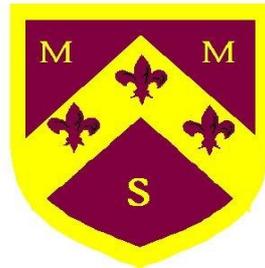


BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL



# MAIDS MORETON CE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

March 2020



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



## **1. Introduction**

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

Maids Moreton CE School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Maids Moreton CE School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

We believe that appropriate attendance and punctuality helps children learn good routines of behaviour and disciplines for adult life. It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to ensure that their children attend school at the times specified. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority and schools to promote good attendance at school and to have systems in place to keep accurate records of school attendance.

Maids Moreton CE School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusion. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

## **2. Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or

- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

### 3. Categorising Absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone, email, Parentmail or in person at the school office on the first day and each subsequent day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. If a child is absent and the school has not been notified by 9.20am, the school administrator/bursar will telephone the parents/carers and record the outcomes in the register.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases a telephone call, email, Parentmail from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness, e.g. letter from a doctor.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day, before and/or after the appointment.

#### Other Authorised Circumstances:

The exceptional circumstances in which a pupil may be marked as unable to attend are where:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause at a time when pupils are due to attend e.g. weather conditions, snow, flooding.
- In the case of a pupil for whom transport to school is provided by the school or an LA, and whose home is not within walking distance of the school, that transport is not available e.g. weather conditions, snow, flooding, non-availability of fuel (rationing), health related emergency.
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school e.g. natural disaster, air travel disruption because of volcanic eruption.
- A family bereavement or the child and his family attending the funeral of a close relative/family member.
- Specified religious observance-see below.

Service families taking holidays in term time is also considered as exceptional.

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Late Arrival: Registration begins at 9am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9.20. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. (Code M)

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry. (Code U)

Unauthorised absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

Leave of Absence and Extended Leave:

Maids Moreton CE School adopts a zero tolerance approach to holidays taken during term time. Parents are strongly encouraged to arrange their family holidays during the school holidays so that their child's education is not compromised.

Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before arrangements are made on the standard proforma provided by the school office. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. The Head Teacher keeps a log of parental requests for holiday leave during term time. This enables her to monitor any patterns and multiple requests for leave throughout the time the child is in school.

Leave will **only be granted in exceptional circumstances**. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil

- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice.

### Religious Observance

Maids Moreton CE School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R)

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

### Traveller Absence:

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Maids Moreton CE School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at Maids Moreton CE School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Maids Moreton CE School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Maids Moreton CE School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

#### **4. Recording Attendance**

- The administrator/bursar records the attendance data every week using the software SIMS.Net Attendance. This gives data on absences and lateness of both kinds.
- The administrator /bursar is responsible for monitoring absence and lateness from week to week. Any emerging patterns are notified to the Head teacher. The school will then contact the parents to discuss the attendance concerns.
- The school regularly informs and reminds parents of their responsibilities regarding attendance.
- Teachers are expected to total the number of children present for quick checking in the case of an evacuation.
- Absences of any kind are shown on the child's end of year report.
- The Head teacher will deal with persistent lateness, with or without explanation by meeting with the parents and/or letters home.
- The official school attendance figures are printed termly and filed in the office. Attendance figures are also captured during the termly School Census. The school also publishes its own attendance figures in pupils' reports and the Head Teacher's termly report to governors.

## **5. Deletions from the Register**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

Maids Moreton CE School will follow Buckinghamshire County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

Maids Moreton CE School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Head Teacher, class teachers, administrator and Governing Body will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress

- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of booking the holiday.

## **7. Using Attendance Data**

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Every half term the Attendance Administrator will provide the head teacher with attendance data for the previous half term for each pupil on roll. The list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attendees at the top;

This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Maids Moreton CE School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## **8. Support Systems**

Maids Moreton CE School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Maids Moreton CE School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors/Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

## 9. Legal Sanctions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Maids Moreton CE School will notify the County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance.

The County Attendance Team or school, may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/.carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

**This policy was re-adopted by the Governing Body in March 2020.  
Review date: March 2023**

## Intervention Flow Chart

School will notify parent of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve.

If you receive a letter informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should

- Speak with your child to see if there are any reasons why they are reluctant to attend
- Contact the school to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing.
  - Ensure your child attends school regularly

If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the school may refer to the County Attendance Team

The County Attendance Team will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.

A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the Local Authority aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.

Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular, the County Attendance team may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

If you are issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent/carer, per child this must be paid in full within 21 days otherwise the Penalty will increase to £120 per parent/carer, per child. If you fail to pay the Penalty by the 28<sup>th</sup> day, the Education Welfare Service may instigate legal proceedings against you.

If you are found guilty of this offence you can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.