

MOUNT CHARLES SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Written: Nov 2017
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Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Children need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Mount Charles School recognises its responsibilities to ensure children 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 children who are registered at our school on our school website.

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

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children 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 frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at Mount Charles School, miss just over 4 half-terms of learning or 19 full school days in each year.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, parents and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve children's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% 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 children of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with children, parents and staff, so that all children realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which children feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in children a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers and our attendance officer, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and children.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, children, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting children 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.
- Weekly presentation of a trophy for the class with the best attendance and additional break time given as a reward.
- Children with 100% attendance for a half term receive a certificate. It is celebrated in assembly, on our good news screen and in our newsletter.
- Children with 100% attendance for the whole year receive a special certificate and are awarded with a treat (for example a school trip or an organised activity).

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. (Unauthorised holiday constitutes an unauthorised absence.)
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.
- If the absence is unauthorised the Education Welfare Services will be notified of the absence and a Penalty Notice may be issued. A Penalty Notice is issued to each parent/carers of each child taken out of school and that this carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid within 28 days if the fine is not paid on time, it may result in legal action being taken against parents/carers. **Parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.**

Procedures

Our school will undertake 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, governors, parents and children.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail 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 strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual children's attendance and punctuality.

- To refer to the Admissions and Attendance Officer any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Cornwall LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Attendance Officer and the Leadership Team.

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.

Attendance Officer & Pastoral Care Manager

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- 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.
- Making referrals to the EWO service.
- Meeting parents/carers in danger of being issued a first warning.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- 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 Headteacher.
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- Informing the Headteacher 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.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation via text message (e-Schools).
- Ensuring attendance issues are raised by teachers at parent consultation evenings where necessary.
- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Texting parents of absent children where no reason for absence received.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

Teachers

- Class Teachers are the child's first point of contact and will monitor daily attendance.

Parents

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. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter/prescription paperwork or packet.)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely 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

The school is open from 8.30 am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any student who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 8.50 am and by 1.05 pm. (Attendance code / and \ for students who are present.)

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Any student who comes into school after 8.55 am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those students who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each student (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.15 am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.15 am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness:

- Our Learning Mentor will meet with the parent/carer to create an action plan to improve punctuality.

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 computer. 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 Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence (and no response to a text message) the absence is recorded as unauthorised (attendance code O).

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then the Attendance Officer will send a text home on a daily basis.

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 school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of the Headteacher to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year. Instead, the Headteacher will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. Parents should ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed.

Concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters (A, B and C – attached to the end of this policy) which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the Attendance Officer has a responsibility to make a referral. A first warning will be issued, then an educational planning meeting will take place, before a final warning. From this point if there are no further improvement court proceedings will begin.

Monitoring Attendance

The Attendance Officer, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Educational Welfare Officer and Pastoral Care Manager to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings, such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns.

Appendix

Letter A

Dear

High attendance at school improves your child's chances of success. Pupils who have high attendance are more likely to be able to sustain good friendships and make good progress towards qualifications. At Mount Charles School the largest group of students have attendance above 96%.

Mount Charles School is very concerned that your child's attendance has fallen below 90%. If this high level of absence continues they are more likely to:

- find it hard to make good friendships
- make poor progress
- find school stressful.

Sometimes absence from school is caused by medical issues or worries about school or friendships. Mount Charles School is committed to supporting pupil's welfare. If you feel there is anything we can do to support «chosen_name» please contact their Class Teacher or Mrs. Leggatt, our Pastoral Care Manager.

Your child's pattern of absence has caused our Educational Welfare Officer concern because it may;

- show occasional absence of one or two days for minor ailments.
- be that Mount Charles School is unaware of the reason for absence.
- be that you have taken an unauthorised holiday.
- be that their attendance is within the government's definition of persistent absence.

Please support our high expectations for your child's attendance and progress. Mount Charles School, along with our Educational Welfare Officer, will monitor your child's attendance and provide support if needed. I enclose «chosen_name»'s registration certificate.

If «chosen_name» has to attend a medical appointment please try to avoid registration times (i.e. 8.45 a.m. and 1.00 p.m.) so that they can attend the start of the day and miss breaks rather than lessons.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can do anything to help improve «chosen_name»'s attendance.

Letter B

Dear

I wrote to you on **date** to express our concern with «chosen_forename»'s attendance. «chosen_forename»'s attendance is still below 90% and is now likely to damage their education and progress. I enclose a copy of your child's registration certificate. Please note that being late to school after 8.55 am counts as being absent from school for a morning.

Here at Mount Charles School, we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence, such as when a pupil is genuinely too ill to attend school, has a medical appointment that cannot be taken outside of school hours or a request for leave has been agreed on exceptional circumstances. Please let us know of any medical reason for absence or any school based factor.

Mount Charles School is closely monitoring your child's attendance. It is becoming very hard for your child to learn effectively and progress in their learning and friendships. If their attendance fails to improve Mount Charles School will have to take urgent action with the Local Authority. This can include a legal warning and/or fines for parent.

Mount Charles School is committed to supporting students and families before requesting legal action. Please phone Mrs Bunting on 01726 73911 or email enquiries@mount-charlessch.org to improve your child's attendance and increase their chances of better progress and happiness at school.

Letter C

Warning of intention to unauthorise your child's absence

Dear «salutation»

«chosen_forename»'s attendance remains a very serious concern. Mount Charles School is unaware of any significant or compelling reason for such a high level of absence and the pattern of absence is now sustained and worrying. Mount Charles School has offered you and your child support.

Mount Charles School will only authorise «chosen_forename»'s absence where we have reasonable evidence that there is a medical reason or for any other exceptional circumstances. Please share any medical evidence you have so that we can support your child's welfare and education and authorise their absence. Mount Charles School can authorise your child's absence when it considers it reasonable to do so.

I am writing to you to remind you of the school's policy regarding absences from school that are not authorised. Any absence that is not authorised by the school will be recorded as such and may make you liable for prosecution or fine under the Education Act (1996). If there are 10 sessions (each session meaning being recorded at morning or afternoon registration) unauthorised you will be referred for legal proceedings.

Here at Mount Charles School, we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence, such as when a pupil is genuinely too ill to attend school, has a medical appointment that cannot be taken outside of school hours or a request for leave has been agreed on exceptional circumstances. However, the Government does not support parents taking children out of school unless the school agrees this is appropriate under 'exceptional circumstances'. Any request for leave should be made in writing to the Headteacher using the school's request form.

If you decide to still take your child out of school, without permission, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. If your child's absence is unauthorised you will be committing an offence. We will refer the matter to Cornwall Council who may decide to take legal action against you. A penalty notice can be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice will result in Court action. Persistent absences not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court, leading to fines up to £2,500 and / or custodial sentences.

You are welcome to contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have regarding this or if you feel you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. Mount Charles School is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved.

Letter D

PN Information letter to all parents (for general, whole school use)

NAME AND ADDRESS

To:

Date:

Of:

Dear Name of parent/carer(s)

Here at Mount Charles School, we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence, such as when a pupil is genuinely too ill to attend school, has a medical appointment that cannot be taken outside of school hours or a request for leave has been agreed in exceptional circumstances.

However, the Government does not support parents taking children out of school unless the school agrees this is appropriate under 'exceptional circumstances'. Any request for leave should be made in writing to the Head Teacher using the school's request form.

If you decide to still take your child out of school, without permission, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer the matter to Cornwall Council who may decide to take legal action against you. A penalty notice can be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in Court action. Persistent absences not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court, leading to fines up to £2,500 and/or custodial sentences. **The Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.**

You are welcome to contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have regarding this or if you feel you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. Mount Charles School is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

For an offence under the Education Act 1996 Sec 444 (1) the maximum fine is £1000. For an offence under the Education Act 1996 Sec 444 (1A) the maximum fine is £2500 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months. Alternatively, a penalty notice may be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in Court action.