

# Merton Bank Primary School



# Attendance Policy

## **Introduction**

*The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient , full – time education suitable to his / her age , aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he / she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. **1996 Education Act. Section 7***

*The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age registered at school failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law. **1996 Education Act Section 444***

## **Aim**

To encourage the pupils of Merton Bank Primary School to attend school as much as possible in order that they might get the maximum benefit from the education provided.

## **Objectives**

- To encourage maximum attendance at school
- To encourage promptness
- To develop in our pupils, a sense of pride in their attendance and punctuality

## **The school day**

Children are admitted into school between 8:45am and 8:55am.

Registration begins at 8:45am. The school gates are locked at 8:55am. Registration ends at 9:00am

Children arriving after this time must enter through the front door so as to receive a mark, they will be coded 'L' late on the register.

The morning register will close at 9:15am

Children arriving after this time will be coded 'U' this counts as an unauthorised absence OR any other code the school decides to record the late arrival correctly.

Afternoon registers close at 1.05pm

School takes punctuality very seriously. If parents do not address this issue promptly it can lead to legal sanctions such as a Penalty Notice fine.

Parents of children who arrive late on a regular basis will be invited into school to discuss the issues and concerns around the punctuality of their child.

Parents/carers of pupils arriving late (after 9a.m. and 1.p.m.) are required to sign the "late book". The late book is situated in the entrance hall. The arrival time must be entered into the book. The purpose of the late book is two-fold. First, it reminds parents/carers and pupils of the need for punctuality; second, it provides a record of who has arrived in school after registration has closed for fire drill procedures.

## **Authorised / Unauthorised absence**

All absences should be explained by the parent before 9.30am or as soon as possible on the first day of absence by phone call or personally.

School employ a 'first day response' system for chasing up unexplained absence, this is a safeguarding strategy. If school cannot make contact with parents the schools Education Welfare Officer may be requested to visit the home to find out the reason why child/ren are absent. School will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence.

Parents are requested to return their child to school as soon as possible after an absence even if there is only one day of the school week left.

Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Illness
- Unavoidable medical appointments (with evidence)
- Days of religious observance (with evidence)
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement

If a child's absence becomes a cause for concern school can ask the parent for medical evidence in order to authorise further absence. The following evidence will be considered by the school:

- Sight of prescriptive medicine
- Dated medical appointment letters/cards
- Care at the chemist evidence.

Parents will not be asked for doctor's notes that incur a cost.

Absence from school will **not** be authorised if school do not accept the reason given by the parents and medical evidence has not been provided to cover the period in question

Parents of children with a high incidence of unauthorised absence may be subjected to Legal Sanctions such as Penalty Notice fines OR prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

### **Leave of absence during term time**

School cannot authorise time off for family holidays during term time and Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such holidays.

Parents can only apply for leave of absence during term time in 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents must apply in writing to the Headteacher well in advance of the absence. Parents should complete a 'Leave of Absence' application form (available from the school office or via the school website) and may be asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the application.

The Headteacher will decide if the Leave will be granted and how many days will be authorised.

If the Headteacher does not grant an application for leave of absence and parent/s decide to take the leave anyway, the absence will be unauthorised.

If the unauthorised absence meets the Local Authority (LA) Penalty Notice threshold as detailed in the LA Penalty Notice Code of Conduct parents may be issued with a Penalty Notice fines.

Penalty Notice Fines can be issued to each parent for every child concerned.

### **Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

1. Parents and pupils will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, parents' evenings etc.) of the importance and value of good attendance.
2. Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice.
3. The school employs the services of a Local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to support the school in meeting its legal obligations with regard to school attendance. The EWO will investigate all arising attendance issues in accordance with current government guidance and legislation.
4. Parents of pupils whose attendance falls below 95% may be invited to agree an attendance action plan OR a Parenting Contract with the EWO and the headteacher to help improve their child's attendance; this may include supportive referrals to the school nurse or a parenting course.

5. A pupil with an attendance of 90% or below is categorised by the government as **Persistent Absentee (PA)**. All PA's will be targeted for improvement by the EWO and the headteacher. Parents of PA's with a high incidence of unauthorised absence may be the subjects of legal sanctions including **Penalty Notices OR Prosecutions in the Magistrates Court**.
6. The school will support Pupils who are absent through long term chronic or life threatening illness by adhering to current government guidance for children with medical needs, this may involve a plan of support with home tuition and a re-integration plan back into school.
7. Teachers and support staff who become aware of issues which may lead to attendance difficulties will report the issues in a timely manner to the Headteacher.
8. When appropriate school will liaise with other agencies – Education Welfare Service, Educational Psychology Service, Social Services, the School Nurse and other agencies to support and help pupils with attendance difficulties

### **Rewards for promoting good attendance**

1. Each week SAM, the School Attendance Matters bear, is awarded to the class achieving the highest percentage attendance.
2. Weekly class attendance is recorded on the weekly newsletter. Each class has a Mr Potato Head to add pieces to. If a class gets 96-97% attendance they will earn one piece, 98-99% attendance earns the class two pieces and 100% attendance earns the class three pieces. The class to complete their model first will earn a reward. Mr Potato Heads are displayed in a prominent place in the hall so that all the children can see how well they are doing. The class will need to work together and provide support for each other.
3. At the end of each term the class with the highest attendance receives a treat. The treat will be personalised to the cohort of children

Attendance certificates are awarded at the end of the term.

1. To achieve a termly attendance certificate, a pupil should have 100% attendance per term and no more than 2 late marks.
2. To achieve a yearly attendance certificate, a pupil should have 100% attendance and no more than 3 late marks.
3. Attendance certificates are also awarded at the end of the year for those pupils who have achieved 99% attendance with a maximum of 3 late marks.

Parental acknowledgement

1. When there is an improvement in either punctuality or attendance following a letter from the Headteacher, parents are sent a letter commending them on this improvement.

### **Penalty Notices**

Merton Bank Primary School have adopted the use of Penalty Notice fines to address unauthorised absence as stated in the LA Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

Penalty Notices can be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where a child has a minimum of 20 school sessions (10 days) unauthorised absence within a ten week period,
- Where a child has 10 school sessions coded as 'U' late after the register has closed recorded
- Where a child has 20 sessions (10 days) coded 'G' unauthorised holiday recorded

### **Information for parents**

Parents/carers are informed of the school's policy on attendance and punctuality at regular intervals through the school newsletter and of the procedures for informing school about their child's absence/need for punctuality. A copy of the Attendance Policy is available to all parents/carers and parents/carers are informed when it is reviewed in school by staff and Governors.

Attendance figures are recorded in the Headteacher's termly report to Governors. These figures show the percentage of attendance of the pupils and the percentages of authorised and unauthorised absences. These figures are also returned to the DFCS via the statistical returns that the school is required to complete.

A pupil's attendance percentage, the number of unauthorised absences and the number of lates are shown on the child's end of year report.

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

Merton Bank Primary School expects pupils to attend school regularly and to arrive on time. The school will encourage good attendance and will investigate all absenteeism. School staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality. The school will work closely with parents/carers should attendance/punctuality give cause for concern.

### **Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring regular and punctual attendance and are responsible for informing the school as soon as possible about the reason for their child's non-attendance at school. Parents/carers can expect the school to keep them fully informed on their child's progress.

### **Pupils**

Pupils will ensure that they attend regularly and are on time where their age is appropriate. Pupils will have their individual records of attendance / punctuality acknowledged by the school.

### **Attendance Monitoring**

Currently the SIMS Attendance Module is used to assist the monitoring of attendance. Information is manually inputted into the system twice daily by the class teacher.

### **Policy Review**

This policy represents the ideal practice that we would like to see at Merton Bank Primary School. It was reviewed by the staff in the spring term 2017. It will be considered for approval by the Governing Body in their spring business meeting 2017. It will be reviewed summer term 2018.

Signed by Chair of Governors \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Application for Leave of Absence during term time**

From September 2013 the law was changed regarding holidays during term time. The Headteacher can now only grant leave of absence in **EXCEPTIONAL circumstances**.

Parents applying to remove their child from school during term time must give advance notice and should provide evidence to support the application.

Parents may submit any appropriate evidence to support the exceptional circumstance outlined below. The Headteacher will then consider authorising or unauthorising the absence.

**Please be aware you may be issued with a Penalty Notice if you decide to go ahead with an unauthorised absence during term time and the absence meets the LA penalty notice criteria of 20 sessions unauthorised absence in a ten school week period. Penalty Notices are issued per parent per child.**

**Further Information on the law regarding Leave of Absence during term time and Penalty Notices for unauthorised school absence can be found at GOV.UK.**

Name of pupil (s)	Year group

Name of parent/carers	
1:	Relationship:
2:	Relationship:
Address (if different from address of child):	
Telephone No:	

Date of leave of absence	
From:	To:
Total number of days:	

**Please list your reasons including any exceptional circumstances for removing your child/children from school during term time.** Please attach any appropriate evidence to support your application.

I understand that the absences applied for may be recorded as **unauthorised absences** on my child/children's attendance record and that if I go ahead with an unauthorised absence I may be issued with one or more Penalty Notices.

**Signed** ..... **Date** .....