



# **Attendance Policy**

Approved by the Governing Body in:

**Summer 2023**

## **1. Statement of Intent**

Monkfield Park aims to work together with parents/carers to ensure that all children registered at the school attend both regularly and punctually.

Education is important and research clearly shows the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents/carers and school staff should work in partnership in making education a success, ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school we will work with parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves the maximum possible attendance and that any problems are identified and acted upon. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter and may make things worse. We expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

We work closely with our Local Authority Attendance Officer and follow the Cambridge County Council guidance on attendance. This includes making referrals and issuing penalty notices.

## **2. Parents/carers' Responsibilities**

- (i) Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full time basis to make the most of the educational opportunities available. In Reception, children are expected to start full time after two/three ½ days during their first week of the Autumn term, but in exceptional circumstances a later start date can be negotiated with the Headteacher. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school punctually, appropriately dressed and equipped, and in a fit condition to learn.
- (ii) The school gates will open at 8.40 a.m. Class doors are opened at 8.50am, when staff welcome the children into school. Registration begins at 9.00 a.m. and the classroom doors will be locked at this time. Parents/carers should ensure that their child arrives at school in time for the start of registration (9.00 a.m.). If a child arrives after 9.00 a.m. the parent/carer should report directly to the school office where they will need to sign the child in and give a reason for the lateness. The child will then be given a small card to give to their classroom teacher to indicate their lateness.
- (iii) Parents/carers should ensure that if their child is going to be absent from school for any unanticipated reason such as sickness, they should contact the school by 8.50 a.m. on every morning of absence. This may be done by phone, email, letter or in person.
- (iv) Parents/carers are requested to inform the school of any circumstances which might affect the child's attendance.

- (v) Parents/carers may not authorise their child's absence - only the school can do this on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents/carers. Should parents/carers fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence the school will record such absence as unauthorised.

### 3. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

#### Authorised Absences

The Department for Education states that 'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence'. It has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences, which are through unavoidable causes and these can include:

- When a child is ill or
- When a child is receiving medical attention – proof of the appointment may be required
- Days of religious observance notified in advance
- Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement of a very close relative, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as "Approved Sporting Activity" that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged **out of school hours wherever possible**.

#### Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the staff at the school do not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence by the parent/s. Unauthorised absences are where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by the parent(s)/carers;
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The following activities are examples of what would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- taking unauthorised holiday;
- returning late from a holiday;
- unexplained absences;
- truancy before the register has been marked;

- minding the house;
- avoidable transport issues;
- caring for relatives
- awaiting repair people;
- shopping;
- haircuts;
- a birthday or family celebration;
- keeping children off school without a good reason.

**The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) 2013 states that Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained state school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. The guidance makes it clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist.**

Please note that a request for a term-time holiday will very rarely be granted/ Arrangements should not be made without the school's agreement in advance. Taking leave without permission is "unauthorised" absence and can be subject to a Penalty Notice fine or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority.

All applications will be treated on an individual basis, by a panel of governors. The panel will take into account the likely impact of any missed time on the child's educational progress, exceptional reason for the leave and social stability. Such applications should not exceed 10 school days per school year. Parents/carers will be informed of the decision of the panel by letter. If a school does not agree an absence, and the child is taken out of school, the absence will be unauthorised.

#### **Issues of which Parents/Carers need to be aware:**

If the school does not agree to grant leave and parents/carers take their child out of school then this will be counted as unauthorised absence. Should leave be granted but the child remains absent for longer than agreed, this extra time will be recorded as unauthorised absence. Should a child fail to return to school within 4 weeks of the agreed return date and there is no contact from the parents/carers the school, in consultation and with the agreement of the Local Authority Attendance Officer, will remove the child's name from the school roll.

Parents are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may offer parents a formal Parenting Contract or refer the child to the Attendance Officer from the Local Authority.

He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement wherever possible but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use legal proceedings if required, including Penalty Notices (fines) or prosecution in the

Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents or pupils may wish to contact the Local Authority Attendance Officer themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. These are called “persistent absentees” by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category.

#### **4. School Responsibilities**

- (i) The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance with the statutory requirements. The school will set an annual target for attendance.
- (ii) Registration opens at 9.00 a.m. and at 12.55 p.m. for KS1 and 1.20 p.m. for KS2. Registration will close at 9.10 a.m. and at 1.05 pm for KS1 and 1.30 p.m. for KS2. After closure of registration a child will be recorded as authorised absence if an acceptable reason is received or unauthorised absence if an unsatisfactory reason is received.
- (iii) Appropriate staff will complete registers in accordance with the guidance contained in the staff handbook. The administration staff will monitor registers to ensure that these are being satisfactorily maintained and to ensure that any potential attendance difficulties are identified at an early stage.
- (iv) Should a member of staff have particular concerns about an individual child's attendance or punctuality, a note should be raised directly with the Headteacher.
- (v) Should a child be absent the staff member registering the class or office staff will enter the appropriate code in the register. Should no explanation be received from the child's parent/carer, the school office will endeavour to make contact with the parent/carer under the first response system from 9.30 a.m. onwards. Individual causes of concern may trigger more rapid procedures to be implemented.
- (vi) Only notes concerning absences about which there are concerns/queries should be brought to the attention of the Headteacher, who may then choose to speak to the parents/carers concerned.
- (vii) The administration staff will regularly review attendance data and will use this data during meetings with the Headteacher and/or the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO). These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify respective tasks and follow-up actions

for the school and/or the LAAO. If a member of staff becomes aware of circumstances affecting a child's attendance they will endeavour to contact the parent/carer to discuss this and will notify the Headteacher.

(viii) The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular, punctual attendance:

- a clear attendance statement will be entered in the school prospectus;
- newsletters sent out to parents/carers throughout the academic year covering holidays, first response, attendance targets, lateness and incentives. The Headteacher will report to the full governing body on attendance at each meeting;
- Monitoring will take place for individual children whose attendance falls below 96%, e.g. unexplained absences, high levels of illness. As a result of the monitoring a three-step letter system may be used to try to improve the child's attendance. If no improvement is seen, the child's attendance will be referred to the LAAO, following attempts from the school to meet with parents/carers about concerns. The LAAO may then contact the child's parent/carer to discuss the rate of absence. Alternatively, parents/carers may be issued with a Penalty Notice if there are 8 authorised sessions over an 8 week period OR a child's attendance is 90% or below over a longer period.
- Where attendance falls below 96% due to high levels of illness, the school may request to see medical evidence which demonstrates that the child is unable to attend school. Inability to do so may mean that future absences will be marked as unauthorised.
- Children who have been absent for any extended period of time will be re-integrated into school through a structured and individually tailored programme;
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**The people responsible for attendance matters at Monkfield Park are: Mrs Howell, Mrs Major and Mrs Ray.**

## **5. Review**

This attendance policy will be reviewed in accordance with the School Development Plan and any changes in legislation. The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents. Please work with us.



Appendix 1a

Dear

Re:

Date of birth:

This letter is for your information so you do not need to take any action.

I would like to thank you for following the school procedures regarding attendance. We understand that \_\_\_\_\_ has been ill recently and that you called the school every day to keep us informed.

We would just like to let you know how this has affected \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance which is currently at \_\_\_\_\_ %.

If the absence is due to medical reasons, please ensure we have the relevant details so that we can support your child.

Please continue to work with us. You are more than welcome to contact any member of the attendance team to discuss any queries or concerns you may have or if your child has a chronic or prolonged illness.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement once your child reaches statutory school age (5 years old). Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

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Yours sincerely

Mrs A Howell  
Headteacher



Appendix 1b

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Re: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

This letter is for your information.

I am writing to advise you that \_\_\_\_\_'s school attendance has fallen to \_\_\_\_\_% and as a result we are becoming concerned that \_\_\_\_\_ is missing a significant part of their learning.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have a significant impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables children to keep up with the work required.

If you would like a copy of the attendance report please contact the office.

I will continue to monitor \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance and look forward to seeing a significant improvement.

If the absence is due to a medical reason please ensure that we have been informed so appropriate support can be put in place.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which are having an influence on \_\_\_\_\_ attending school regularly, or if you are concerned about your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Howell

Headteacher

## Appendix 2

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Re: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to inform you that \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance is currently \_\_\_\_\_% and is still causing concern.

Medical evidence is now required with immediate effect for the next 8 weeks for all absences to be authorised after which the attendance will be reviewed.

I must remind you that as parent (s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may result in a Penalty Notice being issued against you and/or legal proceedings being considered.

If there are any particular circumstances that, the school may not be aware of, which are having an influence on \_\_\_\_\_ attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me as support can be offered through an Early Help Assessment (EHA).

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Howell  
Headteacher

### Appendix 3

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Re: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to advise you that \_\_\_\_\_'s school attendance is still causing concern. Therefore, we need to meet with you urgently to discuss the situation.

You are required to attend a meeting with Mrs Howell to discuss this matter at the date and time below.

Date:

Time:

Should \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance remain irregular; we may have to refer this matter to the Local Authority who could consider more formal action. This might result in a Penalty Notice Fine and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under Section 444 Education Act 1996, and a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

Absence due to self-limiting illness can be authorised in the first instance but for a child who is absent frequently due to a medical reason, including repeated self-limiting illnesses, medical information will be required.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support your child in making good progress. I hope that you will work with us to improve their attendance, therefore avoiding the need for legal proceedings to be initiated. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Howell

Headteacher

#### Appendix 4

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Re: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Following our meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ it has been brought to my attention that \_\_\_\_\_ has been absent from school for xxx days over the previous xxx weeks.

I enclose a record of \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance.

As parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually.

The government's Department for Education (DfE) deems the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold to be 10%. This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

I am therefore writing to inform you that we are now referring this matter to the Local Authority who could consider more formal action. Failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under Section 444 Education Act 1996, may result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Howell

Headteacher

cc Local Authority Attendance Officer