



# Attendance Policy

<b>Approved by:</b>	Head teacher, SLT, GDPR Officer and Full Governing Body	<b>Date:</b> November 2020
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Signed by :

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The Attendance Policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Anti-bullying policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Behaviour policy
- Equal Opportunities policy
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities policy
- Safeguarding and Child protection policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education

As the DfE notes, *'Improving attendance is everyone's business'*, and it is important that we, as a school, work together in partnership with families, children and the wider community.

The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' Guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, and recognises that *'the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families... [It] is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.'*

Maidenbower Junior School expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times.

We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved. At Maidenbower Junior School, the Governors have agreed to make this target that of 97%.

### **Overall Aims:**

1. To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
2. To work with families to understand individual circumstances, with a joint aim of improving attendance.
3. To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
4. To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
5. To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
6. To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.
7. To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.

### **Rights and responsibilities for attendance/punctuality:**

#### The Legal Framework:

There are legal obligations on:

- The parent(s) to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise; to send them to school regularly once they are on the register.
- The School to register attendance and notify the Local Authority of absence from school

- The Local Authority to provide education and to enforce attendance.

#### Head Teacher:

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.
- To deal with parental requests for extended leave in line with Local Authority policies and procedures.
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices, in line with Local Authority policies and procedures.
- To lead on/take responsibility for attendance/punctuality, on a day-to-day basis, including liaising with/responding to parental enquiries.
- To oversee the analysis of weekly/termly/yearly data and respond to findings.
- To meet with the School Administrator to monitor the systems and structures, ensuring they are having an impact on pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To liaise with external agencies and make referrals where necessary.
- To ensure that rewards and incentives for attendance and punctuality are being used.
- Work with the teachers, to plan for the reintegration of pupils after long-term absence.
- To revise and amend the policy, as required.

#### School Administrator:

- To liaise with office staff in respect of the first response procedure when a child does not arrive at school with no reason received.
- To monitor weekly attendance data for their year groups.
- To liaise with office staff, the school answer phone and take messages from parents/carers about pupil absence.
- To promptly inform the SLT, if there are any concerns relating to attendance/punctuality.
- To check weekly data and County e-pods.
- To produce half termly data for HT, SLT and Governors to review and analyse.
- To record reasons for absence and update class registers.
- To implement the daily checking of registers after the morning and afternoon registration sessions.
- To contact parents/carers for a Level 1 telephone conversation.
- To meet parents as part of a Level 2 Attendance Support Meeting.
- To maintain MJS attendance records in line with this policy. (See appendix)
- To liaise with feeder Infant schools regarding Year 2 children with late and absence concerns
- To liaise with Secondary schools regarding families with late and absence concerns
- To liaise with and report to outside agencies.
- To report to the Local Authority, as requested.
- To maintain clear communication with the SLT regarding attendance and punctuality.
- To oversee the admission and induction of new pupils.
- To support HT with the promotion of good attendance and punctuality, through finding/organising incentives.
- To ensure staff are following the registration systems and structures in this policy.
- Inform parents of school procedures in an attendance newsletter.

#### Staff:

- To ensure quality first teaching every day; with lessons that are well planned and resourced so that they challenge, inspire and meet their learners' needs.
- Take a formal register of all pupils twice a day immediately on arrival and after lunchtime break
- To regularly remind children and parents about the importance of good attendance.

- Provide a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children.
- Establish good and effective communication links with parents/carers and work collaboratively in meeting the child's needs.
- Work with pupils and their families where attendance is a concern, identifying barriers to good attendance and working to overcome these.
- To promptly inform the HT and School Administrator, of pupils who persist with poor attendance.
- To feed back to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality regularly and at Parents Evenings.

#### Parents:

Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents should contact the school first thing. If a child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache, colds etc. parents should inform the school and attempt to bring them in. If they do not get any better, school will contact parents straight away, to collect them. If a pupil has a dental, clinic or hospital appointment, parents should let the school know prior to the appointment and provide a copy of it. Pupils' should be brought back to school after appointments. Parents are advised to make such appointments after school or in the holidays if at all possible as these appointments affect pupil attendance percentages. Pupils should miss as little time as possible.

Therefore, parents are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day.
- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons.
- Arrange medical and dental appointments after school or in the holidays wherever possible.
- Telephone the school every day of absence for their child. School will text the first family contact number, if no communication is received and subsequently telephone each contact number, until a reason is provided. If no contact can be made, the matter is referred to SLT and in rare cases, the inability to make contact is referred to Pupil Entitlement Investigations.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning.
- Create a Health Care Plan with the Medical Welfare Officer if there are long-term sickness concerns.
- If a child has a high level of illness, the school reserves the right to request appointment and medical evidence. If none is forthcoming, school will unauthorise the absence and the family may receive a FPN (it is advised by the Government and Health Authorities that a normal, healthy child might have a maximum of 6 days illness per year).
- If a child is absent from school through illness before or after a holiday, the school may unauthorise the absence until medical evidence or flight documentation is provided. If none is forthcoming, school may unauthorise the absence and the family may receive a FPN.
- If a child is absent from school due to a cancellation of a flight following a holiday, this absence will be unauthorised and if the child has 5 days (10 sessions) absence due to this cancellation, the school reserves the right to request all documentation in relation of the cancellation, including emails before and after the cancellation, and if none are forthcoming, the family may receive a FPN.
- We refer to County for any child refuser.

## **Strategies for promoting/rewarding excellent attendance:**

### **Aims:**

- To ensure good attendance and punctuality (above 95%) is regularly promoted and supported and remains high profile across school.
- To achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality (above 95%) through rewarding good attendance and punctuality.

## **Celebration Attendance Assemblies**

Celebration Assemblies are held on a Friday.

Gold, Silver and Bronze Cups, together with certificates, are awarded to those classes with the highest percentage attendance within Lower and Upper school. Every half term a Platinum Certificate is awarded to each class, within Lower and Upper school, with the highest overall percentage attendance for that half term.

At the end of the school year, higher attaining attendance and other assembly awards are added together to enable rewards for a particular house.

## **School Attendance Correspondence**

School Attendance Information Letters are sent out at the beginning of every term. It is used to highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality. It regularly includes sections reminding parents of our school attendance target and what that means in terms of number of days absent. It also includes information about any initiatives, which the school is using, to promote attendance and punctuality and news of celebration.

Reminders are added to this via the weekly newsletter.

## **School timings:**

The doors open at 8:40am and there is a ten minute window for children to enter school. The doors close at 8:50am and after this time, children are marked as late.

## **School contact**

Mrs Bracher is the school's Senior Attendance Champion and works with the headteacher to monitor and communicate anything related to attendance. Contact can be made by calling the school office on 01293 883758 or emailing [office@maidenbowerjunior.co.uk](mailto:office@maidenbowerjunior.co.uk).

## **Requesting leaves of absence**

We do not encourage children to be taken out of school unless in exceptional circumstances. Parents are able to make a request by completing a Request for Absence form and this will be looked at by the headteacher who will authorise / unauthorise the absence.

## **Communicating absence**

If a child is going to absent from school, parents are expected to communicate this by 9am. This can be done by:

- Calling the school office on 01293 883758
- Emailing [absence@maidenbowerjunior.co.uk](mailto:absence@maidenbowerjunior.co.uk)

Daily communication is needed until the child returns to school.

### **Monitoring First Day Absence**

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carer by 9am, an absence text/call will be made. The SA Officer will liaise with office staff to monitor the First Response procedure:

- Text parents' contact number(s).
- Send an email requesting communication and stating that absence is unauthorised until further notice. A copy of the absence policy is attached.
- If no contact by 11am, attempts are made to contact other emergency contact numbers.
- If no contact by 1pm, the senior leadership team will make a decision about next steps regarding safeguarding. This may include a visit to the home, or potentially a Police Welfare Check.

### **Medical evidence**

In the majority of cases a parent's notification that their child is too ill to attend school will be evident and can be accepted without question or concern. Only where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness will medical evidence be requested to support the absence, and when a family have received a Notice to Improve, evidence will also be requested to authorise absence/s.

We encourage medical appointments to take place out of school time but appreciate this is not always possible. We request proof of appointments and these can be issued by doctors/dentists, etc.

### **Formalising support**

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, we will work with partners, including the Local Authority, to formalise and intensify the support.

As part of the measures introduced, a 'Notice to Improve' may be issued to parents. It is a final opportunity for a parent to improve attendance and engage in support before a Penalty Notice is issued. Reasons that a Notice to Improve could be issued :

- if a pupil is absent from school, other than those associated with an unauthorised holiday in term time, whether it be authorised or unauthorised absences.
- if a pupil has a high number of absences through illness and insufficient evidence has been provided.

There is a recommended length for the improvement period of between 3-6 weeks. This period is flexible, but a referral may be made to the Local Authority prior to the conclusion of the period if a parent fails to engage with the school and/or the absences continue.

A Notice to Improve may not be issued if there is unlikely to be any impact on parent's behaviour (a parent has already received one for a similar offence) and therefore, when this occurs, the expectation is for the school to address their rationale in any referral submission to the Local Authority rather than with a Notice to Improve.

Attendance data is regularly monitored, with full analysis each half-term and the following escalation of procedures are in place for children who have persistent absence (below 90%).

- Level 1 - informal telephone conversation with Mrs Bracher to discuss attendance and support. These will take place when a child is late on 5 occasions / a total of

one hour, or when there are two unauthorised absences or when a child's absence is identified as a concern during school attendance meetings.

- Level 2 - Attendance Support Meeting with Mrs Bracher, with formal documentation and targets set.
- Level 3 - Meeting with a Deputy Headteacher and involvement of the school's Dedicated Schools Team, as part of Early Help.
- Level 4 - Meeting with the Headteacher.
- If progress is not made and agreed targets are not met, school will liaise with outside agencies and any future absence may be unauthorised and consideration about making a referral to the Integrated Front Door will be made.

### **Extended Holidays / MJS Procedures**

In line with the 2024 guidance, headteachers are not permitted to approve term-time holidays.

- The school recognises that taking children out of school may constitute a safeguarding risk and will make necessary enquiries, in order to be satisfied that the child is not at risk. The school may contact outside agencies in order to ensure that a visit is legitimate and safe for the child/children.
- The School reserves the right to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice if a child is absent from school either on an unauthorised holiday for 5 days or more, or for any other reason apart from illness.
- The School reserves the right to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice if a child, who is absent on unauthorised holiday for less than 5 days, is then absent on return.

### **Penalty Notices**

If a child is taken out of school without the Head Teacher's authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and of legal action being taken.

If a family request 4 days absence for holiday but then takes an additional day making a total of 5 days holiday, school reserves the right to unauthorise the additional fifth day and issue a FPN.

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

The penalty notice amount is increasing from August 2024 with a maximum of two penalty notices within a rolling three-year period:-

- First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Second Offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days, with no reduction offered for early payment.
- Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years) - the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and either the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or the matter being addressed via an alternative pathway with an investigating officer being allocated with other legal interventions considered.

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The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

**Section 444(1) Education Act 1996:**

"If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence."

The court can fine parents up to £2,500 per child on conviction, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order.

Please note that:

- Penalties and prosecutions are in respect of each parent for each child.
- 'Parents' include any person responsible for the child or who has care of him/her or adopted/fostered etc.

**These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in parents having a criminal record.**