



Inspire Learning, Ignite Curiosity

Marlow Church of England Infant School Attendance for Learning Policy 2023

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness"

Genesis 1:26

Rationale

At Marlow Church of England Infant School our curriculum aim is to inspire learning and ignite curiosity, within a welcoming Christian and spiritual community.

This bible verse above underpins our Christian vision. It tells us that every individual is created in God's image and so this leads us to conclude that everyone is precious and valuable. As a result of this we focus on treating everybody with respect and dignity because we acknowledge their God given value and unique identity.

To help us achieve our vision we concentrate on:

- Embracing the uniqueness of everybody and being inclusive of all
- Empowering all to be enthusiastic learners
- Ensuring that every child feels nurtured, supported and safe
- Enriching learning through progressive teaching methods and technology
- Being responsible to and for society
- Being good citizens of the planet
- Embodying a Christian and spiritual community
- Being guided by our values of respect, kindness, perseverance, forgiveness, thankfulness and service

As a school we support the rights of children and in the importance of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and this is reflected in this policy by Article 28 *All children have the right to a primary education*. Parents/Carers who do not ensure that their children receive an appropriate education are infringing this right. Being absent from school means a lost learning opportunity.

The expectation is that all children on roll should attend school every day when the school is open as long as they are fit and healthy to do so.

Legal framework

The government expects:

- Schools to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
 - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
 - Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons

As a result, a schools' attendance is monitored by outside agencies and judgements are made on the level of absence in a school.

The Education Act 1996 states that it is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their child gets an appropriate full time education that meets their needs. This education must start at the beginning of the term after the child's 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and, where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present
- Absent
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Aim

This policy aims to ensure regular attendance at school for all children and so allow all pupils to have full access to high quality education. It is the belief of the governing body that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To do this we constantly strive to make our school a happy, rewarding and engaging experience for all pupils.

We aim:

- To develop an attitude through the whole school community that values regular attendance at school and recognises the impact of absence on children's learning
- To form a partnership between parents, the school and, at times, outside agencies to support regular attendance at school
- To ensure that pupils can leave this school with an excellent attendance record and be exceptionally well prepared for their next school
- To ensure that pupils reach their full potential

Poor attendance

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:

- attainment in school
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others
- relationships with teachers and other school staff
- general behaviour towards others and equipment

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

Attendance %	Level	Impact	Next Steps
96%+	Excellent	Attendance levels are good to excellent This will help all aspects of a child's progress and life in school It will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.	Positive encouragement and incentives are put in place to maintain high levels of attendance
94-96%	Average	Attendance levels are beginning to cause concern Strive to build on this so that attendance becomes excellent and your child can maximise their learning potential.	Attendance will be analysed and regularly monitored to identify patterns in and reasons for absence. Letter from school warning parents of the concerns and advise then that future absences will not be authorised unless medical evidence is provided.
90-93%	Poor	Attendance levels causing more significant concern Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. Please work with the school urgently to improve the situation.	Parents will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss their child's attendance. A plan will be put in place to assist in the improvement of the child's attendance and a target will be set. This plan will be reviewed every three to four weeks and the dates for review will be agreed at the initial and subsequent meetings.
Below 90%	Unacceptable	Attendance has decreased to an unacceptable level – it is below the threshold for persistent absence. It is affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child's learning.	We will work with you and support services to improve your child's attendance. If complex issues are identified then a referral to Family Support Services may be made and or if, following support from school, irregular attendance continues for 3 weeks after the support a letter will be sent to parents by the school. If attendance doesn't improve as a result, referral to the County Attendance Team will be made Permitting absence from school without a valid reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'.

The table below highlights the amount of learning missed due to a child's poor attendance.

Attendance during 1 school year	Equals days absent	Which is approximately weeks absent	Which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons
75%	48 days	10 weeks	250 lessons
70%	57 days	11.5 weeks	290 lessons
65%	67 days	13.5 weeks	340 lessons

In this policy and in its communication with parents, the School makes clear its expectations for attendance.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Opportunities will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers individually the importance of regular and punctual attendance including e.g. end of term reports.

We ensure that the school is an inviting and safe place for children to spend their days and the focus of our school curriculum is to inspire and engage children so that they have want to come to school. Our school leaders and teachers welcome the children into school each morning and it is pleasing to see how excited the pupils are to enter into the school building.

In endeavouring to secure an overall excellent attendance for the school, which will in turn improve our pupils' chances to achieve well, we will ensure that we listen, empathise and investigate barriers so that we are able to support parents to improve their child's attendance. The emphasis will always be on the impact of high levels of absence on a pupil's learning.

Each term, we will celebrate good attendance by publishing the term's rates in the School Newsletter and on the website.

Definitions

The Governing Body in adopting this has delegated any decisions regarding authorised and unauthorised absences to the Headteacher:

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a valid reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent contacts the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have the authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to visit a leisure park during school hours or when a medical appointment is booked during the school day when there is an option to book it after the end of the school day; these will not be considered to be authorised absences.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without permission of the school.

This means that the absence is unauthorised if a child is absent from school without a valid reason, even with the support of the parent.

First day of absence

The school office must be informed before 9.30am on the day of a child's absence. This will preferably be done by phone or email. When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the class register. If the school office has not heard from the parent/carer in the morning of the first day of absence, then the office staff will contact the parents to gain an understanding of why the child is not in school.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher will take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then contact the parent or guardian straight away in order to check on the safety of the child.

Continuing Absence

If absence from school is likely to continue for longer than three days parents should stay in contact with the school office, giving regular updates on the situation so that parents and teachers can work together to ensure best possible provision for the child.

Children Missing in Education

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the school's admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause. In making reasonable enquiries the school will follow Buckinghamshire Council Protocol for Children Missing in Education.

Lateness

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.50am. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes. Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be coded as late before registers close.

School gates will be locked by 8.55am each morning and children arriving late must report to the main school office and sign in.

Any pupils arriving after 9.20am, once the registers have closed; will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

When arriving late, pupils must report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health & safety whilst they are in school. Parents must use the signing in book to register the arrival of their child at school, giving the reason for lateness.

Frequent Lateness

- Initially an informal approach will be used and the Headteacher (or other deputised member of staff) will verbally remind parents about the start time of the school day and ask them to ensure that children are present at the start of school.
- Where persistent/continuing lateness is a problem parents will be invited into school to discuss the matter with the Headteacher. This will be to discuss any difficulties that may prevent punctual arrival at school and to work together to find solutions. If a solution cannot be found, and consistently adhered to, a Parenting Contract Meeting (see page 8 for details) will be arranged and parents will be notified in writing of the date and time.

Medical appointments

When making medical appointments, every effort must be made to ensure appointments are outside school hours but we acknowledge that this is not always possible when the medical need is urgent. Medical appointments must be accompanied by an appointment card or other written confirmation. Absence for routine dental/medical/optical appointments during school time will not be authorised. By 'routine' we mean check- up appointments that can be planned for out of school hours (not ones that are allocated by the medical profession such as hospital appointments with a consultant)

Long-term absence

If an absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given educational support out of school.

Absence notification

If a child's attendance falls below 90% in any given term (this absence may be authorised, unauthorised or a combination of both) the school will notify parents of the child's attendance level and ask them to attend a meeting with the Headteacher. During this meeting ways to improve the child's attendance will be discussed and a support plan will be put in place.

Repeated unauthorised absences

The school will contact the parent/carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the issue. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation. The governing body, supported by the Local Authority, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. The Governing Body has formally adopted the Buckinghamshire Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from school under section 23, anti-social behaviour act 2003

Failure to ensure that a child regularly attends school when they are required to do so may result in a prosecution of a parent/guardian under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which if convicted could result in a maximum fine of £2,500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 51 weeks.

Excluded (no alternative provision made)

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Leave of absence

From September 1st 2013 the government amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 to remove references to family holiday and to make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Before considering applying for leave of absence for their child or children, parents/carers must apply using the '***Request to authorise term time leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances' form (see Appendix 1)*** which must be obtained from the school office, at least **30 days** before the planned leave (no less than a month). Parents are strongly advised to discuss the proposed absence with the school before completing the form. The schools do acknowledge that in some instances, such as funerals, it may not be possible to complete the form 30 days before the absence. In these instances the absence would be authorised.

The Headteacher will consider requests for absence during term time. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of proposed leave
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- The child's ability to catch up the missed learning
- Proximity of key assessments
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made.

While leave of absence might be authorised during term time, it is entirely at the Headteacher's discretion –it is not a parental right.

The Headteacher will carefully consider the child's previous attendance record and should concerns be raised, for example, should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that the further absence will be authorised.

If the permission to take leave is not authorised and the pupil is absent, the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice. **In cases of unauthorised leave of absence of 5 days or more, the Buckinghamshire Council Attendance Team will be notified.**

'Where a pupil's absence is unauthorised, such as where a child is taken on holiday during term time without the school's permission, currently the Education (Penalty Notices England) Regulations 2007 set out that each parent can be fined £60 per child if it is paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents will be reported for prosecution'

Religious observance

The school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration if authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. It is reasonable for a parent to allow their child not to attend on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion if religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

Traveller absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. Marlow CE Infant School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months.

Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at Marlow CE Infant School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Marlow C of E Infant School can only operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen;
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

We will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return. Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the Headteacher. The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The Governing Body will therefore examine closely the information provided them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are in line with the published target.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher, who will contact the parents or guardian.

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body annually.

Roles and Responsibilities

Marlow C of E Infant School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

School Staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

We expect parents to:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's learning and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time.
- Where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Headteacher at least one month in advance of booking the holiday.

Support Systems

Marlow C of E Infant School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance on school reports
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited or part-time timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Legal Sanctions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Marlow CE Infant School will notify the County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance.

The County Attendance Team or school may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice. Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent; it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue. Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. Each parent/carer can be fined £60 per child and this fine must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/carer, per child if paid between 22 and 28 days of the date the Notice was issued. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Policy reviewed: September 2023

Date of next review: September 2024



Request to authorise term time leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

Government guidance states that under **special or exceptional circumstances** the Headteacher **may** consider giving permission for a child to be absent from school during term time. In making a request for the authorised absence from school you will need to explain why the circumstances are exceptional. The Headteacher will carefully consider your request and will take your child's attendance record into account. If you take your child out of school without permission the absence will be unauthorised and the school has the right to seek legal action.

This form should be submitted to school at least 30 days (not less than one month) before the proposed period of absence. You are advised not to make any arrangements until your request has been considered

PUPIL DETAILS	
Name(s): _____	Date(s) of Birth: _____

Section A—ABSENCE DETAILS	
I request permission for my child/children to be absent from Marlow CE Infant School [insert dates/times below]	
From _____ to _____ (inclusive dates)	
If your child has siblings for whom you are also applying for leave of absence please give their name(s) and school(s) below	
Child's name (s) _____	
School(s) _____	

<p>Section B Please explain why you are applying for an authorised absence and the circumstances which make your application exceptional and therefore why the leave cannot be taken within the normal 13 weeks holiday your child has from school. If you are requesting authorisation to attend a specific event please confirm the date of the event and explain your travel arrangements. <i>Please continue on the other side if you need more space</i></p>
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For Office Use

Academic Year	
No. of sessions school has been open in year to date	
Total no. of absences to date	
No. of authorised absences to date	
% attendance	

Absence authorised	
Absence unauthorised	
Signed: (Headteacher)	
Date:	