

Madresfield C. E. Primary School

Attendance Policy

To be read in conjunction with our Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy

October 2014 – to be reviewed October 2016

The purpose of the attendance policy is to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. A consistent level of attendance enables children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.

Our policy relating to attendance aims to ensure consistency and clarity in the definitions used throughout the school for authorised and unauthorised absence. This document aims to clarify the circumstances when absences will be authorised and when they will not and to inform parents how to report unexpected absences.

It is important for us all to recognise that any absence in term time can have a detrimental effect on a child both in terms of social and educational development. The DfES recognises the importance of regular attendance at school and requires the Headteacher to decide in every case whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Clearly if a child is unwell s/he may need to be absent. In addition there will be a limited number of occasions when absence for other reasons will be **unavoidable or exceptional**. Parents and carers are required **to ask in advance for authorisation for all absences, other than for illness**, and the Governing Body in liaison with the Headteacher will have absolute responsibility for making the decision.

Authorised Absence - It is always best to avoid absences if possible, but the following are examples of the sort of absences that will be authorised:

- Illness
- Medical/dental appointment but we do **urge parents to make routine appointments outside of school time**
- Day of religious observation
- Approved sporting/musical exam or activity

Requesting leave of absence -The granting of leave of absence in school term time is, by law, a matter for consideration and decision by the school. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time. The Department for Education (DfE) and Worcestershire County Council (WCC) policy is that family holidays should not be taken in school term time. Where such requests are made, for the leave to be granted, the Governing Body in liaison with the Headteacher will decide if there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents wishing the school to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully and then complete and send to the Headteacher the application form available from the school office. This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered **well before** the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any holiday booking arrangements before receiving the school's decision on their request. In any event the request form must be received by the school at least four weeks before the departure date to allow sufficient time for appropriate consideration.

Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence the demands of the National and wider School Curriculum especially at the Key Stage assessment stage. In considering a request, the school will take account of:-

- The exceptional circumstances stated that have given rise to the request;
- The age of the child;

- The stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements;
- The overall attendance pattern of the child
- The nature of the trip.
- Students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATs will not normally be granted leave of absence.

Where parents have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The Headteacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. It is possible that because of these factors different decisions may be made. It is hoped that if this situation arises parents will be persuaded to accept the reasons for refusal given and, thereby, withdraw any other requests.

Where requests for a grant of leave of absence are received from only one parent the response letter – agreeing or refusing – will be either addressed to both/all parents where they live at the same address or to each where they do not. This is to ensure, particularly in the case of a refusal, that both of or all 'parents' are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring a refusal as the refusal letter clearly states that each parent will receive a penalty notice.

Should the school decide to grant leave of absence but, the child does not return at the time s/he was expected to (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and, no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence, or make known the whereabouts of the child, **his/her place as the school could be lost.**

Should the school decide **not to grant leave of absence** and parents still take their child out of school the absence will be recorded as unauthorised which may be subject to a Holiday Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per child. If not paid within 21 days this fine increases to £120 per parent per child. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.

All holiday leave is discretionary; there is no automatic entitlement to 10 days holiday in addition to the school holidays. 10 days in 1 year is the legal maximum and if these days are unauthorised further unauthorised days could result in a child being removed from the school register.

The following criteria will be used when making a decision:

- Timing during the school year
- The length of absence
- Links to family background abroad (extended family living abroad)
- Limitations on a parent's leave in school holiday time
- Absences to attend very special family events (weddings, funerals)

Once a decision has been reached, a formal letter will be sent to parents.

When an absence is unauthorised it is recorded as such in the statistics that the school has to report to the LA and to the DfES. It is also a requirement that it is recorded on the child's end of year report.

Unexpected absences

Registration is taken at the start of each morning (8.55 a.m.) and each afternoon (1.00p.m.). Children who arrive after 9.00 a.m. but before 9.10 a.m. are marked as 'late' in the register. Any children who arrive after 9.10 a.m. will be marked as an unauthorised absence for that morning.

If a child is absent, we ask that:

- A parent rings the school office, giving the reason for the absence and the expected length of time the child will be away.
- An adult can send a written message via a sibling, an e-mail or a verbal message via an adult.

If a child is absent and we have not received a message by 9.30 a.m. the school administrator will make contact with home to clarify the absence and a record will be kept of the reasons given for absence. This is to ensure that a child is at home and has not left for school and not arrived.

Regular Attendance

The Headteacher will monitor attendance on a termly basis. If she feels there is an issue with attendance and the child's attendance is particularly poor (below 85%) she will contact the parents and if there are further issues she will contact the Education Welfare Officer.

Special circumstances

For absences relating to theatre, film or television work the LA issues the necessary license at the Headteacher's discretion.

Work missed during absence

Teachers cannot provide children with work to make up for all the lessons missed. When children miss school because they are on holiday we suggest that they keep a daily diary to record their experiences which can be shared with the class upon their return to school.

Attendance Awards

Attendance Award badges are presented on an annual basis to those children who have received 100% attendance and certificates are presented on a termly basis. Certificates are awarded to those achieving 99% at the end of each academic year.

Conclusion

We want Madresfield to continue to be an excellent school for all children. The message that we as teachers and parents give our children about the importance of regular attendance and being punctual are vital in the way that children learn and discipline themselves in the future.

