



MAYFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL
GRAVESEND

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Mayfield Grammar School, Gravesend

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- A clear agreed attendance policy will be beneficial to both users and providers.
- It is important to acknowledge that schools that achieve high levels of attendance will be more able to ensure that their pupils will reach their true academic potential.
- To improve overall attendance, and reduce unauthorised absences.
- To work within a framework, with defined roles and responsibilities, and aim to improve attendance.
- To support, advise and give guidance to parents and pupils, with positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To implement a system of rewards and sanctions which relate to attendance.
- To work effectively with other agencies, in particular PIAS (PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service) accessed in Digital Front Door (12 kelsi pathways available on) to promote good attendance.
- Policy reflects updated guidance from DfE following changes to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which became effective from 1st September 2016.

The responsibility for ensuring that children attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents/carers. This fact must be emphasised and acknowledged.

2. WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

- The school recognises that regular attendance is vital.
- The school will work to ensure maximum attendance by all their pupils.
- The school will work to identify any problems that may impede full attendance, and address these issues.
- The school will work in close collaboration with parents to achieve their aim of 100% attendance.
- The school will ensure that all parents are aware of and understand this policy.
- The school will ensure that parents are aware, that it is ultimately their responsibility to ensure their children attend, as laid down by DfES guidelines. As a school it is our expectation that all students achieve 97% attendance.
Note: Any child who has 10 days absence (20 Sessions) taken during the academic year will not achieve 97% attendance.
- The school will recognise that pupils are individuals and work with them to achieve good attendance.
- School will operate a system of rewards for those who achieve high and improved levels of attendance.
- The school will address attendance issues with the aim of achieving both national and county targets.
- All schools will ensure that they have an allocated Attendance Officer or a named person to monitor attendance. The Headteacher or senior member of staff should liaise with this person and be involved fully with attendance procedures. A Family Liaison Officer or Pastoral Support Assistant may also be involved with attendance. Following a referral to PIAS, schools must continue to monitor pupil attendance, including first day calling, and liaise fully with the Education Welfare Officer, Victoria Gadd.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

Registration

- Class teachers will accurately register pupils, twice a day. This will occur before the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Some schools may register at the end of the afternoon session.
- Late attendance. **Note:** For pupils who arrive after the register has been taken but before the register has been closed, the register should be marked L. Where the pupil arrives after the register has closed, the absence will be marked as U. In this case it becomes unauthorised. This mark may be adjusted where an authorised reason is provided and accepted by the school.
- Registers can be left open for a maximum period of 30 minutes (DfES recommendation) after the register has first been taken. Each school can adjust as appropriate, however parent/carers must be aware of the time the register closes.
- Where a child is not present for registration, the parent/carer should inform the school why the child is not attending. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the school. Please note where no contact is made the absence will automatically be marked as unauthorised, N code must be used.
- The school should contact parent/carer on the first day of a pupil's absence. Where the absence continues and there is no contact, the school will write, within 3 days, to the parent/carer requesting an immediate response, and identify the implications of continued non-attendance. After 10 unauthorised sessions the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) should be consulted via Digital Front Door (Kelsi). (Should the school have any concerns with regard to the child's safety, then PIAS, Social Services or the Police may be informed at any stage of the absence.)
- Any referral to PIAS should be accompanied with all relevant information, and evidence of previous work carried out by the school to achieve improved attendance. Before referral to PIAS, the school must, in the first instance, have tried the following:
 - a) Telephoned the parents/carers
 - b) Written to the parents/carers
 - c) Invited the parents/carers into school for a meeting.
- Where reasons are provided for absence, it is important to note that it is the Headteacher who has the right to authorise the absence not the parent/carers. Where there is continued sickness, schools can request medical evidence (not necessarily a Medical Certificate, e.g. Appointment Card/Prescription) before authorising further absence and schools can make a referral to the School Nurse.
- Letters explaining the absence **should be** received within 10 school days of the absence. Where this does not occur or the reason provided is considered to be unsatisfactory then the absence will be marked as unauthorised, using the O code. The school, via the Attendance Officer makes **every** effort to obtain the information before this for example via telephone calls, emails, letters home requesting explanation.

Requests for leave of absence

- The Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Should a leave of absence be granted, it is the Headteacher who determines the number of school days a student can be away from school.
- It is important to acknowledge that parents/carers have no legal right to remove their children from school for any leave of absence including family holidays. Parents must seek permission, in writing, from the Headteacher to remove their children from school, using the appropriate form.
- Application for a leave of absence should be made at least 4 school weeks prior to the date of departure.

- Application for leave of absence will be judged with regard to the following criteria:
 - i) Amount of time requested
 - ii) Age of pupil
 - iii) Pupil's previous absence level
 - iv) Proximity of internal and public exams
 - v) Pupil's educational needs
 - vi) General welfare of the pupil
 - vii) Family circumstances
- Where leave of absence requests are declined the reasons will be supplied in writing to parents/carers, within 5 school days of the application being made.
- Leave of absence will not be granted retrospectively.
- Leave of absence which has been taken without authorisation will be marked as an unauthorised absence. Parents/carers should be made aware this might lead to the issuing of a Penalty Notice. This information must be communicated direct to parents/carers in the form of a letter.
- EWO may be informed if appropriate, where leave of absence is taken without authorisation.

Sanctions available to School where attendance does not improve

The below should only be put into operation where the absences are unauthorised.

1. Where 10 unauthorised sessions occur within a school term (old term); the school can apply to the Local Authority to consider the issuing of **a Penalty Notice**. Such an application to PIAS via Digital Front Door should be made in consultation with the EWO.
2. Where there is continued unauthorised absence a referral can be made to EWO via PIAS (Digital Front Door).

The Education Act 1996 clearly states: "If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, the parents of the child shall be guilty of an offence".

The offence of non-school attendance is absolute, and the legal requirement regarding evidence is simply that the child did not attend. However, there are four statutory defences under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act.

The Keeping of Registers

School will abide by the regulations as identified by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, 2013. Document can be viewed on www.dfes.gov.uk. The regulations held within this document take effect from September 2006 and updated for 1st September 2013.

Brief Synopsis below

- All schools must keep both an Attendance and Admission Register. Admission Register will contain valuable information with regard to each pupil, in particular, emergency contact details for pupils. Parents/carers must provide correct details to school and provide updated information as required. The register must be maintained and stored securely.
- The Attendance Register is a vital tool in enabling schools to assess poor attendance and absence patterns. As previously stated there is a strong statistical link between attendance and achievement.
- Attendance Registration must be completed using relevant coding.
- IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE REGISTER IS KEPT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STATUTORY REGULATIONS. THE REGISTER MAY BE REQUIRED AS EVIDENCE WHERE PROSECUTION OCCURS.

Role of the Education Welfare Officers

- The named EWO may visit the school, during the academic year. It maybe necessary to visit on a more frequent basis, it is dependent on the requirement of the school.
- The named EWO will monitor the school's pattern of attendance by liaising with the Attendance Officer.
- The EWO will look at those pupils who have unauthorised absences or where a pupil's level of attendance falls below 90%. The EWO's work is dependent on the accuracy of information supplied by the school. The PIAS service would recommend the use of Document 1.
- Referrals will be made using Digital Front Door, EWOs will not accept referrals unless there are unauthorised absences.
- Imperative that the school provides all relevant information, most importantly with regard to Health and Safety issues.
- EWOs work in a multi-agency environment, with Social Services, The School Nurse Service, CAMHS (Children, Adolescent and Mental Health Services) and other agencies where appropriate. EWOs now have available the possible use of Family Group Conferencing to improve attendance.
- EWOs will be required to produce documentation required for prosecution.
- EWOs act in a monitoring capacity for the issuing of Penalty Notices.
- The EWO role involves monitoring, and strategy building with both school and parents.
- The EWO work is based ultimately on a strong collaborative relationship with the school.

Updated November 2016 in line with amendments to the 2006 Education Regulations.

<http://www.kelsi.org.uk/pru,-inclusion-and-attendance-service-pias/access-to-the-service>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

Mayfield Grammar School, Gravesend
Attendance Guidelines

REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Dear Parents

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Thank you for requesting a "Leave of Absence" form. Please return the completed form and return to your school **at least four academic weeks before** your intended absence. The Headteacher will consider all applications for holidays in term time on an individual basis. However, I would draw your attention to the following:

We consider each request individually – as a school we do not operate a "blanket approval" policy for requests. The following factors will be considered when assessing requests – no one factor should be regarded as conclusive:

- **the time of year**
- **the length and purpose of the absence request**
- **the duration of the proposed absence and its impact on continuity of learning**
- **the circumstances of the family and the wishes of parents**
- **the overall attendance pattern of the child.**

Please note that no leave of absence will be authorised during the time when national testing is being undertaken. Please be aware that under the new regulations there will be very few occasions when a leave of absence request for holidays in term time will be approved.

However, when considering a leave of absence in term time, I would ask you to consider the following:

1. the effect the absence from school may have on your child's learning as whole units of work may be missed
2. where possible we would ask you to take family holidays during school holidays.

I would also ask that, on your return, your child returns to school promptly.

I feel it is important to stress that parents have no statutory right to remove a child from school during term time.

Parents should be aware that the DfE advises schools to issue penalty notices where a child accrues 10 or more unauthorised absences during a single school term. The issuing of such a notice may occur where a child is removed from school for a holiday without the written agreement of the Headteacher.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher