

Mountjoy School

Attendance Policy - Pupils

March 2023



This is a Dorset Council Policy
Reviewed by: Senior Leadership Team

Date: March 2023
Date of next review: March 2024

At Mountjoy School, we believe that education is essential for all. We recognise that punctual and regular school attendance is an essential to social inclusion and effective learning. We believe that children should attend school regularly and punctually because school plays a vital part in their learning and enables them to reach their full potential.

We rely on our partnership with parents/carers to ensure that this is achieved. We would ask parents/carers to help the school by notifying us of all absences on the first day and always to ensure that any absence is covered by a note on your child's return to school. Any absence for an essential appointment, which is known in advance, should be notified to the school in writing beforehand.

Parents and Carers' Responsibility

Parents and carers have a primary role in ensuring the attendance of pupils. Good examples of attendance and timekeeping by staff and parents/carers provide role models for pupils. Parents/carers are notified about the importance of attendance and timekeeping. They are responsible for ensuring regular attendance and the importance of notifying the school office of absences.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

It is for the school, not the parent/carer, to decide whether or not to authorise any absences. The school will not authorise absences in the following circumstances:

- Where no explanation is given by a parent/carer
- For extended visits overseas
- For holidays during term time
- For shopping trips, for example to purchase school shoes
- For leisure days out
- Where it is believed a parent is condoning an unnecessary absence.

Head Teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head Teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head Teacher's discretion, but most absences due to a family holiday will be marked as unauthorised. The regulations do not allow for retrospective approval. Therefore, any absence request must be received in writing at least two weeks prior to the date of the holiday. A 'Request for time off school' form is available from the school office.

School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) School Attendance Guidance (Aug 2020) states that schools must take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes (see appendix A).

Only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the Head Teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the Head Teacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absence are recorded as a result).

If leave of absence is taken without the request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct, where there have been 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence recorded. If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority may instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

Appendix

Attendance will be reviewed at SLT meetings weekly and an Attendance File will be maintained.

Pupils who have a score of 100% attendance during a half term will have a Good News postcard sent home. Pupils who have an average below 90% will have a letter of support/concern sent home, unless the attendance is due to a known medical issue.

Throughout the half term, telephone calls home regarding attendance issues will be made and, if necessary, meetings convened.

**This policy complies with Working together to improve school attendance:
Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local
authorities
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