



# MARSH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Fulfilling  
Uplifting  
Nurturing



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## **Our Mission**

It is our mission to provide the best quality early education for the whole child so that they develop a love of learning and can flourish in all aspects of their lives within a safe, healthy atmosphere of mutual support and trust. It is also our mission to be a caring, family school at the heart of the community. We always have high expectations of ourselves and the children and we are deeply committed to raising achievement. Creativity, fun and the broadening of horizons are central to our work. Every child is known personally and is special to us.

### **1. Introduction**

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Good attendance is vital if a child is to make progress and to feel safe and happy at school. We understand that young children will be ill especially when they first start school and also have medical appointments that are unavoidable. These are perfectly justifiable reasons why a child could be absent. It is important to track attendance as it can have a tremendous effect upon the rate of progress of a child and it is easy to lose track of how many days they have missed.

### **2. What is good attendance?**

Attendance of approximately 95% and above is considered good attendance. Many children will attend more than this.

#### **Encouraging Good Attendance**

- We adopt a whole school approach to ensuring that our attendance is high. All members of the school community are responsible for assisting the school in raising levels of attendance. We are proud of the efforts that have been made to raise our attendance figures. This is due to the efforts of staff and parents.
- By ensuring that the school is a happy, caring, healthy learning environment where the needs of the children are met in exciting and creative ways, we ensure that children want to come to school.
- We call the parents or carers of any child we have received no information about on the first day of absence. We note reasons and also if we have been unable to contact anyone.
- There are attendance charts outside each class. Children receive a sticker to show if they have been at school all week
- Class awards are given to the class with the best attendance each week. This is noted on the weekly school newsletter.
- Children who have excellent attendance in a term receive special awards in assembly and are noted on the weekly newsletter.
- Attendance percentages are noted on each child's end of year report and is tracked year on year. A grade is given according to the percentage.

### **3. Holiday Absence**

Once a child reaches Reception, they should be in school every day and it is important to note the change from Nursery where the child's attendance is non statutory.

Holidays in term time are actively discouraged by the school and the County Council Education Service.

Holidays in term time are not a right and will not automatically be granted. Leave will only be granted where proper procedures have been followed and the permission given. Leave of absence will not be granted retrospectively. It remains a discretionary power of the Head Teacher to authorise leave of absence in discussion with the governors of the school.

A request for your child to leave school during school time must be made on a Holiday Form, which is available from the School Office. Each request for holiday absence is considered individually. In doing so, the Head Teacher needs to consider the following before authorising the leave:

- The child's previous attendance history.
- The age of the child(ren)
- The child's stage of education
- The time of year (SATs or exams)
- The nature of the trip
- Whether the parents are restricted in terms of leave from their employer

Where the school and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is then absent from school, the absence is marked as unauthorised.

Where the parents keep a child away for longer than agreed, then the extra time is also marked as unauthorised.

It follows that leave of absence for more than two weeks must be seen as exceptional. The School will explore with parents why such leave of absence is necessary. Where such leave is sanctioned, it constitutes authorised absence.

### **4. Registers**

Registers are taken each morning and afternoon and are carefully annotated to show the reasons for absence. Letters are kept in each class register along with a list of children with attendance issues. A copy of all the attendance codes are kept at the front of each register.

## 5. Contacting the school

It is essential that parents contact the school by telephone to say that their child is going to be absent. A letter should also be given with a reason for the absence on the child's return. This will be noted in the class register. The school will contact the family of any child that is absent without an explanation. This ensures that we know that the child is safe. If we are unable to speak to a parent or carer, we log this in the class register. It is essential that the contact details for the children are kept up to date. A letter will be sent to the parents or carers of any child who has unexplained absences to up date our records.

## 6. How we monitor attendance

- Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Any absences should be explained, verbally or in writing to the teacher concerned with, if possible, the predicted date of return.
- All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child.
- If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. It is vital for the school to know if there are family difficulties that may affect the child as the school can support the family in many ways.
- Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence, to the Education Welfare Service.
- Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.
- Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing although we accept phone calls.

**Authorised** absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

**Unauthorised** absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

## 7. What is unauthorised absence?

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts, etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments, which must be in school time.

## 8. The Staged Approach

An attendance of less than 90% over a five week period is considered unacceptable although there may be good reasons why the child has been absent such as extended illness that may need taking into account.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful.

When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 90% in any term without good reason we follow a staged approach as recommended by Buckinghamshire County Council. It is hoped that we can sort out any difficulties at the early stages to avoid any serious consequences for the parents.

### Stage One

A warning letter is written to the parents and carers if a child's attendance is less than 90% over a five week period informing them that their child's attendance will be monitored for improvement over the next five weeks. The school keeps a log of the attendance percentages for the child over a five week period. The parents and carers are welcome to come and discuss the matter informally with the Head Teacher,

### Stage Two

If there is no improvement, a referral is made to the school's Educational Welfare Officer and further letter is written to the parents and carers. A meeting called an Attendance Panel Meeting is set up. This meeting is held to discuss the difficulties and to help support families. From this stage no absences can be authorised unless there is a letter from the child's doctor.

### Stage Three

The child's attendance is monitored for a further five weeks. If there is no improvement, a parental contract will be drawn up with the support of the Educational Welfare Officer and the Attendance and Enforcement Team.

**Stage Four**

If there is no improvement, the parents could be cautioned by the police and then prosecuted for not ensuring that their child attends school regularly enough. Obviously this would only happen in the most extreme cases and this should be avoided as far as possible. The aim is to support parents and to provide strategies to enable the child to attend school regularly.

**9. Punctuality**

It is also important for children to learn good time keeping from their very earliest days in school. It is vital that the child arrives promptly as they may miss important work. Children who arrive after the register has closed will be considered to be absent that will be marked as unauthorised. A book is kept in the entrance hall to show the time children arrive if they are late. A referral can be made to the school's Educational Welfare Officer about any child who is causing concern.