

## Attendance Policy

### **The school follows The Nottingham City Attendance Protocol.**

We believe that children can reach their full potential only by receiving full-time education, through regular and structured attendance. Melbury Primary School is committed to always improving attendance so that all pupils have the best opportunity they can to learn. We expect all pupils to arrive at and leave school punctually and we emphasise this to parents.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. All staff are concerned for the children's welfare and happiness and everyone plays a part in promoting regular attendance among the pupils.

The governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

### **Aims**

- To foster a climate where the school community – staff, parents, pupils and governors value regular attendance and punctuality.
- To provide support and guidance for parents and pupils.
- To effectively use positive and consistent communication between home and school,
- To effectively use a systematic approach for gathering and analysing data.
- To improve the overall attendance of pupils at school and reduce unauthorised absence and persistent absenteeism.
- For rates of attendance to never be less than the national average

### **Legal Responsibility**

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent/carer fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school then the parent/carer is guilty of an offence. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the appropriate register code will be used.

### **Registration**

Registers are legal documents. Should the parents/carers of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

The electronic registers must be marked at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon session each day. An absence is marked 'N'. If a child arrives after the end of the registration period an L code is used.

Morning registers are officially closed at 9:25am. Afternoon registers are similarly closed half an hour after the start of the afternoon sessions.

## **Lateness**

Once the doors are closed pupils must enter school via the school office. The learning mentor will operate a daily "late gate". Any pupil who comes into school late will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil. Registers will close 30 minutes after the start of the day. Up to this point the L code should be used but after the close of register then this should be changed to a U code.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school late, before the session has closed will receive a late mark and a comment entered. If they don't return before the end of the session the absence will be recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will be advised of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues through an attendance meeting.

Where a child is persistently late and has accrued sufficient 'U codes' in the register a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Service, who may in turn issue a Penalty Notice.

Prior to a referral for a penalty notice to be issued there should be evidence of the following for a successful prosecution to take place:

- A minuted meeting with parents to advise of concerns regarding attendance
- One home visit
- A letter to say that a referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be made
- Evidence of support offered by school in supporting parents with attendance and punctuality

To encourage children to be on time we operate a choice band system for school lunches. This means children can choose the meal that they would like from the menu. Children who are late have a no choice band. If children however have specific dietary needs, these will not be compromised. A form to fill in is available from the office.

## **Authorised Absence**

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness, medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance
- exclusion
- traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment
- 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis).
- On the grounds that suitable transport has not been provided and the school is not in walking distance (2miles FS and KS1 and 3 miles KS2 or specific SEND needs)
- When on an approved visit to another school or an educational visit

- When granted leave of absence by the LA or Governing Body
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Whenever a child is absent from school it is the duty of the parent/carer to notify the school on the first day of absence before the start of school and provide a reason for absence.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence should **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house, etc.)
- family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances).

### **Persistent absence**

Persistent absence (or PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised). If attendance is below 90% then attendance meetings will be offered to parents to discuss this. Unless there is some specific and agreed reason for this, no sickness will be authorised without medical proof.

If the situation does not improve, the school will then refer the absences to the EWO. Once a child has 10 unauthorised absences they can be referred to the EWO who will contact the parents either by letter or through a home visit and seek to ensure that the parents, carers or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.

If the situation does not improve within 4 weeks, then further action is taken which could include prosecution and a fine.

The Governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents, carers or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

### **Approved Educational Activity**

Children who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, need not be marked as absent, and will be recorded appropriately (Code B, D or V). This means that children attending educational visits, or approved sporting activities can be counted as statistically 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

### **Absence for religious reasons**

The Local Authority has agreed with Religious Leaders and the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) that one day for each religious festival (no more than three days in any one academic year), should be counted as authorised absence. This will be marked as 'R' in the register.

***Surely 1 or 2 days absent a week doesn't seem much but this is how it is..***

If your child misses...	That equals...	Which is...	And over 13 years of schooling that's...
1 day per fortnight	20 days per year	4 weeks per year	Nearly 1 ½ years
1 day per week	40 days per year	8 weeks per year	Over 2 ½ years
2 days per week	80 days per year	16 weeks per year	Over 5 years
3 days per week	120 days per year	24 weeks per year	Nearly 8 years

***If your child is late 10 minutes a day - surely that won't matter or affect my child..***

Only missing just..	That equals..	Which is...	Over 13 years of schooling that's...
10 minutes per day	50 minutes per week	Nearly 1 ½ weeks per year	Nearly ½ a year
20 minutes per day	1hour 40minutes per week	Over 2 ½ weeks per year	Nearly 1 year
30 minutes per day	Half a day per week	4 weeks per year	Nearly 1 ½ years
1 hour per day	1 day per week	8 weeks per year	Over 2 ½ years

### **Communication**

We ask parent/carers to inform us as soon as possible if a child is absent. Parents can contact the school office by phone on the morning of the absence and the office staff will process this information.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence e.g. if the child has a medical or dental appointment.

If parents know their child will be absent for part of the morning because of a medical appointment they are encouraged to order the child's lunch choice the day before.

The office will either text or the learning mentor will ring parent/carers if no reason for absence is given that morning. If no reason for absence has been obtained within 5 days a standard absence enquiry form will be sent home with the child. After a further 5 days this will be marked as unauthorised unless a satisfactory reason has been given.

Parent/carers are notified of their child's attendance termly at parents evenings. Parents of children with good attendance are congratulated in this notification. Each child's annual report will show the total possible sessions the child could have attended in the year to the end of the summer term and how many authorised and unauthorised absences the child had in that period.

Parent/carers will be notified if attendance or lateness is becoming a concern. This will be by letter, phone call from the learning mentor or invitation into school for an attendance meeting.

**Requests for leave of absence** – School follows The Nottingham City Attendance Protocol.

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time. Any applications

for leave of absence must be made in advance using the 'Leave Request' form and any request can only be authorised where School accepts there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

Holidays in term time holidays are not authorised unless they are granted under exceptional circumstances authorised by the head teacher. Holidays of 4 days or longer will be subject to a fixed term penalty notice.

When considering such requests, we consider the following:

- circumstances of the request
- purpose of the leave
- length of the proposed leave
- the pupil's general absence/attendance record going back 12 months
- any attempts made to mitigate the length of absence
- the proximity of SATs
- general welfare of the pupil

If the school is informed or suspect that a family has been on holiday whilst suggesting to the school another reason of absence this will be unauthorised. It will be up to the family to prove that they have not taken a family vacation.

Where parents/carers take children out of school without authorisation legal action may be taken (see section on Penalty Notices below).

### **Penalty notices**

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days.

Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted. Penalty notices are issued per parent per child at £120. However, if paid within 21 days the cost is £60.

The Education Welfare Service may also consider other options, such as taking further legal action.

### **Children Missing Education**

For children who suddenly disappear from school the procedures in the **Children Missing in Education Policy** will apply.

If the school is concerned about a child who is not at school and parents have not been in touch and cannot be contacted then the school will undertake a home visit (in pairs). If there is still no response we will inform the EWO. If we believe a child could be at immediate significant risk, we will contact police and ask them to do a 'Safe and Well' check.

### **Liaison with the LA**

#### **The school follows The Nottingham City Attendance Protocol.**

The EWO is principally concerned with persistent absentees i.e. those pupils whose attendance is below 90%.

The EWO liaises regularly with the learning mentor to support school in raising the attendance of these pupils. The learning mentor and office staff also attend attendance network meetings to keep abreast of all local and national initiatives and procedures.

The EWO offers parents meetings to parents annually whose attendance is below 90%.

If staff have any on-going concerns about attendance relating to the welfare of pupils in their class they should refer these concerns to a DSL.

### **Rewards for attendance**

The weekly class attendance for the previous week is announced at Monday assemblies. Each class should display that percentage attendance in a prominent place. The class with the best attendance that week receives a 'whole class fruit treat'.

For children who have achieved 96%+ each term, a congratulation text will be sent home to parents.

The children who achieve 100% attendance each term will receive a certificate and reward in our termly Gold Star attendance assembly to which parent/carers are invited.

Children with 96+% attendance are rewarded at the end of the year with an attendance treat.

Children who have 100% attendance for the whole year will go out for lunch in the last week of term.

The school also takes part in any special promotions run by the LA or EIP to promote good attendance.

### **Monitoring and Review:**

The school office collates attendance figures weekly, attendance reports are submitted electronically to the LA and the DFE. Attendance is closely monitored internally. Overall attendance figures are monitored every three weeks and parents contacted by letter where absence is a concern.

Attendance data is analysed regularly to look at specific groups or trends where attendance needs to be improved. Reports are submitted to the head teacher termly. The Learning mentor works with a targeted group of families to support their individual attendance. The school will keep accurate records on file in accordance with GDPR.

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance and they request a report from the head teacher at FGB meetings. The Governing Body also has responsibility for this policy and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them and ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

Class teachers will be responsible for the general monitoring of attendance in their class. If there is a concern about a child's absence they will inform the learning mentor or DSL.

Reviewed  
Next Review

April 2021  
April 2022

See also:

Children Missing in Education Policy

Safeguarding Policy

GDPR policies