



Melton Primary School

Attendance Policy

Agreed by the governing body on: 6th December 2018

Chair's signature:

Review date: Autumn Term 2021

Introduction

Melton Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance. We expect children to attend school every day the school is open.

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

The policy has been drawn up after consultation with the whole community and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of staff know of the policy and have access to it.

School's roles and responsibilities

All staff (teaching and support) at school have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

The Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Headteacher will ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared weekly with the teaching staff, are made regularly available to all staff, and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body half termly. The headteacher will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

Registration

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown below).

REGISTER CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

The register will be called promptly at 9.00am and 1.05pm by each class teacher. A mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

The registers will close at 9.10am and 1.10pm. Any pupil who arrives after the closing of the register will count as absent. Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted as present but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see below).

Categorising absence

A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the headteacher.

Melton Primary School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at school will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 2 weeks, the absence will remain unauthorised;

Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:

1. where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
 - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's / student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - in exceptional circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance.
2. where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
3. where the pupil / student has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand;
4. where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control.
5. the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
6. the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
7. the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the pupil / student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, have reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
8. in other exceptional circumstances (eg a family bereavement) and for a very limited period.

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons **for not** authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is shopping during school hours;
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, eg a birthday;
- the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
- the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

Monitoring Attendance

A member of the office staff monitors the registers daily. They will alert the Headteacher to an attendance matter that may arise.

Staff Training

The Headteacher will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

Collection and analysis of data

The Headteacher will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

Attendance has a very high profile at Melton Primary School and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in class groups. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

Melton Primary School has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences. Where no explanation has been provided, parents will be telephoned. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents, the designated safeguarding lead will be notified and will continue to try to make contact with the parents either by phone, a letter or a home visit.

First-day calling

Melton Primary School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the designated safeguarding lead will be notified and will continue to try to make contact with the parents either by phone, a letter or a home visit.

Meetings with parents

Where there is concern about a pupil's absence, a letter will be sent to parents notifying them of the concern (attendance below 95% or 90% with or without explanation). If the child's attendance doesn't improve over a six week period, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans will then be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

Referral to the Education Attendance Service

If there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in their classroom for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes, will receive a late mark in the register. A record is kept of these children at the school office. If a child is late 5 times or more in a month the school will invite the parent to a meeting to discuss plans for improving punctuality. If the child continues to be late, the school will refer the case to the Education Attendance Service.

For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the school office. It is important that parents support us by following the late procedure.

For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day are signed in and out by the parent collecting them. This book is kept at the school office.

Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. Melton Primary School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. As part of our PSHE curriculum keeping themselves safe is an annual area of work. Through this work we explore the reasons for not leaving site and ensure that all children have a named person they could go to in school if they felt anxious, worried or wanted to leave the site. If a child is not in class for afternoon register without an explanation, the Headteacher is notified immediately and a sweep of the school premises will take place. If it is discovered a child has left the school grounds without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately. If this is not successful the police are contacted.

Term-time Holidays

Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are unable to take holiday at any other time.

Melton Primary School will consider every application individually, its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays is not a right. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended holiday.

Melton Primary School will consider authorising holidays for:

- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

Requests for holidays for the following reason will not be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods;
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

Melton Primary School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

Melton Primary School will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests, ie SATS

Suffolk County Council will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice if unauthorised absence is 5 days (10 sessions) or more in a 12 week period.

Parents' / carers' responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Melton Primary School.

We expect parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents will also be expected to:

- Notify school on the first day of absence by phoning before 9.30am, leaving a message on the school answer phone if needed.
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, returning reply slips when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. The school will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

Pupils' responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.

Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

Governors' responsibilities

Section 175 (2)

The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.