

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

This policy sets out how we at Merrydale Junior School will work towards our aim of achieving excellent rates of attendance for our pupils. It should be considered alongside the government guidance document 'Working together to improve school attendance (2024)'.

Throughout this policy, the term parent means: all natural parents, any person who has parental responsibility and any person who has care of a child and lives with them.

Introduction

Punctuality and good attendance are crucial to ensure that children learn and reach their full potential. Merrydale Junior School seeks to ensure that all our children receive a full-time education to maximise their opportunities to succeed in their education. Improving attendance is the responsibility of everyone within our school community – students, parents, governors and staff. It is vital that children attend regularly and punctually to gain the greatest benefit from their time in school. Any absence from school causes disruption to learning and should be avoided wherever possible. We value the support of parents in making sure that children are in school and arrive and leave on time. The attendance target for our school is 95%

Our Aims

- To encourage and assist all pupils to achieve excellent levels of attendance
- To reduce persistent absenteeism (below 90%)
- To work together with parents/carers in both a supportive and challenging role to achieve high levels of attendance

Registration

Registration is a legal requirement and creates an orderly start to the school day. The school gates are open at 8.30am and registers will be called promptly at 8.55, and afternoon registration at 1pm.

Students arriving 15 minutes after registers close will be marked as unauthorised absence unless supported by evidence for the late arrival.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

Merrydale's registers will be coded in accordance with the Department of Education mandatory codes – see appendix A.

All absences must be explained by a parent or carer on a **daily** basis. The school will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence. After 3 days of absence the school will request medical evidence, this could be antibiotics packaging, letter from the GP/hospital, text message for the appointment.

The view of the Department for Education attendance expert is that “some think they're being a good parent by keeping their child off school, if in doubt send them to school. There is a difference between minor ailments and the sort of illness that warrants a day off.”

Some examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting on a delivery
- Going shopping or for a hair cut

- A family day out
- A child's birthday
- Sleeping in after a late night

Any unexplained absence will be unauthorised.

Absence **may be** authorised due to:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances

If a student's attendance becomes a cause for concern the school may ask parents to provide medical, or other suitable, evidence to substantiate their reasons before the absence can be authorised.

Holidays

Merrydale Junior School policy is that holidays in term time will not be authorised.

Unauthorised absence may be referred to Leicester City Council, at the discretion of the Head Teacher. A referral may result in Leicester City Council issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Exceptional Leave

The school recognise that there may be times when a student requires exceptional leave during term time for short periods of time. In these circumstances parents are asked to complete the 'Exceptional Leave Form' to request the absence. These requests will be considered by the Headteacher on an individual basis. Please ensure that the school Attendance Officer or Headteacher is provided with all evidence and context to support your application for exceptional leave at the point of the initial application as further information provided at a later date will not be considered.

Exceptional leave may not be authorised during examination periods.

Appeal – Exceptional Leave The decision of the Headteacher is final. However, if you feel that your application for exceptional leave has been unfairly reviewed or that the policy outlined has not been followed you may appeal in writing to the Director of Schools outlining your case. Please note the Director of Schools will not re-hear or reconsider the original application for exceptional leave but will, if required, ensure

the Headteacher has reviewed the application according to policy and in a fair and unbiased manner.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

If a student is absent and no reason has been provided the school will contact parents and/or nominated emergency contacts, as part of the safeguarding procedure. This will be done within the first hour of any absence following the closure of registers. Where a student is absent, and the school cannot contact parents and/or nominated contacts the school will carry out a home welfare check: this will take place by the 3rd day of absence or sooner.

When a student is persistently late or absent without good reason and the school's efforts to effect change have been unsuccessful a referral may be made to our Education Welfare Service for further action. This may also involve a home welfare check.

Persistent Absence

The law requires parents and carers to make sure that their children receive a full-time education suitable to their needs.

Parents and pupils are supported at school to overcome barriers to regular attendance.

As a last resort, schools may request the local authority, through the Pupils Services Court Team, to use its statutory legal powers if parents/carers fail to ensure their child receives an education.

The following sections of the Education Act 1996 apply:

- Section 444(1): if "a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil fails to attend regularly" at the school. This leads to a fine of up to £1000 per parent.
- Section 444(1A): if "the parent knows that his child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails to cause him to do so" without reasonable justification. This 'aggravated offence' leads to a fine of up to £2500 per parent and/or up to 3 months' imprisonment.

A penalty notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.

It would be considered appropriate to serve a notice in the following circumstances:

- overt truancy
- parentally condoned absences
- unauthorised leave of absence / holidays in term-time
- excessive delay in returning from extended holidays without agreement
- persistent late arrival at school i.e. after the register has closed.

Children Missing Education (CME)

The Head Teacher will notify the Local Authority when a pupil is likely to be away from the academy for a significant period of time due to their health needs.

Academies (working with the Trust Attendance & Welfare Lead) will complete a Children Missing Education (CME) referral to the relevant Local Authority when a child's attendance cannot be confirmed after 10 days.

Supporting families

We will always seek to improve a child's attendance in a positive manner. We will seek to work with families and help provide support necessary, or where required to provide signposting and/or liaise with any external agencies and early help.

Penalty (fixed) Notices & further actions

The school will consider a penalty notice as a last resort. We will always seek to find supportive ways to work with students and families. However, there are regular points where we will consider this option (please note the receipt of any fines are NOT received by the school). We will also consider working with families and local agencies in a student's best interests and reserve the right to consider all of the following actions where necessary:

- Parenting Contract
- Education Supervision Orders
- Attendance Prosecution
- Parenting Order
- Fixed Penalty Notice

Merrydale's Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Attend school regularly and to arrive on time.
- Come to school in the correct uniform and be prepared to learn.
- Attend all lessons and actively listen and engage in their learning.
- Not to leave school premises without permission.
- Talk to a member of staff if there is a problem causing them to miss school.

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child attends school on a punctual and regular basis. They are expected to:

- Ensure their child is properly dressed and equipped for the school day and their attendance is regular and punctual. Regular attendance is defined as

“every day the school is open” (Working together to improve school attendance, 2024)

- They inform the school via telephone on each morning the reason for absence. The school will then make the decision on whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. If no reason is given the absence will be automatically unauthorised.
- Know that they will not have holidays authorised during term time.
- Make medical and dental appointments where possible outside of the school day.
- Inform school regarding any diagnosed medical conditions which may affect attendance.
- Provide school with up-to-date contact details for both parents and two emergency contacts, where possible.

The School will:

- Contact and support our pupils and families if their attendance becomes a concern. This includes attendance of any pupil below 95%. For all cases below 90% we will meet with families to look at improving a pupil's attendance. We will support pupils with medical needs and request medical evidence to enable us to put in place an effective support plan.
- Have clear day to day process for managing attendance, for example calling parents when absence is unexplained.
- Recognise that all pupils who are Persistent Absentees are therefore a vulnerable group.
- Have class rewards every half term for those classes that have 97% and above attendance. Excellent attendance certificates for those children whose attendance is 97% and over.
- Individual rewards for improved attendance maybe used for some key pupils.

Appendices

Attendance Codes, Descriptions and Meanings

Colour Key

Colour	Description
	Present
	Authorised Absence
	Approved Educational Activity - Counted as Present
	Unauthorised Absence
	Not Counted in Attendance Calculations

Attendance Codes

Register Code	Description
/	Present AM
\	Present PM
L	Late (before registers closed) marked as present
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
C	Authorised absence as pupil is absent due to other authorised circumstances
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
E	Authorised absence as pupil is excluded, with no alternative provision made
I	Illness (NOT appointments)
M	Authorised absence due to medical/dental appointments
R	Authorised absence due to religious observance
S	Authorised absence due to study leave
T	Authorised absence due to traveller absence

J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
B	Approved education activity as pupil being educated off site (NOT dual registration)
P	Approved educational activity as pupil is attending an approved sporting activity
V	Approved education activity as pupil is away on an educational visit or trip
W	Approved educational activity as pupil is attending work experience
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
G	Unauthorised absence as pupil is on a family holiday, NOT agreed, or is taking days in excess of an agreed family holiday
N	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for a reason that has not yet been provided
O	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for an unauthorised absence not covered by any other code/description
U	Unauthorised absence as pupil arrived after registers closed
D	Dual registered (at another establishment - NOT counted in possible attendance)
X	Not required to be in school - for non-compulsory school age children
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances - not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances
#	Planned whole or partial school closure - NOT counted in possible attendances
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Attendance	Actions/Support
100%	Letter home for excellent attendance and certificate of praise (individual school rewards).
99% – 97%	Courtesy letter informing parents attendance is good.
96% - 91%	Attendance letter home requesting meeting with school attendance officer and or /SLT Recorded on CPOMS.
90% and below	Formal meeting with School Attendance Officer and or SLT. Attendance contract will be considered or referral to Education Welfare Service.
85% and below	Attendance contract will be put in place and a referral to the Education Welfare Service if there is a lack of engagement.

Overall attendance level	Number of days lost each year	Impact on child's education
97%+	5 days or less	Children have every chance to make really strong progress at school
95%	10 days	These children benefit from strong overall attendance and are well placed to make good progress at school.
90%	19 days	Children in this group are missing a month of school per year, it will be difficult for them to achieve their best.
85%	29 days	Children in this year group are missing 6 weeks of school per year. There is a real risk that this will hinder a child's progress.
80%	38 days	Children in this group are not benefitting from their right to be educated. Parents in this group could be issued a penalty notice.

September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you have all had a great summer and your children have settled into their new classes.

I am writing to you regarding attendance and Merrydale's expectations.

Our school day **starts at 8.30am** and **finishes at 3.20pm**. We politely request that parents and carers ensure children arrive at 8.30am promptly and are collected on time at 3.20pm.

If your child's attendance drops below 95% we shall send you a letter with our concerns. If your child's attendance drops below 90% we will request that you attend a meeting in school. In this meeting we will look at how their attendance can be improved by working jointly with parents removing any barriers to your child achieving excellent attendance. We shall then have a written contract between school and the family with the focus on supporting you as a family to improve attendance. Studies show that children who attend school regularly and on time achieve greater attainment than those who have poor attendance.

Please be aware there have been significant changes to how the local authority deal with unauthorised absences.

The following changes came into force for Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised absence that occurred after 19th August 2024.

- Any absence during term time is highly likely to receive a fixed penalty notice. The penalty notice will be issued at the cost of **£160 per parent per child (discounted to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days for the first offence)** or your case will be referred by the Local Authority directly to the Magistrates' Court.
- The second time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be **£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days with no discount.**
- The third time an offence is committed for term time leave or irregular attendance a penalty notice will not be issued. **The case will proceed to the Magistrates' Court.**

If your child has an absence of 20 days or more, the Local Authority has advised that a Penalty Notice is unlikely to be issued and **the matter is likely to proceed to the Magistrates' Court for prosecution action instead.**

- The Local Authority has advised that where a parent is found guilty, or where the case is proven against the parent, that this is likely to result in a fine (up to £2500 per parent, per child) and the parent receiving a criminal record.
- Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days and for fewer days where this has happened before.

From this term we will have incentives for those children who have excellent attendance, and we will let you know via our newsletter when this will happen.

If you have any queries around attendance, please contact Kate Hodgkinson.

Kind regards,

K Hodgkinson

Kate Hodgkinson
Family & Attendance Support Worker
Merrydale Junior School
Claydon Road
Leicester
LE5 0PL
0116 276 7708

This form must be completed before the Headteacher can consider your application for absence. Please complete ALL sections of the form and attach evidence of travel and/or accommodation.

- On receipt of the completed form the Headteacher will consider your request, and you will be notified of the decision made.

To the Headteacher of Merrydale Junior School

I wish to apply for:

Name of child: Class

First day of absence

Last day of absence

Reason for request:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Country travelling to

Contact number whilst away

Travel documents attached: YES/NO

I understand that:

- The law allows for absence to be granted only in exceptional circumstances.
- A fixed penalty notice may be issued by the Educational Welfare Service for unauthorised absence. A Penalty Notice of £160 per parent, per child (discounted to £80 if paid within 21 days), or your case may be referred by the local authority directly to the Magistrates' Court.
- Extended absence may result in your child losing their school place.

Signed (parent/carer):..... Date:.....

Authorised

Unauthorised

Signed Headteacher: Date:

Penalty Notice Fines for School Absence are changing



With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice fines issued for unauthorised absence that occurs after 19 August 2024.

Per Parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice fines will be issued to each parent, for each child who was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave will result in **each** parent receiving 3 **separate** fines.

5 Consecutive Days of Term Time Leave

Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days, and for fewer days where this has happened before.

10 Sessions of Unauthorised Absence in a 10-week period

Penalty Notice fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of **absence in a 10-week period**.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.

(No option to pay at £80 level)

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued. The case will proceed to the Magistrates' court. Magistrate's fines can be up to £2,500 per parent, per child.

Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate and may impact on job applications and travel abroad.

Court prosecutions: Penalty Notices will not automatically be issued. Parents are advised that where the LA considers that a Penalty Notice is not appropriate due to the level of concern about a child's absence, prosecution action may be taken.

By law, all Penalty Notice payments go to the local authority and not to schools.

Dear Parent,

Absences from school

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent high levels of absence from school.

Their current attendance has fallen to [percentage]. Falling below 95% attendance will likely have an impact on their academic achievement.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help them to address gaps in learning due to absence.

Please contact the school office on [number] as soon as you can so we can arrange to discuss this.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher



Merrydale Junior School
Tel: 0116 2767708

althv School office@dsatmerrydale.org

Claydon Road, Leicester, LE5 0PL
Fax: 0116 2762820

www.merrydalejuniors.com



Dear Parent,

Unauthorised absence from school

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent unauthorised [absence/absences] from school.

[Name] has been absent from school for a total of [number] unauthorised sessions ([number] days) on the following dates:

[date]

[date]

[date]

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

Amend the line below based on your local authority's code of conduct for penalty notices:

Please note that unauthorised absences can result in a penalty notice being issued if your child has more than [number] unauthorised absences within [time period]. You can find more information about penalty notices in our school attendance policy. Copies of the policy are on the school website, or available from the school office.

Please contact the school office on [number] as soon as you can so we can arrange to discuss this.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher



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Dear Parent,

Poor punctuality

I'm writing to you because [name] has been late to school [number] times in [timeframe].

They have arrived at school after the register had closed on the following dates:

They also arrived at school late (but before the register had closed) on the following dates:

The school day begins promptly at 8.55am and registration closes at 9.10am.

Arriving promptly makes sure that your child doesn't miss work, and that disruption to the teacher and other pupils is minimised. Persistent lateness can lead to a significant loss in learning time.

Persistent lateness can result in a penalty notice.

We're committed to working with families to make sure every pupil gets the support they need. We would therefore like to arrange a meeting to discuss how we can work with you to help improve [name's] punctuality.

Please contact the school office on 0116 276 7708 to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher



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Relevant legislation:

- [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
 - [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
 - [Education Act 1996 - Legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk)
 - [Children Act 1989 - Legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk)
 - [Crime and Disorder Act 1998 - Legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk)
 - [Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 - Legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk)
 - [**Education and Inspections Act 2006 - Legislation.gov.uk**](https://legislation.gov.uk)
 - [Sentencing Act 2020 - Legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk)
 - [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](https://legislation.gov.uk)
 - [The Education \(Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders\) ...](https://legislation.gov.uk)
 - [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](https://legislation.gov.uk)
 - [Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour](https://legislation.gov.uk)
 - [Children missing education - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)
 - [Keeping children safe in education 2022](https://gov.uk)
 - [Elective home education - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)
 - [Alternative provision - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)
 - [Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral ...](https://gov.uk)
 - [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)
-
- [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school](https://gov.uk)
 - [Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)