

Date agreed: September 2013
Review: 3 yearly
Next review: September 2016

Milton Park Primary School Attendance Policy

Philosophy

Milton Park Primary School is committed to providing high quality inclusive learning opportunities for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to reach their full potential, then excellent attendance is crucial. Any problems that impede full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

1. Aims and Targets

It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Full attendance is a critical factor in ensuring positive educational outcomes for our pupils. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

Our school will give a high priority to emphasising to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home – school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents, pupils and the Education Welfare Service to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Parents have a duty to educate their children “*suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and any special educational needs which they may have*” either by regular attendance at school or otherwise under Section 7 of The Education Act 1996. Parents whose children are registered at school are then responsible for ensuring that they attend punctually, regularly and stay at school.

Schools are required:

- To call the attendance register twice per day – at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.
- To ensure that attendance registers are kept, in accordance with legal requirements and the policy of the school.
- To inform the Local Authority about pupils who do not attend school regularly or who have been continuously absent for two weeks or more (unless the absence is covered by a medical certificate).
- To include data on authorised and unauthorised absence in the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents, in accordance with Department for Education and Skills (DfE) requirements.

Local Authorities are required to ensure parents carry out their responsibilities, with regard to their children's education. In North Somerset the Local Authority fulfils this requirement through the Education Welfare Service, whose primary responsibility is to enforce the regular and punctual school attendance of all pupils. Each school in North Somerset is allocated a named Education Welfare Officer who will work in close partnership with them. The Education Welfare Service has provided Milton Park Primary school with a Service Level Agreement which details this support.

3. Procedures

We will ensure all staff are aware of the registration procedures and that they will complete, accurate registration processes at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session within fifteen minutes of the start of the morning session and 5 minutes of the start of the afternoon session.

First day Contact

We will encourage parents/carers to contact the school office early on the first day of absence (by 9.30am). The school has provided a dedicated, automated answer service for collecting messages concerning absences (01934 624868). Messages left should include the child's name and class, the name of the person leaving the message and telephone number as well as the reason for absence and the anticipated date of return.

If the parent/carer has not contacted the school by 9.30am. then the parents/carers of identified pupils should expect to be contacted by the Attendance Officer.

Parents/carers will be challenged if they fail to inform the school of the reasons for absence, or if the reasons given for absence are unacceptable. This will be done by the Attendance Officer.

It is the view of the school that first day contact works by:

- Raising awareness of the importance of full attendance.
- Addressing problems before they become serious.
- Improving home-school liaison.
- Sending a clear message to parents/carers and pupils that if a child is absent s/he will be missed.
- Alerting parents/carers who may be unaware that their child is truanting or missing and therefore may be at risk.
- Promoting a high level of communication within the school staff.
- Assisting parents/carers and pupils to develop habits that reduce casual absence and encouraging early contact from parents/carers
- Reducing the number of pupils who have short-term absence, thus reducing the overall absence rate.

If no contact is achieved with the parent/carer of an absent pupil on the first day of absence, a letter will be sent and daily telephone calls made until contact is

achieved. Any unexplained absences of one week or longer may be reported to the EWO, and further action decided upon.

Lateness

Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at 8.45am ready for registration. Registration is from 8.45-8.55am, in Reception this is 8.45-9.00am. Registers will close at 9.30am. Children arriving after 8.55am but before 9.30am will be recorded as late. In Reception this will be after 9.00am. Children arriving after 9.30am will be recorded late after registration closes, which is an unauthorised absence. (DfE good practice guidance states that registers should be closed within ½ hour of registration).

Persistent lateness and/or poor attendance will be discussed with parents/carers at our regular Lateness/Attendance Clinics where school staff will discuss ways we might be able to help parents address any issues. These are led by Mrs Davies (Attendance Officer) and Mr Cox (Parent Support Advisor.)

There are three negative results caused by pupils who constantly arrive late:

- The loss of learning suffered by the pupil themselves which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time in school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.
- Raised levels of unauthorised absence.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

- The Attendance Officer/Pastoral Support Team will regularly monitor lateness of pupils electronically and identify patterns/issues around persistent absence. They will inform parents/carers when a pupil is persistently late. This will be done by the Attendance Officer.
- The use of Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence will be used as per North Somerset Education Welfare procedures. This decision will be taken by the Head teacher in consultation with the Education Welfare Officer for the school.
- Asking parents/carers in to discuss lateness and/or inviting parents/carers to attendance/lateness clinics with the Attendance Officer and/or Educational Welfare Officer.

Authorisation of Absence

In Milton Park Primary school the decision as to whether an absence will be authorised will be taken by the Head teacher. The class teacher and Attendance Officer will consult with the Head teacher when there are any causes for concern. This may be after a period of absence, a pattern of missed absences or continued lateness.

Authorised Absence: an absence agreed by the Head teacher with a satisfactory explanation from parents/carers

Unauthorised Absence: an absence not agreed or unexplained

Medical: an appointment such as hospital, doctor or dentist

Illness: illness as informed by the parent or on receipt of doctor's/hospital notes if required.

Full guidance on attendance codes is held in the school office.

Holidays in term time

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Milton Park Primary school will consider each request on a case by case basis. Some of the reasons we may consider as supporting an application for holiday in term time are:

- Forces' Personnel on leave from a foreign posting.
- Significant family events or circumstances – these will need to be considered individually.

All other requests for holiday in term time will be unauthorised.

Parent Contracts

If a child's attendance falls below 90% in any one term the school may seek to raise attendance by drawing up a parenting contract with parents/carers. This will enable the school to support the family in improving the child's punctuality and/or attendance.

Penalty Notices

Accumulated unauthorised absences may result in a Penalty Notice being issued by North Somerset Council. These fines are £60 (per parent, per pupil) if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid and the notice is not withdrawn the parent will be prosecuted for the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

These procedures will be applied to every absence and give a clear message that absences are not allowed for reasons other than those determined by the law. The procedure and the need for it should be understood by all, and the school will do this by regularly writing to parents and providing information on the school website.

4. Strategies

We will:

- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.
- Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. Sending a clear message that if a pupil is absent s/he will be missed.
- Have procedures that allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of other class members.
- For any pupil returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks, the school will make provision to allow the pupil to ease back into the school system if necessary. In the event of returning after a long-term absence, a Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) will be implemented. The PSP will include all relevant members of school staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupil as possible. Implementation of the PSP will follow North Somerset guidance provided by the Education Welfare Service.

We will strive to raise the profile of attendance when appropriate through:

- Classroom discussions
- Assemblies
- Early Bird schemes
- Breakfast and after school club attendance where appropriate
- Newsletters

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Targets for improved attendance will be set annually. It is important to set realistic targets and these targets will be set in consultation with the Education Welfare Service. Each year the governors will check whether these targets were met and, if not, try to establish why not.

Part of the evaluation process will be to look at what interventions have been successful. We will consider:

- Attendance data for individual pupils, classes and the school as a whole.
- Has the school ethos improved?
- Has the behaviour of pupils improved?
- How successful have pupil re-inclusion plans been?
- Is the school a better place to be for staff and pupils?
- Has the school been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school and the community?
- How well informed are new pupils, parents and staff about the importance of attendance and the policy and procedures operating within the school?
- Have attendance issues been included as topics in school assemblies, new parents evenings or any other events?
- Has attendance been discussed regularly by the governing body?

These issues will be reviewed by the Governing Body 3 times per year at governors' meetings.

Milton Park Primary School believes that it is essential to keep this policy “alive”. Consultation and communication are key factors that will ensure that the Policy has impact in raising attendance. This school will keep attendance as an item on the agenda of staff meetings and we will consult with all members of the school community and the Education Welfare Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.

We will ensure that we take a pro-active approach to supporting the needs of all pupils and are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity to all.