

MEREWORTH COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL



Attendance Policy

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Attendance Policy **Mereworth Primary School**

All children are entitled to receive an effective full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude. It is the joint responsibility of the school and parents/carers to ensure that our children receive that education.

Mereworth Primary School expects all children to attend school every day that the school is open, in full school uniform, arriving on time, registering for the morning and afternoon sessions and remaining for the full school day.

Only the school has the right to authorise absence. The school will not do this if they believe that a child's attainment is being significantly impaired by his/her level of attendance.

As part of the school attendance policy, referrals will be made to our Attendance Advisory Service the South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service (SEAAS) where there are concerns about a child's attendance which has not been resolved by the school and/or when the school believes that the child's attainment is significantly impaired by his/her level of attendance.

Punctuality

Punctuality is very important. Arriving late for school is a poor start to the day, causing embarrassment to your child, disruption to the class, unnecessary difficulties for teachers who are teaching, and most importantly, disturbance to learning for other children. At Mereworth Primary School, the register is taken at 8.55am (electronically). Children who arrive after that time are considered late.

Most primary age children are brought to school by parents or carers. Therefore, poor punctuality is the sole responsibility of the parents or carers. If children are not brought to school on time they come to believe that education is not considered to be important, which often leads to truancy when they are older.

In accordance with our policy on good punctuality, if your child is persistently late for school and this affects their attendance, it is possible that a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent for each child who has poor punctuality, as stipulated in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007.

With effect from 1st September 2013, standard information provided with each Penalty Notice states that £60 is payable within 21 days of the Notice being issued, rising to £120 if paid between the 22nd day and 28th day. If neither of these sums is paid within these periods, liability to prosecution will arise.

Registers

The electronic register is completed promptly by the class teacher at 8.55am for the morning session and 1.05pm in the afternoon. A late arrival constitutes a pupil arriving after 8.55am. Any pupil arriving at school after 9.30am will be recorded as 'absent' for the morning session. The

pupil must report to the school office. If there are any unauthorised absences the school will endeavor to contact the Parent/Carer for a valid reason on the day of absence.

Illness and medical appointments

Sickness

If your child is unwell, they should not attend school. **It is important that you notify the school by 9.30am on the first day of absence by telephone** if your child is unwell and that you provide a letter of explanation when your child returns to school for their file. If the school has not been contacted we will text home to find out the reason for absence.

The school is very concerned for the welfare of our children. Where there are persistent or prolonged periods of sickness, the school may refer the matter to SEAAS so that the correct advice and assistance can be put in place to support the family through this difficult period.

There may be occasions where medical evidence is needed to support the reasons for your child's absence from school. The school and SEAAS will not approach your doctor to obtain that evidence. **It is your responsibility as a parent/carer to provide a medical certificate or doctor's letter, as appropriate.**

For contagious illnesses such as chicken pox, where children may have a longer period of absence, parents may request work from the school when their child is well enough to complete it.

Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours wherever possible. If this is impossible then absence will only be authorised when the appointment card is shown. The child should be returned to school immediately after the appointment, unless advised otherwise by medical professionals.

Authorised Absence

A child shall be considered for authorised absence from school ...

- At any time when he was prevented from attending by reason of sickness, as described above or any unavoidable cause. An unavoidable cause is an incident of a serious nature in the immediate family of the child concerned. Where something of this nature has occurred, we ask that the family contact the school at the earliest opportunity, so that the school can provide support, the length of absence from school can be agreed and that the child can be correctly registered.
- On any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/carer belongs. The school recognises all religious beliefs and actively seeks to support families on these occasions. Where a family wishes to exercise this entitlement, the school asks that the family contact the school in writing at the earliest opportunity, requesting a religious observance day, so that the length of absence from school can be agreed and that the pupil can be correctly registered.
- If a parent/carer wishes to take a child out of school during term time, they should seek permission, in writing, from the Head Teacher at the earliest opportunity. **Each case will be treated on its merits, but it is not the policy of this school to authorise such absences, except in the most exceptional circumstances.**

Leave/Holidays during Term time

It is a myth that parents are entitled to take their children out of school, for a holiday, during term time.

Please note that the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**, which came into effect on 1st September 2013, removes references to family holiday and extended leave. The amendments make clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. .

There is no definitive list of exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher will treat each case on an individual basis and determine what is an exceptional circumstance and the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

If a parent/carer wishes to request such leave, they should make a written application at the earliest opportunity. The Head Teacher and senior staff will consider each request and inform the parent/carer as soon as possible, in writing, whether the request has been granted or not.

Please be aware that if a request for such leave is not granted, any absence from school during the above dates will be recorded as unauthorised.

If unauthorised leave during term time is taken, the school will consider issuing a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child that is taken out of school. Standard information provided with each Penalty Notice states that £60 is payable within 21 days of the Notice being issued, rising to £120 if paid between the 21st day and 28th day. If neither of these sums is paid within these periods, the Local Authority may consider a prosecution for an offence contrary to Sec. 444(1) Education Act 1996.

Levels of attendance

The school and the Attendance Advisory Officer (AAO) monitor the attendance and punctuality of each child on a regular basis. Parents will be notified by the school when attendance is less than **96%** or a regular pattern of absence is noted and you will be invited to discuss any concerns or problems that you have.

If there is still no improvement and we believe that the child's attainment may be impaired by his/her level of attendance, a formal referral will be made to SEAAS. Parents will then be asked to attend a meeting with the Attendance Advisory Officer in school in order to address the attendance concerns for your child.

Rewards

We place a high importance on regular and punctual school attendance and we do our best to promote and reward good attendance for all the children. Certificates are issued to those children across the school who have maintained consistently high levels of attendance each term and attendance is celebrated on a weekly basis in assembly.

In conclusion

School attendance and attainment are closely linked.

It is extremely important that all of our children attend school on a regular basis, so that they receive the education to which they're entitled. This ensures that our children have the best opportunities in later life.

If a child misses one day at school per week over their school life that is 80% attendance and is the equivalent to missing two full school years by the time they reach the end of secondary education. That is a lot of missed learning!!

Please don't leave it until it is too late. If you are having problems with your child's school attendance, make an appointment to speak to us so that we can provide advice and strategies to assist.

Your co-operation is important.

We all want the best education for our children.