



Mill Lane Community School & The Windmill Community Nursery



Growing, Thriving, Flying

Attendance Policy

Mill Lane School is committed to providing the best quality education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents / carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance for example newsletters and end of term reports.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department of Education (DfE).

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance / absence targets. These will reflect both national and Oxfordshire attendance targets.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals. This policy will contain within it, the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

Aims:

- To maximise attendance of all children.
- To provide an environment which encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated at the school. To monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty.
- To analyse attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice.
- To work closely and make full use of the support from the wider community including multi-agency teams.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The following people have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

Governors

- To set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy.
- To support the school in encouraging good attendance

Headteacher

- To ensure that effective systems are in place to accurately reflect individual pupil and group and whole school attendance patterns.
- To monitor individual, group and whole school attendance and punctuality.
- To work in partnership with key agencies if attendance and / or punctuality is an issue.
- To provide governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of policy and practice.
- To write to parents / carers regarding any concerns about their child's attendance.
- To arrange meetings with parents / carers to discuss support and set targets for those experiencing attendance difficulties.

Class Teacher

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class.
- To record the reasons for absence given to them on the appropriate recording sheet.
- To respond promptly to any issue raised in the weekly analysis of registers by office staff.
- To organise work to be sent home for children in their class who are expected to be absent for an extended period through sickness.

Office Staff

- To prepare, manage and coordinate the use of SIMS Attendance Manager System.
- To monitor and track attendance patterns for all children and prepare relevant attendance reports when necessary.
- To contact parents / carers on the first day of their child's absence to establish the reason.
- To ensure that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child at the end of each week.
- To make a judgement in conjunction with the Headteacher whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Administration

- The School uses Attendance Manager provided by SIMS to store and monitor it's legal responsibilities in relationship to attendance. This system consists of specialised software and OMR sheets.
- Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions.
- Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Failure to complete a register accurately leaves the school vulnerable to complaint from parents or carers and constitutes a risk if an emergency evacuation has to take place.

Parents / carers

- To ensure that their child/ren attends school, aiming for a 100% attendance rate
- To contact the school as soon as it is reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend
- That any absence is followed by a letter stating the explanation of why the child was absent and for what period of time if it is more than one day.
- To ensure that their child/ren arrives in school well prepared for the school day
- To contact the school, in confidence, whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child/ren away from school
- To refrain from taking their child/ren out of school for holidays, or occasional days, unless there are significant exceptional circumstance

Pupils

- To attend school regularly, aiming for an attendance rate of 100%
- To arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day
- To inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may hinder them from attending school

School Procedures

Lateness

- Pupils arriving after the register has been closed at 9.10 am, will be considered as late.
- Pupils arriving after 9.10 must report to the School Office so that their attendance can be recorded.
- Pupils arriving after 9.30 am will be officially absent for the morning session. This will be considered an unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory reason is given, for example a doctor's appointment.

- Action to address lateness will be taken in line with the school's strategy to improve punctuality.
- The afternoon registers will be open from 1pm and will close at 1.30pm.
- Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late (L) before register closes.
- In the case of persistent lateness the parents / carers will be asked to work with the school to address this.

Illness

- Parents / carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide the reason for the absence and where possible each subsequent day of absence. Parents should provide a reason for the absence, being unwell is not sufficient. This must be followed up in writing to explain the reason for the absence. If no reason is given within two weeks the absence will become unauthorised.
- Where office staff are not made aware of the reasons for a child's absence they will, wherever possible, contact parents / carers by telephone on the first day of absence.
- If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher should be informed.
- **Third day absence:** if a child is still absent after three days and no contact has been made by the parent / carer, every effort will be made to contact them in order to discover the reason for absence. If no contact can be made a letter will be sent to the family home requesting an urgent response. Parents / carers will be asked to contact the school in the first instance.
- **Continuing absence:** The school will continue to make contact with the parents / carers up until the 10th day when the absence will be reported as below.
- **Ten day absence:** As a legal requirement any pupil who is absent without an explanation, for 10 consecutive days will be referred to Oxfordshire County Council, Attendance and Engagement Team. The school will include details of the action they have taken.

Authorised Absence

- Absence will be authorised if the school has notification from the parents/carers that their child is ill. This should usually take the form of an initial notification at the beginning of the period of absence and regular communication during the absence to update the school of the child's well-being.
- If the child has a medical appointment that cannot be made outside school hours, this will be considered as an authorised absence. Children are expected to attend school prior to and after a medical appointment where possible.
- If an absence has been requested and approved in line with the school procedures then this will be an authorised absence.

An absence may not be authorised, even if the parents give a reason, if the absences are persistent. In the case of repeated absence due to illness, the school will request confirmation from the GP that the child has a medical condition that seriously impacts on their ability to attend school regularly.

Unauthorised Absence

- Any absence that is not considered to be the result of extenuating circumstances may be unauthorised.

Persistent Absence

- With effect from September 2015 the government classify pupils with attendance below 90% as persistent absence
Attendance below 95% The Head teacher will send a letter informing parents/carers of our concern with the attendance level and asking them to attend a meeting to discuss any issues or concerns
Attendance below 90% The Head teacher will arrange a meeting with parents/carers to discuss reasons for the low attendance and may involve other agencies to work together to improve the child's attendance. At this point it is likely that an EHA will be undertaken and meetings will ensue. A Home/School Contract may be written.

Holiday Absence

As of 1st September 2013, the Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are *exceptional circumstances*. Parents/carers should seek permission from the Headteacher prior to the leave of absence period in question.

- Requests for absence for holidays during term time will be considered by the Headteacher
- Requests for absence for holidays during term time will only be considered if there are exceptional extenuating circumstances. Parents will be expected to attach a letter outlining their extenuating circumstances with the absence form. Issues such as parents' employment conditions related to non-negotiable holiday dates, the time of year and level of previous attendance will be taken into consideration. Leave under exceptional circumstances can only be granted as a 'one off' occasion in the child's attendance at Mill Lane Community Primary School.

If a holiday request is refused by the school, but the child is still taken on holiday the absence is then unauthorised. The matter can be referred to the County Attendance Team who can issue a Penalty Fine.

Absence Notes

Absence notes received from parents explaining absence will be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes may be retained for a longer period.

Frequent absence

- In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve any concerns with parents/carers. The Headteacher or Inclusion Manager will liaise with the County Attendance Officer or other relevant professionals to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and/or punctuality are identified.
- Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward. This may include support from the Inclusion Manager, Home School Link Worker, or the County Attendance Team.

Penalty notices and legal action

The Law

The Education Act 1966 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time suitable –

- (a) To his age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) To any special needs s/he may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part VI Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the school reserves the right to ask the Attendance and Engagement Team to either issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a fine or further legal action through the courts.

A Penalty Notice is a fine that the Attendance and Engagement Team may decide to issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates' Court system.

A parent / carer can be issued with a penalty notice if:

- they fail to ensure their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as 6 or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six week period;
- they allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation;
- they fail to return their child to school on the agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence;
- their child persistently arrives late for school after registration is closed.

A pupil becomes a "persistent absentee" (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed immediately.

Leave of Absence

As of 1st September 2013, the Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Parents/Carers should seek permission from the Headteacher prior to the leave of absence period in question.

The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school **if** the leave is granted. Parents/carers who remove their children from school without authorisation or do not return their child to school on the agreed date following an authorised period of leave of absence, may face a Penalty Notice Warning which could lead to a fine/prosecution (see Penalty Notices and Legal Action above).

Penalty Notice may be considered in the following circumstances:

- At least 20 sessions (10 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence in a period of no more than 10 weeks.
- A leave of absence that has not been approved due to **exceptional circumstances** during term time, of a least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a period of no more than 5 weeks.
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed) equivalent to 20 sessions of unauthorised absence in a period of no more than 10 weeks.

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to other pupils.

Promoting attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parent / carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their child/children receive their education.

The Home/School agreement can be used in this way.

Attendance Awards

The school will use the following system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance. Children will be awarded a 100% attendance certificate for each term (autumn, spring & summer) when they are not absent for any reason. Children attaining these awards for all three terms will be awarded a 100% attendance certificate for the whole school year and a prize.

Register and admission roll keeping

The legal requirements regarding register and admission roll keeping can be found in The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006.

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school at the time of registration must be recorded within one of these categories:

1. Unauthorised absence
2. Authorised absence
3. Approved educational activity

- 1. Unauthorised absence:** this is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without a valid reason
- 2. Authorised absence:** This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.
- 3. Approved educational activity:** This covers types of supervised activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include:
 - Field trips and educational visit;
 - Sporting activities
 - Link courses or approved education off site;
 - Most types of dual registration.

Policy Reviewed: November 2020

Next Review: November 2022

Covid-19 and Attendance

Attendance expectations In March when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, we made clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school. Now the circumstances have changed and **it is vital for all children to return to school** to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. **School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term.**

This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the school's ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are selfisolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent. some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, they should access remote education provided by the school. School will monitor engagement with this activity.

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

Attendance and Covid-19 Symptoms

In order to continue to work together to minimise the spread of Corona Virus (COVID-19) school will implement measures to minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school.

Staff will work with families to ensure that pupils, staff and other adults do not come into the school if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or have tested positive in the last 7 days, and ensuring anyone developing those symptoms during the school day is sent home.

If anyone in the school becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they must be sent home and advised to follow 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)

infection', which sets out that they must self-isolate for at least 7 days and should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID19). Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

If a child is awaiting collection, they will be escorted to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, with appropriate adult supervision. School will provide reassurance until a parent or carer has arrived.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they will use a separate bathroom.

Staff caring for the child while they await collection will be wearing PPE.

Parents must support school and the community by taking any symptomatic child for a test at the earliest opportunity.

Parents must work with school to communicate in a timely fashion should any member of their household test positive for coronavirus.

Parents must make the school aware if they have received a track and trace text or call so that the school can seek advice and guidance from public health.