996.

As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.

THE FACTS	THE LAW
<p>School aged pupils in Cornwall maintained schools are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school is open. Whilst there are a number of unavoidable reasons why a pupil might be away from school (illness, medical appointments, exclusions etc.) the legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school if there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER</b></p> <p>Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.</p> <p>Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.</p> <p>If the school is unable to authorise the absence and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as <b>unauthorised absence</b> and you may receive a £60* fine per parent per child.</p>	<p>The law allows the school to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However, before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient evidence/information in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from the parent with whom the child normally resides.</p> <p>If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.</p> <p>If the child is away for a period of four weeks or more, the school may have the option to take the child off roll subject to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006</p> <p>In case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent fully informs the school as to the reasons. If a child is removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.</p>
<p><b>Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised. Examples include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genuine illness</li> <li>• Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible).</li> <li>• Days of religious observance.</li> <li>• Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces</li> <li>• External examinations</li> <li>• When traveller children are on the road with their parents</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other examples of absence from school that <u>will not</u> be authorised include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any type of shopping</li> <li>• Looking after siblings or unwell parents</li> <li>• Minding the house</li> <li>• Birthdays</li> <li>• Resting after a late night</li> <li>• Relatives visiting or visiting relatives.</li> </ul>
<p>Please contact Mrs Bunting, Headteacher if you wish to discuss this issue.</p>	

**The law requires parents to ensure their children receive an efficient full time education, and every minute of every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time.**

We hope that when you have read this leaflet you will consider that your child's education is too important to allow them to miss school for avoidable reasons.

**\*Penalty notice £60 if paid within 21 days increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days and before 28 days.**

## APPENDIX B – HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME LETTER

GENERAL LETTER - Sent out annually to all parents/carers

NAME AND ADDRESS

Dear parent/carer(s)

Here at Mount Charles School we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence, such as when a pupil is genuinely too ill to attend school, has a medical appointment that cannot be taken outside of school hours or a request for leave has been agreed in exceptional circumstances.

However, the Government does not support parents taking children out of school unless the school agrees this is appropriate under 'exceptional circumstances'. Any request for leave should be made in writing to the Headteacher using the school's request form.

If you decide to still take your child out of school, without permission, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer the matter to Cornwall Council who may decide to take legal action against you. A penalty notice can be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in Court action. Persistent absences not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court, leading to fines up to £2,500 and/or custodial sentences. The Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.

You are welcome to contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have regarding this or if you feel you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. Mount Charles School is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved.

Yours sincerely



Miss F Turner  
Assistant Headteacher



## APPENDIX B – HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME LETTER

### **Exceptional Leave Request Forms (Notice to Parents and Form for parents to complete and return)**

Dear Parent/Carer,

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. Any absence from school will disrupt your child's learning. You may consider that a holiday will be educational but your child will miss out on the teaching that their classmates will receive during your holiday. Attendance is vital to academic success and lost education poses a potential risk of under achievement. This is something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

The Department of Education no longer allows Headteachers to grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you consider that your request for absence is exceptional you will need to complete the form on the reverse of this notification. A response will be sent to you as soon as possible. If leave is not authorised and you nevertheless withdraw your child from school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

In the case of an unauthorised absence the Education Welfare Services may be notified and a Penalty Notice may be issued. Please note that a Penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine is not paid after 28 days, it may result in legal action being taken against you. Parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

All requests must be completed on the attached form, letters will not be accepted. This form should be returned to the Attendance Office at least 14 days before the start of the absence.

**Please be reminded that Mount Charles School now has a two-week break for the October Half Term. This decision was made, with the support of our parents, to enable families to take an affordable holiday without the need for an absence from school.**

I hope you will support our efforts in raising attendance and attainment at Mount Charles School.

Yours sincerely



Miss F Turner  
Assistant Headteacher

# APPENDIX B – HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME LETTER

## Exceptional Leave of Absence Request Form

### APPLICATION BY PARENT/CARER

If you consider an absence during term time to be an exceptional circumstance, please complete this form and return it to the Attendance Office at least **14 days before** the date you wish to remove your child from school.

Pupil's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Carer Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

First day of absence: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of return to school: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of days missed: \_\_\_\_\_ days

Reason for absence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**I understand that if the absence request is unauthorised the Education Welfare Service may be notified of the absence and a Penalty Notice may be issued. I understand that a Penalty Notice is issued to each parent/carer of each child taken out of school and that this carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid within 28 days. I understand that if I do not pay the fine, it may result in legal action being taken against me. Parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.**

Signed ..... Dated .....

(Please ensure you give at least 14 days' notice of the proposed absence.)

Office Use Only			<input type="checkbox"/> Absence authorised Code _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Absence unauthorised
Date form received	Number of school days absence required	% attendance	
			Signed _____ Headteacher

Date Received: .....

Date letter sent to Parent/Carer/phone call/other: .....

## APPENDIX B – HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME LETTER *(from LA exemplars)*

### Penalty Notice Model Leave refusal letter

Date

Name/Address

Dear

Student Name

Date of Absence

I am writing regarding your request to take your child out of school.

The law states that a planned absence from school should only be authorised for students in 'exceptional circumstances'. Here at Mount Charles School we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence; we look at each request on its own merit, taking into account purpose, attendance history and study commitment and seldom authorise a request for students in Year 6.

Under the circumstances, we regret that on this occasion we are unable to authorise your request for absence. If (Student Name) does not attend school on the dates concerned, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

If you decide to still take your child out of school, without permission, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer the matter to Cornwall Council who may decide to take legal action against you. A Penalty Notice can be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in Court action. Persistent absences not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court, leading to fines up to £2,500 and/or custodial sentences. The Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.

I would like to offer you the opportunity to contact Mount Charles School if you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. Mount Charles School is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely



Miss F Turner  
Assistant Headteacher

## APPENDIX C

### Letter 1

<<Date of Printing>>

<<Salutation>>

<<AddBlock>>

Dear <<Salutation>>,

I note from a recent register check that <<Forename>>'s attendance was <<PercentageAttendance>>% from the start of this academic year. I enclose a copy of your child's registration certificate for your information.

This attendance level may include times when your child was ill or attending routine appointments. The average attendance in primary schools nationally is 96%. We aim to achieve this average or even better to ensure that all pupils gain full benefits from their education.

I will therefore continue to monitor <<ChosenName>>'s attendance and will contact you again if <<his>> attendance continues to remain a cause for concern.

Should you wish to discuss attendance in the interim please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Miss F Turner  
Assistant Headteacher

c.c. File

Enc. Attendance certificate

## APPENDIX C

### Letter 2

<<Date of Printing>>

<<Salutation>>

<<AddBlock>>

Dear <<Salutation>>,

You may recall that I wrote to you recently to make you aware that <<ChosenName>>'s attendance was <<PercentageAttendance>>%. <<ChosenName>>'s attendance is now <<PercentageAttendance>>% and is still a cause for concern. I enclose an attendance certificate for your information.

I am therefore inviting you into school on **[date]** at **[time]** to meet with me and our Attendance Officer to look at ways that we can work together to support <<ChosenName>> in improving their attendance.

If you are unable to attend the appointment date or time, then please do not hesitate to contact us to rearrange this.

Yours sincerely



Miss F Turner  
Assistant Headteacher

c.c. File

Enc. Attendance certificate

# APPENDIX C

## Letter 3

«date\_of\_printing»

<<ParentalAddressee>>

<<AddBlock>>

Dear <<Salutation>>

I am writing to invite you to an Attendance meeting at Mount Charles School on -----  
at -----pm with the Educational Welfare Officer and Attendance Officer.

<<ChosenName>>'s attendance is now <<PercentageAttendance>>% and has not improved since our last meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to review the action plan we wrote following your last meeting with us and to look at other ways that we can work together to support <<ChosenName>> to improve their attendance.

If you are unable to attend this meeting, please contact Debbie Fugler on 01726 73911 so we can re-arrange the appointment.

In addition, Mount Charles School will only authorise «chosen\_forename»'s absence where we have reasonable evidence that there is a medical reason or for any other exceptional circumstances. Please share any medical evidence you have so that we can support your child's welfare and education and authorise their absence. Mount Charles School can authorise your child's absence when it considers it reasonable to do so.

Yours sincerely



Miss F Turner  
Assistant Headteacher

c.c. File

Enc. Attendance certificate