



*"Where learning is alive!"*

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## Attendance Policy

### Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is vitally important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Minworth Junior and Infant school fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time for the duration of the school day, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of time available.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently, develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

### Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children to the best of our capability, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.

- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

### Definitions

#### **Authorised absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received appropriate notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

#### **Unauthorised absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without a legitimate reason accepted by the school, even with the support of a parent. The school's decision on this is final.

The school abides by LA guidelines when recording absence as authorised or unauthorised.

### Procedures

Our school will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

1. To maintain appropriate registration processes.
2. To maintain appropriate attendance data.

3. To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
4. To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
5. To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
6. To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
7. To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
8. To work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance and punctuality.
9. To refer to the appropriate service, any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
10. To report attendance statistics to the LA and the DfE where requested.
11. All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the head teacher or, in his absence, the SLT.

### **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

#### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the head teacher where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Discussing attendance issues at parents' evenings where necessary.

#### **Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance with the office manager and analysis of trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Ensuring families are contacted where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

#### **The school office manager**

The school office manager is responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Ensuring registers are accurately completed using the appropriate code.
- Overall weekly monitoring of school attendance with the head teacher.

- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence and pursuing this where it is not provided.
- Ensuring absence and late records are completed.
- Ensuring that parents of absent children are contacted where school has not been informed.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Head teacher.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

## **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment which cannot be arranged outside of school time.
- Contacting the school office on every morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we request evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary, with the understanding that these will not automatically be authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

### **Registration**

The school gates are opened to receive children at 8.45 am until 9.00 am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register is completed by the class teacher from 8.55am and is closed at 9.05am. In the afternoon, the register is completed at 1.30pm by Rec and KS1 class teachers and at 1.00pm by KS2 class teachers. For both phases, the afternoon register closes 10 minutes after it has been opened. When completing registers, teachers will record any absence with an 'N' code, to be amended by the office manager later.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

### **Lateness**

Once the gates are closed at 9am, the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9.00am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.00am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M). Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

### **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on each day of a child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence, it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences. Following the absence, it is important that we receive accurate written information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

### **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.05am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

### **Safeguarding concerns**

Where the school has followed its policy and protocol but has not heard of the whereabouts of a particular child for a period of time, the school will follow local authority guidance and carry out reasonable enquiries as to the child's absence. This reasonable enquiry will include the following:

- First day calling for all absent children without prior authorisation / information.
- If first day calling is unsuccessful, other family members on the child's file will be contacted.
- If the child is known to be in receipt of Children's Services intervention or support, they will be contacted for information, either directly through any allocated workers or through MASH.

If all of the above is unsuccessful or if the school has continued concerns for the child's wellbeing, it will endeavour to make a home visit to ensure the child is safe and well. This will usually occur after a period of five consecutive day's absence but can occur sooner at the school's discretion, if authorised by the Head teacher or Pastoral Leader. Home visits will always be conducted by school staff, at least one of whom will be a senior leader, usually accompanied by one of the learning mentors. If school feels it is inappropriate or unsafe to conduct a safe and well check, the school may request the police to

undertake this or make a referral to MASH. When safe and well checks are conducted by school staff, strict protocol must be followed in the best interests of and safety for school staff. See Appendix B for School Safe and Well/ Home Visits procedures.

- Any child whose whereabouts are unknown will be referred as a Child Missing in Education to **the Left School No Trace Team** as soon as concerns arise and no more than five days from the first day of absence.

### **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send work home so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to make the necessary arrangements are in place for the child to continue their education.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries. For repeated illnesses, the school may make a referral to the school nurse for additional support.

### **Parental Request for Absence from School**

On the rare occasions that parents request absence from school during term time, a letter should be collected from the school office (or downloaded from our website) indicating when the absence will be and the reason for it. Parents are asked to complete this as accurately as possible. With effect from September 2013, the government abolished the right of Headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays taken during term time. Instead, Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

### **Persistent Absence**

Persistent absence refers to any child whose attendance drops below 90%. Persistent absence is taken very seriously as it seriously limits children's opportunities and can be indicative of child protection concerns. School monitors persistent absence extremely rigorously.

### **Monitoring Attendance And Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 97%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary schools, we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance,

parents are always informed of our concerns. Our office staff, has the responsibility for ensuring that all attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents. Initially, concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to take the appropriate course of action including referring to the Education Welfare service (EWS). It is the legal responsibility of parents to ensure their children attend school regularly and failure to do so, could result in EWS taking legal action over the issue, the outcome of which could involve issuing penalty notices to parents as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

At Minworth, attendance is monitored weekly by the headteacher and office manager. Together they will identify and monitor children with low attendance (usually below 92%) and directly address these issues through communication with parents and adhering to the local authorities' attendance procedures (Spotlight on attendance.)

If there are health concerns around a child with low attendance (below 95%) school will make a referral to the School Nurse Team.

### **Encouraging Positive Attendance**

In addition to monitoring attendance, the school also offers rewards and incentives to encourage children to attend school as frequently as possible. Each week the class with the highest attendance is announced in merit assembly, the outcome of which is collated at the end of term and the winning class rewarded by the Headteacher or senior leadership team. In addition to this, children are also encouraged to strive for 100% attendance being rewarded with a bronze certificate if they are on track after the autumn term, silver if they remain on track after spring term and then gold if they earn 100% for the duration of the year. 100% attendance achievers for the year will also be rewarded with a gift certificate as recognition of their achievement. Children receiving 100% attendance for the entire year and who have been at the school for a minimum of two terms will be awarded a gift voucher.

## Appendix A: Spotlight on attendance letters

### **Leave in Term Time – Legal Guidance for Parents/ Carers**

It is essential for children to be in school regularly to benefit fully from their educational opportunities. Good attendance will ensure that children can reach their full potential. To achieve this, children need to attend school every day. We are sure you would not jeopardise your children's academic progress by taking them away during term time.

The importance of school attendance is such the law has now changed and Head teachers may now only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional. This is in line with Birmingham Local Authority's 'Leave in term Time Guidance' and the 2013 Amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations.

For example:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)

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.

If you have exceptional circumstances which have lead you to request leave in term time for your child/ren, please complete the required form, which you can obtain from School. The Head Teacher will then make a decision on whether or not the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

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

#### **Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:**

Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60.

- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.
- If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.

#### **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 each parent up to £1,000 per child, 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.
- 'Parent' includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether or not that person lives with the child) or who has care of him/her.

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

Ref: HT Request denied letter

Date:

«ParentTitle» «ParentFirstName» «ParentLastName»

«AddressLine1»  
«AddressLine2»  
«City»  
«PostCode»

Dear «ParentTitle» «ParentLastName»

**Re: «ChildFirstName» «ChildLastName» - D.O.B. «ChildDOB»  
Yr «YearGroup» at «SchoolName»**

I am unable to grant your request for your child/ren named above to be absent from school due to leave during term time.

I assure you that I have made this decision with the best interests of your child/ren in mind. I will not authorise this absence.

The importance of school attendance is such that leave of this kind will only be granted where the circumstances are exceptional. This is in accordance with Birmingham Local Authority's 'Leave in Term Time Guidance' and a 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

If you now take your child out of school it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. Please understand that this may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

In addition, if a pupil takes unauthorised leave in term time without the Head Teacher's authorisation, and does not return to school within 20 school days the pupil may be deleted from the school register on the 21st day.

**This means your child would not have a place at this School.**

It is essential for your child/ren to be in school regularly to benefit fully from their educational opportunities. Good attendance will ensure that your child can reach his/her full potential. To achieve this, your child needs to attend school every day.

We are sure you would not wish to jeopardise your child's academic progress by taking them away at this time. Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher  
Enclosure: copy of 'Leave of Absence Request Form'

**EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES - LEAVE IN TERM TIME REQUEST**

Pupil's Name: ..... D.O.B: ..... Year: .....

I request permission for the above named pupil(s) to be granted leave during the school term.  
Reason for request

.....  
.....

.....  
Dates of Absence

From: ..... To: ..... No of school days: .....

I/We understand that if leave is agreed:

- if travelling abroad, I / we will supply a copy of the return travel documentation.
- I / we will supply the name and phone number of a contact person whilst abroad.
- if I / we do not return at the agreed time; I / we am / are aware that I / we may be issued with a penalty notice, and could be fined £60 or £120 depending on how soon payment is made. If I do not pay the fine, I / we could then be required to attend Court; this could result in a fine of up to £1000 per child and having a criminal record.
- after four weeks of absence my / our child/ren may be removed from the school register and I / we will then be responsible for finding a new school on my / our return.

<b>Parent/Carer Name:</b> ..... <b>Address:</b> ..... ..... <b>Signature:</b> ..... <b>Date:</b> .....	<b>Parent/Carer Name:</b> ..... <b>Address:</b> ..... ..... <b>Signature:</b> ..... <b>Date:</b> .....
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Request **agreed / denied**

Signed: ..... Head Teacher      Dated: .....

Our Ref: Leaveintermtime/DLPLetter1

Date:

«ParentTitle» «ParentFirstName» «ParentLastName»  
«AddressLine1»  
«AddressLine2»  
«City»

«PostCode»

Dear «ParentTitle» «ParentLastName»

I understand that you intend to take name of «ChildFirstName» «ChildLastName», «ChildDOB» on leave during term time without the authorisation of the Head Teacher. You were informed that any leave during term time would only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Please see enclosed Head Teacher's letter of refusal which was sent to you recently.

If you now take your child out of school it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This is in line with the Birmingham Local Authority 'Leave in Term Time Guidance', a copy of which you can request to see at School. Please understand that this may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

Frequent absence can add up to a considerable amount of lost learning and can seriously disadvantage your child in adult life. Good attendance will ensure that your child can reach their full potential. Absence disrupts the education of the individual pupil and the whole class. Children who do not attend regularly do not achieve well in exams and find it difficult to maintain friendships.

***I have to advise you as a parent/carer of a child of statutory school age, you have a legal responsibility to ensure full time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs the child may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (Education Act 1996 Section 444).***

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me on the number below. If you call and I am not available, please leave a message and telephone number.

Yours sincerely,

«School\_Representative»

Job Title

Enclosures:

copy of Leave of Absence Request Form and Head Teacher Letter of Refusal

Our Ref: Leaveintermtime/DLPLetter2<sup>(a)</sup>

Date:

Dear «ParentTitle» «ParentLastName»

Your child «ChildFirstName» «ChildLastName», «ChildDOB» has now been absent from «Schoolname» School for «number of days» days which is the same as «number of sessions» sessions. I wrote to you on «date of first letter» and informed you that taking leave, which had not been agreed by the Head Teacher, would be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Unless your child returns to school by «15<sup>th</sup> School days date» the matter will be referred to Court Section, Birmingham Education Welfare Service and may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me on the number below. If you call and I am not available, please leave a message and telephone number.

Yours sincerely,

«School\_Representative»  
Job Title

Our Ref: Leaveintermtime/DLPLetter2<sup>(b)</sup>

Date:  
«ParentTitle» «ParentFirstName» «ParentLastName»  
«AddressLine1»  
«AddressLine2»  
«City»  
«PostCode»

Dear «ParentTitle» «ParentLastName»

Your child «ChildFirstName» «ChildLastName», «ChildDOB» has now been absent from «Schoolname» School for a further «number of days» days. I wrote to you on «date of first letter» and informed you that taking leave, which had not been agreed by the Head Teacher, would be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Unless your child returns to school by «10<sup>th</sup> School days date» the matter will be referred to Court Section, Birmingham Education Welfare Service and may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and/or legal action being taken.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me on the number below. If you call and I am not available, please leave a message and telephone number.

Yours sincerely,

«School\_Representative»  
Job Title

Our Ref: Leaveintermtime/DLPLetter3

Date:

«ParentTitle» «ParentFirstName» «ParentLastName»  
«AddressLine1»  
«AddressLine2»  
«City»  
«PostCode»

Dear «ParentTitle» «ParentLastName»

Your child «ChildFirstName» «ChildLastName», «ChildDOB» has not returned to «Schoolname» School as advised in my letter dated «date of second letter».

I have informed you previously: **that as a parent/carer of a child of statutory school age, you have a legal responsibility to ensure full time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs the child may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (Education Act 1996 Section 444).**

I am now submitting the documentation to Court Section, Birmingham Education Welfare Service and may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken. If you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me on the number below. If you call and I am not available, please leave a message and telephone number.

Yours sincerely,

School Representative  
Job Title

#### Appendix B: School Safe and Well/ Home Visits Procedure

- 1 School has concerns around a child's non-attendance.
- 2 School has made first day calls and either has no answer from parents/carers or still hold concerns.
- 3 Headteacher/Pastoral Lead conclude that a home visit is required.
- 4 Headteacher/ Pastoral Lead decide whether a school home visit or police safe and well check is the best course of action.
- 5 A member of SLT conducts a home visit with a Learning Mentor.

Staff notify the School Office of the address that they will be visiting, ensure that they have a mobile phone with them and leave an indication of the time that they are due back to school.

Staff wear Minworth School fleece/ jackets and school ID to ensure that they are recognisable to parents.

Staff discuss concerns with parents/carers and ensure that the child is seen.

On return to school, staff log the visit immediately on CPOMS.

If required, further intervention within school is carried out or referrals to outside agencies are made.

If a police safe and well check has been requested, it is imperative that the outcome of this check is followed up.