



Church Road, Milford

Godalming GU8 5JA

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Milford School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

**All holiday requests will be considered to be an unauthorised leave of absence.**

**Any appeal will be heard by the Governing Body, whose decision will be final.**

**All other requests for leave will be considered on a case by case basis by the Governing Body that may, at its discretion, delegate some decisions to the Headteacher. Again, the decision of the Governing Body will be final.**

Milford School, along with other local schools and Surrey County Council, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. Pupils will be expected to achieve 100% attendance but when absence is unavoidable, parents/carers will be required to inform the School at the earliest opportunity.

Parents/carers, whose children are of compulsory school age (5 to 16) and are registered at a school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or to be served with a penalty notice.

In line with the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, all unexplained absences of 10 consecutive days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority, although schools may wish to discuss such an absence sooner with their EWO if the absence is unauthorised, parents/carers cannot be contacted or there are other concerns. Schools are required to report all absence figures to the local authority and the DFE and to ensure they are recorded on a child's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by OfSTED as part of a school's inspection.

### Encouraging Regular Attendance

The majority of children attend school on time regularly, the benefits of this can be seen in their academic progress and the healthy relationships they enjoy with their peers and staff. With this in mind the School is proactive in encouraging good attendance using the following strategies:

- by providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- by responding promptly to a child or parents/carers concerns about the school or other pupils



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- by accurate and punctual completion of electronic registers during morning and afternoon registration
- ensuring all staff take a proactive approach to promoting good attendance and apply this policy consistently and equitably

### **Parent Responsibility and the Law**

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude; and
- (b) to any special needs he may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent/carer is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

### **Registers**

Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 (s434) and the Student Registration Regulations 1995 the School must keep an attendance register.

Any child who is absent from School at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of School]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

### **Categorisation for Absence**

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the School must be recorded within one of these categories.

#### **1. Unauthorised absence**

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off School unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Excessive illness without medical evidence



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## **2. Authorised Absence**

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

## **3. Approved Educational Activity**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the School.

**Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.**

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

## **Registration and Lateness**

The School day begins at 8.45 a.m. for children ready to start learning at 9.00 a.m.

Classroom staff are responsible for keeping an accurate register of attendance at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon session. The school office monitors the children's attendance and where necessary will contact the parent/carers in relation to any unexplained absence.

Morning registration will take place at 09:00. Any child who arrives after the register has been taken will be marked late "L".

Any child, who arrives after 09:00, when the registers have been closed, must report to the school office. Pupils arriving after 09:30 will be marked as "U", which statistically counts as an unauthorised absence. If a reason is given for the late arrival, for example, attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. For an authorised code to be used in this context, prior notice must have been received by the School. Any circumstances where prior notice has not been received by the School will automatically be treated as unauthorised.

Afternoon registration will be taken at 13:00.

In cases of persistent late arrival to school, parents will initially be spoken to by the class teacher or ultimately be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher.



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**Escalation Process**

If a child is absent for any reason, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the School by **10:00**. However if the child is absent and no reason has been provided the following procedure will apply:

**1. First Day Absence**

If a child is absent parents/carers are asked to telephone the absence line before 09:00 and no later than 10:00 and leave a message with the reason for absence.

If a message is not received by 10:00 the school will telephone the parent/carer to request a reason for absence. A message will be left if no contact is made. The school will note any reason for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised.

**2. Second Day Absence**

The school will telephone the parent/carer to request a reason for absence. The school will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. A message will be left where no contact can be made.

**3. Third Day Absence**

The school will telephone the parent to request a reason for absence. The school will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. If no response is received the school will send a letter to the parent/carer and the EWO will be informed.

**4. Ten Days Absence**

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will automatically be notified to the Local Authority (if this has not already happened), by submitting a referral to Education Welfare; this is a legal requirement. As part of this referral the school will include details of the action that they have taken. For a child on the 'At Risk' Register or defined as a 'Child in Need', contact with social care and/or Education Welfare will be made at an earlier stage.

**5. Frequent Absence**

Whilst at some point most children will be off school due to illness, regular absenteeism can disguise a reluctance to attend school. All problems relating to irregular attendance are best sorted out between the School and home. If a child is reluctant to attend School, it is unhelpful for families to cover up their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending; this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes returning to School more difficult.

Education Welfare meets with school staff on a regular basis to discuss attendance concerns.



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In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/s by:

1. A phone call to the parent/carer by Class Teacher and issues discussed with student within school
2. A letter sent to the parent/carers stating concerns
3. Meeting at school with the Headteacher.

If this is unsuccessful the School will make a referral to Education Welfare.

**Persistent Absence (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and the School requires parents' full support and co-operation in addressing this.

The School monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the Persistent Absence mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and the parent/carer will be informed of this immediately.

Parents will be notified by letter if their child becomes a persistent absentee and be invited to a meeting where an action plan will be drawn up to address the issues identified.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

**Exceptional Leave of Absence**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. (The Headteacher/Governing Body will be responsible for deciding what they consider to 'exceptional circumstances'). There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. The Government, through the Department for Education (DFE), has stated in its guidance (July 2008) that "Schools must remember that they can only approve absence for family holidays if they consider that there are special reasons which warrant the holiday."



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Any savings that parent/carers may believe are made by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. Research relating to this demonstrates;

- The link between a child's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.

School will only authorise leave of absence in term time in exceptional circumstances.

Where a parent/carer wishes to request a leave of absence, a formal request must be made, in writing, to the Headteacher who will consider the application on behalf of the Governors. As part of the consideration the Headteacher will decide if, "exceptional circumstances," apply. Even in cases where, "exceptional circumstances," do apply, authorisation will be considered within the context of the child's previous attendance. "Exceptional Circumstances," alone do not guarantee authorisation.

All absences, including holidays, taken without prior authorisation by the School will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Education Welfare will be made aware through monitoring of attendance registers and in some circumstances parent/s may be liable to a Penalty Notice.

### **Penalty Notices**

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer in persistent cases of unauthorised absence from school requiring the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid between 21 days and 28 days. If not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the absence by the Local Authority for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

### **Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued**

- To parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are failing to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Education Welfare Officer.
- Where a child is taken out of School for a holiday during term time for 5 consecutive days or more without the authority of the Headteacher. **Each parent/carer** is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised.
- For late arrival after the close of registration on 7 occasions during a half term where the pupil's attendance falls below 90%, you may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer, who may issue a penalty notice. The lateness will be recorded in accordance with the 'Registration and Lateness' section of this policy.



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**With the exception of unauthorised holidays taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.**

### **The Education Welfare Officer**

Education Welfare monitors the attendance of all children on a regular basis. The Education Welfare Officer will work with school and parents to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence.

If attendance problems cannot be resolved by school then the school will make a referral to Education Welfare. The Education Welfare Officer will try to resolve the situation but if attempts to improve attendance have failed and unauthorised absence persists, the Education Welfare Officer can use sanctions such as parenting contracts, penalty notices and prosecution.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, a fine not exceeding £2500, or a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months, or both.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **All staff are expected to:**

- Encourage good attendance and punctuality

#### **Class teachers are responsible for:**

- Keeping a register of attendance and raise attendance concerns with the Headteacher

#### **Office Staff**

- Will ensure morning and afternoon registers are taken and are up to date
- Contact parents and request reasons for absence
- Collate daily attendance records and together with the Headteacher, put in place agreed procedures to monitor and respond to poor attendance and punctuality

#### **Headteacher**

- Regularly meet with Education Welfare Office (EWO) to identify and action any attendance concerns
- Work with families to resolve attendance issues
- Monitors and reviews the attendance policy on an annual basis
- Monitors and reviews the attendance procedures and works with the EWO to ensure reasons for absence are identified and interventions are put in place
- Identifies and monitors attendance of PA pupils
- Promotes the attendance policy within the school and ensures that it is implemented effectively



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**Governing Body**

- Formulates the Policy
- Agrees appropriate absence targets on an annual basis
- Plays an active role in ensuring targets are met

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