

Attendance Policy



Mepal & Witcham Primary School
a part of Ely Diocese Multi Academy Trust

Approved by the Governing Body:	
Signed:	
Date:	

Date to be reviewed:

Link Governor:

**Please be aware that this policy has been written in line with normal school timings prior to Covid 19 changes.*

Situations relating to Covid 19 will be taken into consideration when making decisions around absence and attendance, However, it should be noted that attendance at school is a legal requirement and the school will continue to adopt this approach in the vast majority of cases.

Please see guidance below from the Local Authority:

The lockdown has been challenging for all families, with some having been affected more due to their own vulnerabilities and circumstances. Undoubtedly the experiences of lockdown may present challenges when preparing a child to return to school.

School staff have a wealth of experience in supporting transition, and will ensure that all pupils receive the most appropriate tailored support, in their return at the beginning of the new academic year.

Parents who have concerns regarding their situation and vulnerabilities need to contact the school and have a full and candid dialogue with the Headteacher who can then see exactly what provision needs to be put in place. The school may need to consider a risk assessment that may be necessary for the child returning to school.

The government expects parents to send their children to school full time. The Local Authority attendance team will continue to offer advice, and support schools to ensure that they adopt a supportive and nurturing approach in the first instance before any type of legal interventions are considered. However on the occasion that it is clear that all possible interventions have been offered and there are no other reasonable grounds to explain the absence then the attendance team may become involved to ensure the child's attendance improves to a more suitable level.

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1. Aims

The Witchford Area Schools Partnership (WASP) aims to ensure the achievement of high levels of attendance and punctuality by all pupils. This will enable all pupils at the school to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Mepal and Witcham Church of England Primary School aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- **Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence**
- **Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled**
- **Having a clearly understood attendance procedure that is effectively communicated to and understood by parents/carers**
- **Acting early to address patterns of absence**

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons. It is our aim to work with parents and children, with an inclusive approach that engages positively with parents.

This policy is designed to help all concerned adults to enable children to attend school regularly and thus be offered the most consistent access to learning as is possible.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold (10%).

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day (8:55am) and at the start of the afternoon session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- **Present**
- **Attending an approved off-site educational activity**
- **Absent**
- **Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances**

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Registers are checked by Administrative Staff. Attendance data is held electronically on Pupil Asset, accessible by the Head teacher and Administrative Staff who are able to conduct spot checks on individual children and provide comprehensive attendance records.

Children may arrive at school from 8.45 and go straight to class. Registration is called at 8.55 am and again in the afternoon. Registers will close five minutes after registration times.

A pupil that arrives after this time but before 9.15am will be marked as 'late' unless the school have previously acknowledged the reason for their late arrival into school. Children who arrive after 9.15am will be marked as an unauthorised absence for that session although the school will know the child is on site for health and safety purposes such as a fire alarm.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school every day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9:00am. This can be done by phoning, emailing or in person to the Office.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, medicine bottle or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary and return to school immediately following their consultation.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start at the start of the school day. The Headteacher monitors lateness of pupils as punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is of extreme importance therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

A pupil who arrives late but before 9.15.am will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after 9.15am will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will make verbal contact with parents/carers. If the concerns persist, the Headteacher will ask to meet with the parents to discuss the issue. Support (if required) and monitoring will follow.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use. Where the reason for an absence isn't known, the school administrator will make contact via phone within 45 minutes of the scheduled start time.

Other reasonable steps to be taken by school staff can include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts
- Home visits
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts
- Enquiries with any other service known to be involved with the pupil/family
- Letters home (including recorded delivery).

3.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance is reported to parents annually with their written end-of-year report. Attendance is also discussed at parent meetings throughout the year. Parents can also request the latest copy of their child's attendance report during the school year – this will be provided by the Office within 5 working days.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body or Local Authority to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement.
- Attendance at events of significant cultural or national significance, where absence is minimal and rare and supported by the Headteacher.

Absence from school will not be authorised for things such as shopping, over-sleeping, birthdays, family days out.

Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the Special Leave of Absence form. These may be obtained from the school office or be downloaded from the school website.

4.2 Term Time Holidays

Holidays taken in term time will not be approved. Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave (code G) for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more, not authorised by the school under exceptional circumstances rule, will normally receive a Penalty Notice.

4.3 Reduced Timetables and Flexi-Schooling Requests

In very exceptional circumstances, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. Such reduced timetables can only be agreed by the Headteacher in conjunction with parents/carers, and with advice from medical staff or specialist teachers. An agreement will show in writing the reasons for the reduced timetable, and a time scale by which the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.

Requests for flexi-schooling are not normally granted, as the school believes that all children should have the benefit of a broad, rich curriculum and the benefits of feeling part of the school community.

4.4 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. As of 30th November 2015, the rate per parent per child will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.

A penalty notice can also be issued where a child has **at least 8 unauthorised sessions over an 8-week period and attendance is below 90%**. However, the school will first apply its resources to improve attendance before a request for a penalty notice is made in these circumstances.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Evidence has shown that tackling absence can be most effective when a number of different approaches are taken by schools to encourage attendance. Environmental factors need to be considered and schools need to respond to their own particular problems in a way that works best for them.

(Tackling Absence – the role of the school, Cambridgeshire County Council, 2019)

Regular school attendance will be promoted by the school using newsletters, information, Local Authority letters to parents, end of year reports and in parent consultations.

Where there are concerns about attendance, the following steps will be initiated until attendance improves:

1. As soon as possible, a verbal discussion with parent to highlight that attendance is a concern.
2. If there is no improvement which is sustained the school will write to the parent/carer using the three tier letter system. The school reserves the right to use discretion or adapt a letter when issuing absence letters due to absence being deemed irregular or unusual in their occurrence
3. If attendance remains a concern or targets have not been met, then the school will call a formal Parent Contract Meeting (PCM). A parent contract meeting is an opportunity for the school and parent/s to discuss a child's attendance and to review the impact of school interventions thus far offered. It provides the opportunity for parents to discuss more generally any difficulties which the family are having and types of support that may be helpful to them. The contract will include a monitoring period, a school target (usually 96% over 8 weeks) and clear guidance on what will happen if the target is not met, and if attendance falls below 90% over the monitoring period.
4. If attendance falls below 90% over the monitoring period, all of which is unauthorised, then the school will refer the case to Cambridgeshire County Council for legal intervention.

If a child has had 15 days or more away from school because of ongoing health needs (whether consecutive or cumulative across the school year), a Health Care Plan will be offered to the parents. If the parents accept the invitation to create a Health Care Plan for their child, the school will retain a copy of this and will take it into consideration when considering the child's attendance record. Any certification will be accepted from the responsible specialist and/or the GP where appropriate. If conditions are undiagnosed, the school will take all reasonable steps to arrange a multiagency meeting to plan an alternative package of education if appropriate. If the parents decline a Health Care Plan and attendance remains a concern, interventions will be implemented as above.

6. Children missing from education

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to the Local Authority Attendance Officer via a CME report sent to cme@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

If there is Social Care involvement or Child Protection then the Local Authority Attendance Office and the linked Social Worker will be informed immediately.

7. Attendance monitoring

Staff in the School Office informally monitor pupil absence on a daily basis. The Headteacher monitors pupil absence more formally on a regular basis if school staff report a specific concern.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above 5 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 The governing body

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

8.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and approves the issue of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary. The headteacher comments on pupil attendance in

children's end of year reports, using data and contextual information. The headteacher works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.

8.3 Office staff

The School Administrator is expected to record information about absence and record it on the school system. They report concerns and information about attendance to the Headteacher, and are approved to issue fixed-penalty notices for term time holidays. This can be done via email or online at https://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Unauthorised_term_time_leave_request_for_the_issue_of_a_penalty_notice

Office staff also arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues with the Headteacher.

8.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing body.

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2:

Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time

Mepal and Witcham Church of England Primary School, DEMAT, the Local Authority and Government believe that absence during term time should be avoided as they can have a damaging effect on a pupil's education and overall achievement. The expected attendance for all pupils is 100%. 96% is considered to be the minimum standard. However, it is recognised that there may be exceptional reasons that may justify authorisation of the absence by the Headteacher.

Please refer to our Attendance Policy for details of when absences may/may not be authorised. The policy can be downloaded from the school website or requested from the office.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Please note:

- Application is to be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the Pupil Absence Request Form. These may be obtained from the school office.
- Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents will be informed within 7 school days of the application for leave as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.

As of November 30th 2015 the rate **per parent per child** will be £60 if paid within 21 days and rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days.

If a penalty notice is not paid, each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to a maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

NB the word parent includes legal guardians and carers

Application for leave of absence during term time.

Mepal and Witcham CofE Primary School, the Local Authority and Government believe that absences during term time should be avoided as they can have a damaging effect on a pupil's education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that there may be exceptional reasons that may justify authorisation of the absence by the Headteacher.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states;

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

As a result of these changes, our Attendance Policy will from 10th March 2016 include the following;

- Application for leave of absence if to be made in advance, by the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides, on the form headed "Application for leave of absence during term time". Copies of the form may be obtained from the school office or the school website.
- Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to "exceptional circumstances". Parents/carers will be informed within 7 school days whether the request has been authorised.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings or a fixed penalty notice. A separate fixed penalty notice will be issued to each parent/carer for each child. As of 10th March 2016 the rate per parent/carer per child is £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the penalty remains unpaid after 28 days, each parent/carer may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if upheld, each notice may result in a criminal conviction and/or a fine to a maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

N.B the words parent/carer include legal guardian.

Pupil's name:		Date of birth:		Class:	
Home address:					
First date of absence:		Date of return:		No. of school days absent:	
Exceptional reason for absence:					
Parent/Carer signature:			Print name:		
Emailed address:				Date:	

For the Headteacher to complete;			Date received:		
Current attendance			%	Last year's attendance	%
Exceptional reason accepted	Y	N	This absence is -	AUTHORISED	UNAUTHORISED
Signed:				Date:	