



Medina House School

10. Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Policy adopted by Governors (date): 5th May 2023

Signed: Andrew Trotter Chair of Governors

Review Date: April 2026

Section 1: Rationale

The Governors of Medina House School are fully aware that central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children are provided with suitable, full-time education, at school or otherwise, between the ages of 5 years old and 16 years old.

Once children are admitted to Medina House School, the school has a legal responsibility to keep a daily register of attendance, to decide when absence can be justifiably authorised and to report any unauthorised absence to the Local Authority.

Medina House School is a limited and expensive resource and parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure that once their child has been allocated a place, they have every available opportunity to benefit through regular attendance.

The school and parents/carers should work in partnership to ensure that children achieve high standards of attendance and punctuality, make the best progress possible and enjoy their time in school.

Regular or prolonged absence from school can be a cause for concern and should be treated as a safeguarding issue particularly where there are no obvious medical/health related reports for the Headteacher. As such, all unauthorised absence must be discussed with the school's Education and Inclusion Officer, who will decide whether to take further action.

Section 2: Purpose

The Purpose of this policy is to clarify:

- ways in which the school promotes good attendance and punctuality.
- ways in which the school monitors attendance and punctuality and how the school and the Local Authority deal with issues of non-attendance and poor punctuality.
- the role and responsibilities of parents/carers.

Section 3: Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

- ✓ The Governing Board and all staff of the school place a high priority on good attendance and punctuality.
- ✓ The school will:
 - provide a welcoming atmosphere and environment to ensure that all pupils feel safe and have a positive image of the school.
 - Publish ½ termly attendance figures in comparison to national data for special schools.
 - ensure that all parents/carers understand their responsibilities for regular attendance and punctuality by sharing this policy with them through the school Prospectus, the Admissions Pack which every new parent/carer receives and on the website.
 - promote good attendance and punctuality with parents/carers through newsletters and pupil review meetings where appropriate, encouraging parents/carers to recognise that this makes a vital contribution to their child's educational progress.
 - support pupils in developing good attitudes to attendance and punctuality by ensuring that they enjoy coming to school and achieving.
 - value good attendance and punctuality through the school's reward system.
 - ensure that following any prolonged absence pupils are welcomed back and supported to settle back into school routines effectively.
 - support parents with practical strategies/ resources as appropriate e.g. schedules/visual cues/rules/social stories to encourage a child to get dressed in the morning in time to catch the bus/taxi.

Section 4: School Responsibilities - Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

- ❖ The Governing Board and school will meet all statutory responsibilities for monitoring attendance and authorised and unauthorised attendance.
- ❖ The school is required to keep a daily attendance register and to complete the register within 30 minutes of the start of the school
- ❖ The school register must also be completed for the afternoon session.
- ❖ The school day starts at 8.45am and morning register closes at 9.15am.
- ❖ Any pupil arriving more than 30 minutes after the start of the school day must be marked as an unauthorised absence unless the Head Teacher has already received information from the parent/carer and made the decision to authorise the absence, or there is an unavoidable reason e.g. school transport running late.
- ❖ All registers must be marked using ONE of the national attendance codes.
- ❖ The school uses an ARBOR attendance module to monitor attendance and punctuality.
- ❖ The parents of any pupil who is off school without notice will receive a phone call from the school as soon as the registers close, to check on the reason for absence. Should parents not answer the phone a text will be sent.
- ❖ This phone call will be repeated on each subsequent day of unexplained absence. If contact cannot be made with parents the Education and Inclusion Officer will be informed and if they cannot be contacted the child will be reported as missing in education.
- ❖ The school will monitor patterns of attendance and punctuality in order to identify any concerns.
- ❖ The Headteacher will approach parents/carers for a discussion where there are any concerns.
- ❖ Any prolonged unauthorised absence, attendance that falls below 90% in any half-term or patterns of attendance that cause concern MUST be discussed with the school's Education and Inclusion Officer who will decide on the most appropriate next steps. These steps may include phone calls, home visits, multi-agency case conference, fines, parenting or school attendance orders or ultimately a court hearing.
- ❖ Where there are any concerns for the pupil's safety or welfare these will be shared with other appropriate agencies of the Local Authority e.g. Social Care/EIS
- ❖ The Headteacher is responsible for reporting attendance and punctuality data to the Governing Board at least termly and discussing any emerging issues with them.
- ❖ The Education and Inclusion officer allocated to Medina House School carries out half termly register checks and meets with the attendance officer and Headteacher to discuss any persistent absentees.
- ❖ The headteacher is responsible for reporting to the Education and Inclusion officer the details of any child who has 15 or more days cumulative absence in the academic year.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Absence from school can only be authorised for a limited number of reasons. These include:

- sickness of the child themselves;
- there is a notifiable illness in the family and medical advice has been obtained that the child should not attend school;
- medical appointments that cannot be arranged outside the school day – a common occurrence at MHS where many children are regularly monitored and/or treated by consultants on the mainland, e.g. Southampton General/GOSH/Moorfields
- religious observance;
- approved holiday;
- wedding of parents;
- death of a close family member.

Absence can only be authorised by prior arrangement with the Headteacher (See Appendix 2) for purposes other than illness, who has the ultimate responsibility for authorising any absence.

This means that absence is almost always unauthorised if:

- the absence is not notified beforehand (unless that is impossible for any reason);
- a child is off school because a parent or other child in the family is ill;
- the parent cannot get the child to school for any reason;
- the child is taken on a shopping trip or to visit a relative;
- the child is absent for a birthday or family treat;
- the child does not want to come to school.

Holidays

Parent/carers should not take holidays during school time.

In accordance with current legislation the Headteacher will not authorise requests for term time holidays. Requests for unauthorised holidays may result in the issue of a Truancy Penalty Notice.

Section 5: Parent/Carer Role and Responsibilities

Parents/carers should recognise that regular attendance and good punctuality are essential for their child to make the best progress possible and help their child to understand the importance of coming to school.

Parents/carers should understand the reasons why the school follows the procedures described in this policy and why sometimes it is necessary to contact other agencies for support.

The school expects that parents/carers will:

- provide the school with up to date contact details and any changes as quickly as possible.
- complete absence forms, in advance where possible.
- tell the school early in the morning on the first day of absence, giving the reason why their child cannot attend school.
- tell the school on the second day if the absence is likely to continue.
- keep the school advised about how long an absence may be and discuss whether work should be sent home.
- tell the school when their child is likely to return to school so that staff can be well-prepared.
- try to obtain medical appointments outside school hours whenever possible.
- provide evidence in writing when a child has a medical appointment.
- make sure that their child is away from school for the shortest possible time when they have an unavoidable medical appointment. Parents/carers should collect their child from school where possible, rather than keeping them off and make sure that they never miss an additional morning or afternoon session unless absolutely necessary.
- tell the school if their child is going to be late for school for any reason.
- try to take family holidays only in school holidays and where this is not possible be aware that absence for term time holidays will not be authorised

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- Attendance and punctuality data will be collected and analysed by the school.
- The analysis and any issues arising will be discussed with the Education and Inclusion Officer once every term.
- The success of the policy in promoting good attendance and punctuality will be discussed with the Governing Board annually and any revision needed to the policy will be agreed at that point and shared with all staff and parents/carers.

Appendix 1

Key to Codes

/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated Off site (not Dual registered)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration (attending other establishments)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
I	Illness (not medical/dental appointments)
J	Interview
L	Later (before registration closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised Absence (Not covered by other code)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
#	School closed to pupils and staff
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
-	All should attend/ No mark recorded.

Appendix 2

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

As parents, you have the legal responsibility to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. Applications for leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and the number of days given determined by the Headteacher.

If you wish to apply for a leave of absence for your child in term time, you will need to complete this form and return it to the school office no later than 14 days before the requested date.

Any leave of absence during term time which is not applied for or agreed to by the school will be recorded as unauthorised and will be referred to the Local Authority. This may result in a Truancy Penalty Notice (TPN) being issued or Prosecution under section 444 Education Act for failure to secure regular attendance at school (see note below):

Name of Child:	Class:	
I am applying for leave of absence for my child from/to:	From:	To:
Number of school days that will be missed:		
Full names of Parents and/or Carers:		
This leave cannot be taken during the school holidays because:		
I have requested leave of absence previously this academic year:	YES / NO	
I have requested leave of absence last academic year:	YES / NO	
I also have children at (please name school/s):		
Parent/Carer signature:		
Date of request:		
OFFICE USE		
Having considered your request carefully, my decision is	Authorised/ Unauthorised	
Signed:		
Date:		

TRUANCY PENALTY NOTICES

Unauthorised absence and persistent lateness may result in the issue of a Truancy Penalty Notice to each parent/carers, for each child for the period of absence from school. This will be issued as an alternative disposal to prosecution for failing to secure regular attendance at school.

The Penalty Notice is £80 per pupil, per parent/carers if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 per pupil, per parent/carers if paid within 28 days.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice within the specified time will result in its withdrawal and will result in a prosecution under Section 444 Education act for the non-attendance where the maximum fine is £2500 and up to 3 months imprisonment. Please note there is no provision for payment of the penalty notice in instalments. There is no statutory right of appeal. Once a penalty notice has been issued, it can only be withdrawn if it can be shown that it was issued in error.