

Attendance Policy – Maranatha Christian School

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INTRODUCTION

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law.

Maranatha Christian School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

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 if requested.

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

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head Teacher and Trustees at our school work together 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 are likely to experience a negative impact on their progress and ability to meet age-related learning expectations.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and Trustees 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, 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 promotes good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff 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 pupils to have a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

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 understand the responsibility placed on them for making sure their children attend regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to their age and development.
- Maintaining an effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff, and Trustees on school attendance matters (through letters to parents and the weekly newsletter)
- 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 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 good reason, even with the support of a parent.

PROCEDURES

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

- To maintain appropriate registration processes
- To maintain appropriate attendance data
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, Trustees, parents, and pupils
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give details of any absence and lateness
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence

- To discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve
- To report attendance statistics to the DfE where requested
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Head Teacher.

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.

TEACHERS

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 Business Manager and 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
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.

HEAD TEACHER

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Monitoring trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Trustees.

BUSINESS MANAGER

The Business Manager in the School Office is responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- 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/CARERS

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
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if necessary, as these are not automatically 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

School opens for students at 8:15am. Registration is at 8:30am; all students should be in classrooms by this time; students arriving after this will be recorded in the register as Late.

Each 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 should be completed by the teacher by 8:35 in the morning and 13:05 in the afternoon.

Attendance registers are legal documents and must be kept secure, and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

LATENESS

Any pupil who comes into school after 8:30am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented in the register for each pupil. *Any child who arrives for school later than 8:45am and whose parents/carers have not contacted the school will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code O).*

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and consequently come to school later than 8:30am, will have the absence recorded as a medical/dental appointment absence (Attendance code M), or who are absent through an illness which their parents/carers have informed us about, will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code I).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning; 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 the first day of their 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 on the register. It is important that we receive accurate 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 will telephone home (or other parent contact number) and if necessary, send a letter requesting this information. 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).

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 material home, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork.

Where over the course of an academic year a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will contact parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness-related absence. We may seek written permission from parents for the school to make our own enquiries.

PARENTAL REQUEST FOR ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL FOR HOLIDAY

Independent schools do not have to comply with the government guidelines regarding authorising absence specifically for holidays; therefore, we will consider authorising holidays taken during term time. However, we would discourage requests for holiday absence if the school felt them to be excessive or in any other way likely to be significantly detrimental to the student's education.

ADDRESSING ATTENDANCE CONCERNS

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the Trustees to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

In MCS we rely upon parents to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually, and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, we will always contact parents. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and for support to be given by the school with the aim of improving attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

MONITORING ATTENDANCE

MCS has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded in the registers. Attendance concerns are noted and assessed by staff, and appropriate actions are taken such as contacting parents to discuss or to arrange meetings to consider these concerns.

CODES USED ON SCHOOBASE FOR REGISTRATION

- B - Educated off site
- C - Other Authorised Circumstances
- D - Attending other establishment
- E - Excluded
- F - Extended family holiday (agreed)
- G - Family holiday (NOT agreed)
- H - Family holiday (agreed)
- I - Illness (NOT medical or dental appts)
- J - Interview
- L - Late (before registers closed)
- M - Medical/Dental appointments
- N - No reason yet provided for absence
- O - Unauthorised absence
- P - Approved sporting activity
- R - Religious observance

- S - Study leave
- T - Traveller absence
- U - Late (after registration closed)
- V - Educational visit or trip
- W - Work experience
- X - Untimetabled for non-compulsory pupils
- Y - Enforced closure
- Z - Pupil not on roll
- # - School closed to pupils