



Attendance Policy

Milton Road Primary School



Milton Road Primary School Attendance Policy

At Milton Road Primary School, we know that regular attendance and arrival at school on time is very important. Not only is it a legal requirement, but children need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the opportunities available to them. In simple terms, absence is missed learning.

We expect all staff to be positive role models with regard to attendance and punctuality.

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Emphasise the importance to parents and children of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education, and reinforce that it is vital if children are to achieve their full potential.
- Reinforce the notion that every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled and that parents are responsible in law for the regular and punctual attendance of their child.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and are seen to be valued by the school.
- Support all stakeholders in working in partnership (pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service) so that all pupils achieve as well as they can, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Support all children in achieving a minimum of 95% attendance, apart from those with chronic health issues. As a school, we seek to achieve overall attendance rates which are consistently higher than this figure.

Procedures and Practices

Registration

Registration (electronic) takes place twice a day – at the start of the school day and after the lunch break.

Lateness

Any student arriving in school after registration has been taken will be recorded as 'L' (late). If they arrive after registration period has finished they will be recorded as 'U' (unauthorised absence). At Milton Road Primary School, registration periods are as follows:

For Key Stage 1 – 9:00am, and registers are closed a 9:15.

Any child who arrives after 9.15am will be categorised as U (unauthorised absence).

For Key Stage 2 – 8:55am, and registers close at 9:10am. Any child who arrives after 9.10am will be categorised as U (unauthorised absence).

At Milton Road Primary School, we believe that late arrival at the beginning of the day can be particularly damaging to a child's academic and social progress as they can miss out on important whole class input.

Parents and Carers should be aware that the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice fine for repeated unauthorised absence due to lateness in the same manner as they would for general unauthorised absences from school.

Absences

Absences from school will be either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised** depending upon circumstance.

Authorised absences are where a pupil has been absent and a satisfactory and legal reason has been communicated to the school. Reasons for authorised absence include: genuine illness, days of religious observance, unavoidable medical appointments, exceptional circumstances (i.e. bereavement/funeral) or traveller children going 'on the road'.

As a school, we expect authorised absences to be kept to a minimum and therefore routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours or during school holidays, wherever possible. Where absence through illness has led to attendance of below 95%, parents/carers will be expected to provide evidence of illness and/or appointments.

Unauthorised absences are when no acceptable explanation is provided by parents/carers or the reason provided is not deemed as acceptable by the school. Examples of these may be lateness after the end of registration, attending a birthday celebration, minding a house, caring for a sibling, shopping, lack of childcare, visiting relatives or going on holiday.

The school, using Local Authority and DfE guidelines, makes the final decision about whether or not any absence is seen as authorised or unauthorised. Parents who wish to request absence may do so by completing an Exceptional Leave of Absence request form (available on the school website and from the school office) and returning it to the school before the absence occurs. Authorisation cannot be granted retrospectively.

Unauthorised term time leave (including Holidays) – Penalty notice: In accordance with the Cambridgeshire County Council attendance code of conduct, any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave of more than 6 consecutive sessions over an 8 week period, not authorised by the school (under the 'exceptional circumstances' rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. Such cases will have to be supported by evidence, from the school, of previous unauthorised term time leave (more than 6 consecutive sessions over an 8 week period) taken in the last 3 years and evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice.

Notifying the school about a child's absence

Parents/Carers must contact the school before 09.00am each day of absence either by phone on 01223 712333 ext 1 or email absent@miltonroad.cambs.sch.uk. The office will log and record the reason for absence, to be kept by the school as written evidence which may be required by the Local Authority when monitoring attendance. If no explanation is provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Prior notice should be given of unavoidable medical appointments.

First day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, we initiate a first day contact process. Members of the office check all the registers on a daily basis to identify those pupils who are absent. If the school is unaware why a child is absent, we will contact the parent by telephone to check the reasons for the child's absence. If contact cannot be made, we will then initiate steps within our Safeguarding policy for a missing child.

Illness

When children have an illness that means that they will be away from school long term, we will do what we 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 appropriate support services to see if arrangements can be made to provide tuition outside school.

Term-Time holidays

Parents do not have any right or entitlement to expect leave to be given for holidays during term time. At Milton Road Primary School, we strongly discourage such holidays as learning and progress is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child.

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and September 2013 make clear that Head teachers may not authorise holidays (or other Leave of Absence) in term time unless there are very exceptional circumstances. The school upholds these regulations and will work closely with the Local Authority (LA) to ensure that they are upheld.

Requests for long-term leave can only be granted in '*exceptional circumstances*' and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. No term-time leave will be granted, or deemed granted, without a formal request on the appropriate form (available on the school's website and from the school) being made and a written response given. Leave of absence will not be granted if it coincides with formal assessments and tests for pupils (SATs). The school will not authorise any holidays retrospectively and may follow up any reported illness that we feel may have been a term-time holiday. The cheaper cost of holidays and travel during term-time will not be regarded as an 'exceptional circumstance'.

Extended periods of absence

Families considering going away for an extended period for reasons connected with their work or family should discuss matters with the Headteacher at an early stage of planning. Pupil places cannot usually be held open for more than six weeks and may be taken by others on the waiting list.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

At Milton Road Primary School, our expectation is that a child's attendance be 100% unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence, apart from those with chronic health issues. Since we are a Primary school, we rely on parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore, where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents/carers are always informed of our concerns. As part of addressing issues of concern, opportunities are provided for the parent/carer to discuss the reason for absence and support can/will be offered by the school with the aim of improving attendance. When a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time, then, as a school, we have a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

Monitoring Attendance

The Attendance Officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis. Along with other Cambridgeshire schools, the Local Authority's 'Three Letter System' is used to manage attendance. Each letter is sent after an 8 week monitoring period.

Letter 1: Notifies parents when attendance drops below 95% and that a further period (4 weeks) of monitoring will continue with view of improvement.

Letter 2: Usually follows letter 1 if no improvement but is also sent when attendance drops below 93%. Parents will be required to attend an attendance meeting to discuss any issues and set targets for improvement over a further 4 week period.

Letter 3: Typically sent if no improvement following letter 2, but also when attendance drops below 91%. It informs parents that if attendance fails to improve in a further 4 week period, the child's attendance will be referred to the EWO.

The Attendance Officer will also regularly monitor attendance for patterns of absence and lateness. Pupils with attendance or lateness concerns will be reviewed regularly. These concerns will also be shared with the EWO and the Local Authority, who may decide to take actions against parents.

Education Welfare Officer

The local authority (Cambridgeshire County Council) holds the statutory responsibility for school attendance for pupils in all Cambridgeshire schools. Education Welfare Officers act on behalf of the LA to promote attendance and, in partnership with schools, enforce attendance through the use of legal sanctions when necessary. The Education Welfare Officer makes regular visits to the school to check and monitor attendance.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will;

- Write to parents requesting their attendance at planning meetings, parenting contract meetings and Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) meetings as appropriate.
- Carry out home visits when appropriate.
- Carry out assessments and broker supportive interventions from a range of external agencies such as the locality team (family work, youth support) when necessary.
- Request the imposition of legal sanctions such as penalty notices, parent contracts, education attendance orders and fines.

Agreed: 3rd December 2018

Review: December 2019

Appendices

Appendix 1 - School Register codes

Appendix 2 - Information about Term Time Holidays

Appendix 3 – Copies of Letter 1; Letter 2; Letter 3 (LA's 3 letter system)

Appendix 4 – Exceptional Leave of Absence Request Form

Appendix 1 – School Register codes

The DfE offers a comprehensive set of register codes which all schools are required to use. These codes are as follows:

/\ - Present am/pm

B - Educated off site - Approved Educational Activity.

C - Other authorised circumstances (including public performances licensed by the local authority, family bereavements, exceptional special occasions) - Authorised Absence.

D - Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment) - Approved Educational Activity.

E - Excluded (no alternative provision made) - Authorised Absence.

G - Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess of agreement) - Unauthorised Absence.

I - Illness (not medical/dental appointments) - Authorised Absence.

J - Interview - Approved Educational Activity.

L - Late (before registers close) - Present.

M - Medical/Dental appointments - Authorised Absence.

N - No reason yet provided for absence - Unauthorised Absence.

O - Unauthorised Absence.

P - Approved Sporting Activity - Approved Educational Activity.

R - Religious Observance - Authorised Absence.

S - Study Leave - Authorised Absence.

T - Traveller child travelling - Authorised Absence.

U - Late after registers close without an acceptable explanation – Unauthorised Absence

V - Educational visit or trip - Approved Educational Activity.

X - Non-compulsory school age absence - not counted in possible attendances.

Y - Enforced closure – not counted in possible attendances.

Z - Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances.

- School closed – not counted in possible attendance.

Class teachers are only required to use a limited number of the codes. The Attendance Officer should be consulted before entering codes that are different to those on the default settings via the electronic registration system.

Appendix 2 - Information about Term Time Holidays

The following information has been taken directly from the Cambridgeshire County Council website

Term time holidays

Children of school age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend that school regularly. Regular attendance is the best way of ensuring that a child makes the most of the educational opportunities which are available to him or her.

When a child is absent from school, he or she misses not only the teaching provided but is also less prepared for the lessons after his or her return.

There are only 190 statutory school days in one year and 175 days (weekends and school holidays) available to use for holidays. Therefore every school day counts!

Key information

Prior to June 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 allowed for headteachers to grant leave of absence for a term time family holiday in 'special circumstances' and for extended leave in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to these regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave. The amendments make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and that headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Your rights and responsibilities

If your child is registered at school you must ensure that s/he attends regularly.

The regulations make it clear that parents, carers or relatives do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term time holiday.

If parents take their child on holiday in term time, without authorisation, this will be counted as unauthorised absence - this is the same as truancy and you may be at risk of a Penalty Notice being applied.

What you can do:

- Look at the school's attendance policy for full information.
- Speak to the school direct if you feel you need to take your child out of school in exceptional circumstances.

Appendix 3 – Local Authority (LA) 3 letter system

Letter 1

Date

Addressee

Address

Dear

Re: Child's Name Dob:

Following weekly monitoring of pupil attendance, I have noticed that *Child's* attendance over the 8 weekly monitoring period, has fallen to %, which is below the school's target of 95%. We understand that there may well be obvious reasons for absence, such as illness but we have a duty, in accordance with Local Authority guidance, to let you know that *Child's* attendance is now below the school's threshold.

The school and the Local Authority's focus on regular attendance extends beyond just the fact that it is a legal requirement, but also takes consideration of the impact on children's academic progress, and even their friendships, that issues with irregular attendance may cause.

I hope that by bringing this to your attention we can, together, support *Child* to ensure s/he gains the greatest benefit that s/he can from his/her education with regular school attendance.

Enclosed is the school's attendance leaflet along with *Child's* registration certificate. I will continue to monitor *Child's* attendance, but if there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on *Child* attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Attendance Officer

Enc Record of attendance and School Attendance Leaflet

Appendix 3 – Local Authority (LA) 3 letter system

Letter 2

Date

Addressee

Address

Dear

Re: *Child's Name* Dob:

I am writing to advise you that *Child's* school attendance has fallen to % and as a result we are becoming concerned that *Child* is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of *Child's* attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

We would like you to attend a meeting with a member of the Attendance Team to discuss this matter further on *Date* at *Time*.

Should *Child's* attendance remain irregular; the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under **Section 444 Education Act 1996**, and a fine of up to **£2500 and/or 3 months in prison**.

For any further absences of illness, we will require evidence. Acceptable forms of evidence will be discussed at our meeting.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support *Child* in making good progress. I hope that we can work together to improve *Child's* attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me through the school office.

Yours sincerely,



Attendance Officer

cc EWO - Encs Record of Attendance School Attendance Leaflet

Appendix 3 – Local Authority (LA) 3 letter system

Letter 3

Date

Addressee

First line of address

Town/City

Postcode

Dear

Re: Name of pupil Dob:

As you are aware, we have previously contacted you about *Child's* attendance. A review of attendance registers shows that *Child* has been absent from school for xxx sessions this year/over the previous xxx weeks. I enclose a record of «*forename*»'s attendance

As parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under **Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which they are registered, regularly and punctually.**

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

I am therefore having to write to inform you that if attendance fails to improve during the next four weeks, the case may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for possible legal intervention.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on *Child* attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me. I hope that we can work together to improve *Child's* attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/Attendance Officer

Cc EWO

Enc. Record of attendance & Attendance Leaflet

Appendix 4

Exceptional Leave of Absence Application

(please complete a separate form for each child)

This form should be completed and signed by **all parents/carers that hold parental responsibility**. It should be returned to the Headteacher, at least 28 days before the absence commences.

Amendments to the Education Regulations 2006 came into force on 1 September 2013. The amendments make it clear that Head Teachers will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**, which will not include reasons of cost or inconvenience (please see overleaf for guidance). This means very few requests for exceptional leave will now be authorised.

Applications to the Headteacher for a leave of absence will be considered individually, following guidelines as outlined in our Attendance Policy and by the Local Authority. The policy can be found on the school's website (for Local Authority's guidance see below), alternatively, please ask at the school office.

You should also be advised, if the absence is not authorised and you decide to still take your child out of school, you may be issued a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority, resulting in a £60 fine per parent/carer per child (if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 thereafter).

Requests for an exceptional leave of absence during term time will be returned to you by the Headteacher, and if your request is not authorised, you will be informed of the reason/s, it is advised, therefore, you give as much detail for the absence as possible.

Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances – A Guidance for Parents

The information overleaf is designed to help parents understand how and when leave of absence in exceptional circumstances may be granted.

The decision to authorise absence is at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Headteachers will rightly prioritise attendance. Generally, absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised by the headteacher in exceptional circumstances.

Penalty Notices for term time leave are issued based on information and referrals received from schools. The Local Authority cannot override the decision made by the Headteacher to unauthorise

the absence. If you have any reasons to believe the Penalty Notice should not have been issued please contact the school within 10 working days. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are exceptional circumstances?

Exceptional circumstances are one off events which are unavoidable. Such as the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child or a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

I explained my exceptional circumstances to the school yet I was still issued with a PN fine. Can this be reviewed by the Council?

No. Only the head teacher of a school can authorise any absence under exceptional circumstances. The County Council cannot override any decisions made by the head teacher. If a request is sent to the Council then a PN fine will be issued based on the information received.

My child's attendance record is generally good, can I still be issued a fine for short time unauthorised holiday?

The Cambridgeshire Penalty Notice Code of Conduct allows a Penalty Notice fine to be issued for holiday taken for 3 days or more.

Which parent receives the fine?

Where both parents live together and have day-to-day care and also any absent parent who has frequent contact with the child and is named in the child's school records may receive a fine for each of their children. This will include parents who allow their child to go on holiday with another family member or friend of the family.

Who is fined when parents do not live together?

The situation can become complicated where parents do not live together and both wish to remove their child from school at separate times during the same academic year. Where parents are separated, if an absence request is submitted by the parent not involved with the absence, then both parents may be fined.

Who is considered to have parental responsibility?

The definition of a parent is anyone who has parental responsibility for the child and/or any adult with day to day care and responsibility. (Section 576 Education Act 1996). This will include step parents and cohabiters, partners of older pupils if the partner is over 18 years of age and they are living together, other relatives with residency orders.

What happens if I am a self-employed worker e.g. a Farmer, is an employee with fixed holiday dates, or is on a holiday rota set by my employer?

It is advisable for parents to discuss this with their child's school prior to making any arrangements for absence during school term times. Legislation no longer allows Headteachers to authorise 10 days absence from school for a term time holiday. If you are self-employed then you are able to select when you take your annual leave.

We want to go on a trip of a lifetime. Could this be an authorised absence?

No, this would constitute a family holiday. The Headteacher cannot authorise term time holidays, unless they accept the reason for leave of absence is exceptional.

I have a significant number of relatives abroad and may need to spend an extended period in another country. Could this be an authorised absence?

Headteachers are bound by law to discourage families from taking trips during term time, whatever the reason given.

Can I have a payment plan or make part payments?

No, The Code of Conduct does not allow part payments or payment plans.

The Primary school authorised the absence but I received a PN fine for my secondary school aged child. Is there no consistency?

The Government has given the authority to individual headteachers to make their own decision based on the explanation provided by the parents. What is exceptional has not been defined by the government and

