



## MUDEFORD INFANT SCHOOL

### School Attendance Policy

What the law says about school attendance.

#### **The law states that it is:**

The responsibility of parents to ensure that compulsory school aged children (5 to 16 years) access an appropriate educational provision

BCP Council's duty to ensure that parents are fulfilling their responsibilities and if they fail to do so then we have a statutory power to intervene - where appropriate this intervention may be legal action.

BCP writes it is important children attend school because:

- attendance has a direct link to attainment. If a child is not in school regularly they are not fully accessing the curriculum and learning opportunities available to them
- achieving at school builds a child's self-esteem, as well as enhancing their future prospects
- attending school and being part of the school's community gives a child a sense of belonging and promotes their social development
- spending time with school staff teaches a child about society's expectations with regards to behaviour and how to communicate with people in authority preparing them for adult life
- attending school gives a child the opportunity to experience positive separation from their parent(s)/carer(s), which builds their confidence and resistance

BCP Council provides legal guidance regarding children being absent from school.

#### **Principles at Mudford Infant and Mudford Junior School**

Mudford Infants School and Mudford Junior School have an expectation of 100% attendance.

Children should be in school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence of the parent. All schools in Christchurch recognise the extensive research that shows good attendance in school strongly correlates to successful educational outcomes. We also recognise that good attendance habits are formed at an early age and a co-ordinated and consistent approach to attendance will ensure students will maintain these habits as they enter the employment beyond their education.

Both schools expect good attendance from its students, to enable them to make the most of the opportunities the schools have to offer. We rely on our partnership with parents to make sure this is achieved. Both schools are committed to acknowledging good attendance.

#### **When does the school day start and finish?**

The school day begins at 8:45am and register takes place at 8:55am (closing at 9:05am). The school day finishes at 3:00pm. If your child arrives after the register closing time they will be marked as late. If your child arrives after 9.30am this will be marked as an unauthorised absence for the morning session. When children are frequently late they miss

the start of learning, often arrive at school not ready to learn and find it difficult to come into class after everyone else has settled for the day

### **Processes for notifying and requesting absence from school**

Parents are required to help the school by notifying them of all unplanned absences on the first day with a verbal message to either the school reception or the school attendance line (whichever is applicable to your child's school), or via email to the school office. Parents must continue to notify the school daily to explain their child's absence unless the length of absence has already been determined and explained from the outset. Any absence which is known in advance such as medical appointments should be notified to the school in writing beforehand. In the case of an un-notified absence, a member of staff from the school office will contact parents and will continue to do so until an explanation for the absence is provided. If the absence remains unexplained then it will be coded as unauthorised.

If parents plan to take their child out of school during term time, then a form must be completed and given to the school office. The headteacher will, in exceptional circumstances, authorise the absence but they will usually mark the absence as unauthorised.

### **Authorised Absences** include:

- Illness that deems a child 'unfit' for school (school must be notified on the first day of absence).
- Medical or dental appointments which cannot be arranged out of school hours.
- Days of religious observance
- Leave of absence in exceptional circumstances as agreed by the Headteacher

*Should a parent believe absence should be authorised but does not meet the above criteria it is vital that they contact the school to discuss the absence well in advance.*

If attendance falls below 90% as a result of a child being deemed 'unfit' for school, then parents will be requested to obtain a medical note from a medical professional on a termly basis.

A Headteacher **will not grant** any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

### **Unauthorised absences**

All other absence from school will be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Monitoring attendance**

Government legislation enforces schools to monitor attendance and intervene should the need arise, with the support of the Local Authority if necessary. This intervention may begin once attendance drops below 95% (refer to Mundeford Infant School attendance flowchart).

Mundeford Infants School and Mundeford Junior School have to report both to governors and local authorities on attendance patterns at regular stages throughout the year and work closely with the local authorities to support good attendance. All schools have a statutory requirement to follow up poor attendance and will refer individual cases of poor attendance to their Local Authority and this can be done without the permission of parents.

### **Child Missing from Education**

What will be done when children stop attending school, school has been unable to contact those children and they are believed to have left the area without parents notifying the school or the children are missing?

- The school will try to make telephone contact.
- The school will write to the known home address.
- The school could make a home visit if appropriate.
- The school will make informal enquiries to relations or friends of the child and if the child has been missing, with no contact from parents or carers and no information as to where the child is for 11 days, a Child Missing Education Form will be completed and sent to BCP.

- On receipt of such a referral the Child Missing Education representative in the Local Authority will complete checks to locate the child.
- The school will inform the Child Missing Education representative if the child returns to school.
- If the school has any Child Protection concerns about the child, it will follow the Child Protection Procedures and contact social care immediately

## **Responsibilities**

The attendance champion for the school is Daniel Pope (Headteacher) supported by Kimberley Voss (Pastoral Leader)

Students: During the primary phase this is a shared responsibility with parents:

- Have a responsibility to attend school regularly, on time, properly equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- Have a responsibility to ensure that their lifestyle beyond school does not, in any way, adversely affect their ability to attend school regularly, punctually and in a fit condition to learn. During the primary phase this is a shared responsibility with parents.

Parents:

- Have a legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents must notify the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- A student's absence will be considered unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation has been given.
- Parents should work with the school to support good attendance and commit to meeting with the school should a child's attendance cause concern.

Schools:

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team to monitor attendance.

Responsibilities include:

- Overall monitoring of individual and whole school absenteeism.
- Contacting parents to share concerns regarding high level or inappropriate absences or persistent lateness.
- Authorising leave of absence on behalf of the governing body.
- Making referrals to BCP Attendance Service who represents the Local Authority.
- Liaison with external agencies such as Social Care as appropriate.
- Reporting to parents, the governing body and the Local Authority as appropriate.
- Making decisions concerning school closure in line with Local Authority guidance.
- Informing the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, following the authority's procedures for a Child Missing Education.
- Developing strategies and incentives to promote good attendance.

Governors:

- Will monitor overall attendance figures.
- Work with the Headteacher and staff to improve attendance as required.

BCP Council state:

Every moment in school counts and days missed add up quickly. Evidence shows that pupils who have good attendance enjoy better wellbeing and school performance than those who don't.

There are only a few circumstances where a child is allowed to miss school, such as illness or where the school has given permission because of an exceptional circumstance.

However, if your child misses school without a good reason, local councils and schools can intervene and you may be issued a fine.

It's important to acknowledge that children with long-term medical or more serious mental health conditions, and those with special educational needs and disabilities may face additional barriers.

For children who face complex barriers to attendance, schools should have sensitive conversations with children and families and work with them to put support in place for their individual needs.

### **How much could I be fined if my child misses school?**

Under the national framework, all schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons within a rolling 10 school week period.

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be **£80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.**

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

Money raised via fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.

### **What if my child needs to miss school?**

Your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day. If there is an extended period or pattern of absence due to illness, the school will contact you to discuss this. The school may arrange a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting in consultation with the BCP attendance officer and school nursing team regarding the health of your child. The school may also consider whether additional support from other external partners (including school nursing services, the local authority, children and young people's mental health services, GPs or other health services) would be appropriate and make referrals.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance.
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet.

You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school.

## What happens if my child misses school without a good reason?

If your child is absent and you haven't received advance permission from the headteacher to take your child out of school, the school and local council may take action.

Before that, your child's school and your local council are expected to support you to improve the child's attendance before any measures are put in place.

These measures can include:

- **Issue a fixed penalty notice, otherwise known as a 'fine'** – your local council can give each parent a fine. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.
- **Seek an Education Supervision Order from the family court** – if the council thinks you need support getting your child to go to school but you're not co-operating, they can apply to a court for an Education Supervision Order. A supervisor will be appointed to help you get your child into education. The local council can do this instead of, or as well as, prosecuting you.
- **Prosecute you** – this means you have to go to court. You could get a fine, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court could also give you a Parenting Order.

If you want to find out more, you may find these links helpful:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/02/29/fines-for-parents-for-taking-children-out-of-school-what-you-need-to-know/>



### Helping parents to understand fines for term time holidays

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 holidays recorded by schools **after 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.**

### **Who may be fined?**

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent who allows their child to be absent from school.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent who allowed the holiday receiving 3 separate fines.

### **First Offence**

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for an unauthorised term time holiday the fine amount will be:

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

Increasing to £160 if paid between days 22-28.

### **National Threshold**

There will be a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

For example: a 5 day holiday would meet the national threshold.

The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years.

### **Second Offence (within 3 years)**

The Second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child, payable within 28 days.

### **Policy review**

This policy has been adopted by the governors and is approved annually by the full governing body at its first routine meeting of each academic year (usually in September). In the meantime it is reviewed as necessary by the head teacher assisted by a governor, and any resultant changes other than minor clarifications or those of a typographical nature are brought to the attention of the governing body. The policies master record index (MRI) is updated to reflect the dates of the last and next review.

**Reviewed, approved and adopted as detailed in the current MRI**