
ATTENDANCE POLICY

MUNDY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL

[Version 2]

Last Reviewed	JULY 2021
Reviewed By	
Next Review Date	

Policy on Attendance

1 Introduction

- 1.1 We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.
- 1.2 Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, 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 the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

2 Definitions

2.1 Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. There are only 4 reasons for the school to authorise an absence:
 1. Illness of the child
 2. Family bereavement
 3. Medical appointments/reasons
 4. Educated off site
 5. Religious observance

2.2 Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

3 If a child is absent or Late

- 3.0 It is the responsibility of the parent, carer or guardian to contact the school.
- 3.1 When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, and will inform the school office, who will endeavour to contact a parent or guardian.
- 3.2 When the child returns to school, a letter or telephone conversation is required from the parent to explain the child's absence.
- 3.3 An appointment card/note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has a medical appointment.
- 3.4 If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.
- 3.5 Lateness can cause children to miss key learning that happens immediately as children enter to start their day and so it is vital that your child is at school on time every day. If your is going to be late for any reason please contact the school office before 8.45am to explain reasons for this. All lateness, before and after the close of registers, will be logged and you will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher and further action taken should this become a regular occurrence.

4 Requests for leave of absence

- 4.1 We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible.
- 4.2 Following government guidelines there is **no automatic entitlement in law to have time off school for holidays**. The Headteacher and Governors will only give authorisation to a holiday in exceptional circumstances. An exceptional leave form must be completed and the request will be considered by the Headteacher.

Mundy Junior School have a strict criteria when making the decision to issue penalty notices as a result of holidays being taken which are unauthorised. This criteria is detailed in the attached paperwork.

5 Long-term absence

- 5.1 When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send work home, so that they can keep up with their school work.
- 5.2 If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

6 Repeated unauthorised absences/Persistent Absenteeism

- 6.1 The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the Educational Welfare Officer, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation (see 9.4 for further details).
- 6.2 The education welfare officer, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. If there is no improvement, parents may be issued with an Education Penalty Notice, or can be fined

up to £2,500, or imprisoned for up to three months for failing to ensure their child attends school regularly.

- 6.3 Persistent Absenteeism is when a pupil's attendance falls to 90% or below irrespective of the reason for absence.
- 6.4 Mundy Junior School follows the LA guidelines for 'Education Penalty Notices' for unauthorised absences. (Attached is a copy of this paperwork.)

7 Rewards for good attendance

- 7.1 All the children who have 100 per cent attendance in any one term will receive an excellence certificate for attendance; these are awarded during an assembly. There are special certificates for any child who has 100 per cent attendance for a whole year.
- 7.2 Each half term the school will hold an 'Attendance Celebration' to promote good attendance and punctuality. Certificates and other rewards will be presented to pupils who hit 100% attendance for that week.

8 Attendance targets

- 8.1 The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors at the annual target-setting meeting. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

9 Monitoring and review

- 9.1 It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the Headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.
- 9.2 The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- 9.3 The rates of attendance will be reported through relevant governor's sub-committees and at the full governing body meeting each term.
- 9.4 The Headteacher/School Business Manager will be responsible for monitoring attendance and attendance patterns. If a child's attendance drops below the school target then the following action will be taken –

If attendance drops below 96% (starting from Autumn 2) parents will receive a letter indicating that this is the case and that attendance needs to improve.

If attendance drops below 92% then parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher/School Business Manager to discuss the reason for this and any necessary action will be agreed.

If attendance drops below 90% then this will be classed as persistent absence from September 2015. Parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher/School Business Manager and regular monthly meetings will continue until attendance improves. Derbyshire guidance will be followed when attendance drops below this figure which means that no illness will be recorded on the register unless a GP appointment card or other suitable evidence can be provided to support the absence. If attendance has not improved by the first monthly meeting then an Early Help Assessment will be discussed with parents. This will be initiated at the second monthly meeting if attendance has not improved and a referral to the Education Welfare Officer will be made.

- 9.5 This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every year, or earlier if considered necessary.

Changes to Penalty Notices for Absences from School

The opportunity for your child to have access to a good education in a Derbyshire school is very important to us all. Encouraging good attendance gives each pupil the best chance to learn and achieve to their full potential.

The vast majority of our pupils achieve very good attendance, and the number of unauthorised absences (without permission agreed by the school) is lower in Derbyshire than compared to the national average. We also have an improving picture on the number of persistent absences (children who repeatedly miss sessions) as this has reduced each year since 2010. Therefore, good attendance is not a problem in most cases.

Headteachers continue to hold the responsibility for deciding if a request made by a parent or carer for leave of absence should be granted, to give permission for “authorised” absence in exceptional circumstances.

Last year the Department for Education (DfE) introduced changes to the law regarding parents taking their children out of school during term time. These changes meant that parents risk receiving a penalty notice (fine) issued by the Local Authority for taking their child out of school in term time without permission from the Headteacher. The Local Authority has consulted with schools and reviewed the county’s criteria for issuing these penalty notices, for those pupils who miss out on school without permission, and where the Local Authority is, therefore, required by law to take appropriate action.

This has resulted in some changes which are outlined below and which came into effect from 23rd February 2015.

Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

- There is no attendance threshold at Mundy Junior School before we inform the authority regarding an unauthorised absence and this can result in a Penalty Notice being issued.
- Previously only one Penalty Notice per pupil was issued within an academic year. This limit has been removed so more than one Penalty Notice could be issued for repeated absence without permission during term time.
- Previously pupils missing 4 or more sessions could trigger a Penalty Notice.

- Instead of monitoring and totalling holiday absences taken across each academic year, they will now be monitored across the previous three terms, regardless of academic year

Penalty Notice for persistent absence

- Parents whose child is repeatedly absent will now only receive one warning notice period to bring about improvement in attendance in a single academic year. If attendance deteriorates again then no further formal warning notice will be issued and the Local Authority can automatically consider other statutory actions if unauthorised absence re-occurs.

These changes have been agreed with Headteachers and have been implemented to support good attendance. Further details and a copy of the revised Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices can be obtained from the council's website:
https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/attendance_behaviour_welfare/parent_responsibility/default.asp

Unauthorised Holiday/Leave Penalty Notice Criteria

The Headteacher has the authority to authorise holidays or leave of absence only in **exceptional circumstances**.

- Parents cannot demand a leave of absence as an automatic right.
- Parental requests must be made by completing the leave request form at least 2 weeks prior to the period of absence.
- Extended periods of absence will be granted **ONLY** in exceptional circumstances.
- The power to authorise/unauthorise a leave of absence belongs to the Headteacher and governing body.

Example Letters.

(Parent/carer(s) name and address)

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

Thank you for your letter dated (date) requesting permission for (pupil's name) to be absent from school from to

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

I have considered your application very carefully. Although I understand the reason for your request, I am unable to approve leave of absence in this instance, as I believe the circumstances are not exceptional. **Therefore, if your child is away from school during this period it will be recorded as Unauthorised Absence.**

As a school we are obliged to inform you that you may be subject to a Penalty Notice if your child's absence from school is unauthorised. This is in line with Derbyshire County Councils Code of Conduct.

The Penalty Notice fine would be :-

- £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996.

I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1,000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Our key priority is to ensure your child(ren) are as successful as possible, are able to reach his/her full potential and gains maximum benefits from his/her educational experience.

I would hope that upon reflection you are able to support this decision in line with the Local Authority and Government policy, that leave should be restricted to the 13 weeks school holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

(Parent/carer(s) name and address)

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

Thank you for your letter dated (date) requesting permission for (pupil's name) to be absent from school from to

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

Having looked at your application, I feel that your request can be supported in this instance.
Therefore, the absence to include the dates requested will be authorised.

Our key priority is to ensure that your child(ren) are as successful as possible and are able to achieve (his/her) full potential. I would therefore ask that you support your child in catching up on the time they will miss in school.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

Headteacher

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance has dropped below the school target of 96% and is currently _____. I am sure you are aware how important it is that all children maintain a good attendance in order for them to achieve their full potential in all areas of their learning and therefore ask for your support to ensure their attendance improves.

What does your child's percentage attendance mean?

Below is guidance as to how absence impacts upon attendance each term and over the year.

Attendance Percentage	Day missed over an average school term (approximately)	Days missed over a school year (approximately)
100%	0	0
95%	3 ½	10
90%	6 ½	20
85%	10	30

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

Headteacher

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance has dropped below the school target of 96% and is currently _____ which is of concern. I am sure that you are aware that attendance below 90% is now classed as persistent absence and may result in involvement from the Education Welfare Officer.

In order to ensure that we work together to improve your child's attendance I would like you to attend a meeting with me at _____ on _____. At this meeting we will be able to look in detail at your child's attendance pattern and agree on a way forward to ensure that we see this figure improve.

If you are unable to attend the meeting stated above please contact the office to arrange a more suitable date and time. I am happy to accommodate work commitments and can meet outside of the school day if requested.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

Headteacher

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance has dropped below 90% and is now classed as persistent absence. Their current attendance figure is _____.

Derbyshire guidelines are very clear as to process that need to be adhered to when attendance falls below this figure. I would therefore like you to attend a meeting with me at _____ on _____. At this meeting we will be able to look in detail at your child's attendance pattern and I will share with you detailed guidance as to what this now means for you and your child.

If you are unable to attend the meeting stated above please contact the office to arrange a more suitable date and time. I am happy to accommodate work commitments and can meet outside of the school day if requested.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

Headteacher

Date:

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to inform you that as of September 2016 Mundy Junior School will have very clear policies and procedures that will be followed when managing attendance. A copy of our school attendance policy can be found on the school website but below I have detailed all the main points that you need to be aware of.

Attendance –

Our school attendance target is 98%. This has been set in line with National and Ofsted expectations.

If your child's attendance drops below 96% then you will receive a letter from school to make you aware that this is the case.

If your child's attendance drops below 92% you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher.

If your child's attendance drops below 90% this will be classed, by Derbyshire, as persistent absence. You will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and further action may be taken including the referral to Education Welfare.

When your child is ill –

If your child is ill or unable to attend school for any reason you must inform a member of school staff by 9.15am on the day of the absence. We will ask for the reason your child is ill and may ask you to stay in touch daily until your child returns to school. Failure to inform school of the reason your child is absent will be considered a safeguarding concern and may result in a home visit to ensure that your child is safe and well.

Holidays or Leave of absence request –

The Headteacher has the authority to authorise holidays or leave of absence only in **exceptional circumstances**.

- Parents cannot demand a leave of absence as an automatic right.
- Parental requests must be made by completing the leave request form (available from the school office) at least 2 weeks prior to the period of absence.
- Schools cannot apply blanket policies to approve/reject all applications.
- All requests must be considered on their own merits.
- The power to authorise/unauthorise a leave of absence belongs to the Headteacher.

Exceptional circumstance are –

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
3. The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
4. To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
5. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 4 above, the Headteacher can discuss the circumstance with the Education Welfare Officer, a decision will then be made as to whether the exceptional circumstance can be upheld.

In **all** cases evidence will be requested to confirm the legitimacy of the exceptional circumstance.

Maintaining an outstanding attendance is a priority for Mundy Junior School in our continued journey for school improvement and I welcome your support and comments in the coming year in order to ensure we continue to develop school policy and procedures effectively.

If you would like to discuss the content of this letter with me please do not hesitate to contact the school office to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher