



MY Schools Together **Attendance Policy**

The MY Schools Together federation seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive an education which enables them to maximise opportunities to reach his or her full potential. Research shows there is evidence of a strong link between good attendance and increased attainment. Pupils who regularly attend school make much better progress both socially and academically. Regular attendance enables pupils to adapt better to routines, schoolwork, and friendship groups. Therefore, those pupils will have a positive experience of learning and a more successful transition from primary to secondary and beyond to further education and training.

MY Schools Together aims to work in partnership with parents and other agencies to strive towards every child reaching 96% to ensure that each child can get the best out of the educational opportunities provided.

By working in partnership with parents and other agencies, we can ensure that we have clear and robust strategies in place to manage and promote regular attendance, for all pupils at Mather Street Primary School and Yew Tree Community School.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

- The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.
- Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Aims

At Mather Street Primary School and Yew Tree Community School we will:

- create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- have clear procedures in place which encourage pupils to achieve their maximum potential by maintaining good attendance and punctuality.
- establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- ensure parent/carers and pupils are informed about the procedures for attendance and encourage them to take an active role in promoting good attendance and punctuality.
- recognise and reward pupils who achieve attendance and punctuality targets throughout the academic year
- ensure all our staff and governors are fully aware of, and clear about, the actions necessary to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- allocate resources to support the policy.
- protect the most vulnerable pupils by providing the support necessary to maintain good attendance and punctuality.
- ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception age children to promote good habits at an early age.

To manage and promote regular attendance MY Schools Together will:

- keep parents updated on the school's overall attendance and the individual pupil's attendance via letters home, newsletters, text messages, social media and the school's website.
- report to parents how their child is achieving in school and how their child's attendance is impacting on this via regular parents' meetings.
- celebrate good and improved attendance and reward this through competitions, certificates, prizes and events.
- notify parents when we are worried about their child's attendance.
- utilise attendance data, analysing patterns and trends to target attendance and punctuality improvement across pupil cohorts or individual pupils, to reduce persistent or severe absence from school.
- support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

Absence/ Illness

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 the equivalent of two whole terms of learning.

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that:

- if a child is absent from school, the school office is notified on the first day of absence before 9.30am. This can be done via telephone, text message or email to the school office email address.
- as far as possible any medical or dental appointments are made outside of the school day so as not to disrupt learning time. If this is unavoidable, parents should provide evidence of the appointment with school.
- They liaise with school staff to highlight any potential issues that may affect the attendance or punctuality of their child e.g., sick parent, emotional wellbeing.

Punctuality

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that the children are punctual. At Yew Tree, lessons begin promptly at 8:45am and school finishes at 3:15pm. At Mather Street, lessons begin promptly at 8:50am and school finishes at 3:20pm. The doors open 10 minutes before lessons start so that parents who have 2 children in different parts of the building have plenty of time to drop both off before learning starts.

If the child is late for school, they should be dropped off by an adult at the office and a reason entered onto the school's Inventory System.

Parents should ensure that the children are picked up promptly at the end of school.

Absence for holidays

In line with the statutory guidance from the DfE 'Working Together to Improve Attendance' it is the expectation of the federation that all holidays should be taken out of term time to minimise the impact on children's education.

If there are exceptional circumstances, then parents must contact the school and discuss the situation with the Head of School. All applications for exceptional leave will be considered on a case-by-case basis and a decision will be made and discussed with the parents before leaving.

All holidays will be classed as unauthorised. A fixed penalty notice may be issued, by the SAIS, of £160 per pupil, per parent which will be reduced to £80 per pupil, per parent if paid within 21 days.

To put this into context, if a parent/carer takes a pupil out of school without authorised leave of absence in term time for 5 days or more from September 2024, then a family with two parents would receive a penalty of £320 per child. This is halved if paid within 21 days for the first instance.

If the absence is longer than 20 school days, then the child may be taken off role in line with LA policy.

Unexplained absences

When a child is absent from school and no reason has been given, the federation staff will follow the graduated response below:

Step 1	On the first day of the absence, the office staff will attempt to contact the parents via the text messaging service. If the parents do not respond, they will attempt to phone parents to gain information about the absence.
Step 2	On the second day of the absence, if the parents are still unable to be contacted, the school will repeat the process of step 1. If the parents are unable to be contacted via phone, a member/s of the pastoral team will complete a home visit. If the parents are not at home at the time, they will post a letter through the door asking them to contact the school.
Step 3	On the third day of the absence if there has still not been any contact, they will repeat step 2. Failure to make contact will result in the school escalating the incident to the SAIS and/or requesting a welfare check.
Step 4	On returning to school the pastoral team will arrange a meeting with the parents to reiterate the federation's policy and expectations around attendance; support will be offered to ensure that that their child is in school.
Step 5	If the child's attendance continues to become an issue, the parents will be asked to attend a meeting with a member of the SLT to discuss the concerns relating to their child's attendance. This may result in a fixed penalty notice and a referral to the SAIS.

Penalty Notices

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

- The threshold at which a penalty notice **must** be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period. This may include absences because of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or school years.
- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Rewards

To promote good attendance, children with 100% attendance will be rewarded half-termly. This will acknowledge their family's commitment to their child's education; the rewards will be presented by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. By rewarding children, we aim to develop an ethos where children are enthusiastic about attending school.

Furthermore, there will be class challenges to encourage children to work together to improve attendance.

Periodically, there will be additional rewards to refocus the children and make sure that good attendance remains a key priority.

Working together to improve attendance

The federation aspires to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents. The priority is to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families to successfully treat the root causes of absence and remove the barriers to attendance. We rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) so all parties can work together to resolve them as soon as possible before they become entrenched.

Discussions with pupils and parents to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance take place so that there is an agreement on how all partners can work together to resolve them. This may involve accessing early help or support from external agencies.

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

September 2024

Approved by Governors – October 2024