

# Mapledown School



Working and Learning Together

## Pupils' Attendance Policy

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| <b>Name of School</b>                            | Mapledown School                                   |
| <b>This policy was updated on</b>                | 18 <sup>th</sup> January 2022                      |
| <b>This policy was reviewed in</b>               | September 2022<br>September 2023<br>September 2024 |
| <b>This policy is to be reviewed annually in</b> | September 2025                                     |

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## Statement of intent

The Department for Education requires all Local Authorities to have in place a framework that enables a strategic oversight for school attendance for all schools including academies and independent schools. This guidance has been introduced to ensure schools are embracing a whole school approach to early help and interventions to promote and support School Attendance in line with: DfE Guidance 2024 '*Working together to improve school attendance*'

Working together to improve attendance is based around successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home and in school. More broadly it requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with families.

Mapledown School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school. We are committed to providing all pupils with an appropriate and effective education in a safe and happy environment.

We aim to meet our 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
- Acting early to address patterns of absence, and work with other agencies to ensure the health, safety and safeguarding of our pupils
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and that any absences are reported punctually and appropriately.

At Mapledown, each child is welcomed, valued and respected and is encouraged to respect themselves and others. We aim to empower all of our children to gain the essential skills – both academic and social – that will equip them to lead the lives they choose in the future.

We believe that education is essential for all. To achieve their full potential children need to attend regularly and punctually. Non-attendance at school for any reason is an important issue that must be treated promptly and seriously. Early action needs to be taken in every case of non-attendance.

## 1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014

- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2020) 'Improving school attendance'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'

1.2. This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

Our Governors, the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team and staff acknowledge that there is a strong correlation between high attendance and pupil progress.

In order to promote good attendance Governors and staff will:

- Provide a welcoming and safe environment where all members of the school community are valued and respected
- Ensure that all school staff work with the pupils and their families to enable regular School attendance and punctuality and to support and challenge families who do not prioritise this
- Establish an effective and efficient system of communication with the parents, carers and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice and support
- Develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data in order to address any issues which become apparent (Poor attendance of individuals or groups in school)
- Promote effective, supportive partnerships with the education welfare service and other services and agencies
- Ensure that parents/ carers are aware of the DfE guidance relating to holidays taken in term time and understand the impact that this has on their child's progress
- Understand that, for some pupils, their condition means frequent unavoidable absence through illness or medical appointments and will recognise that the needs of individual pupils may require considerable planning following significant periods of absence

2.1 The Governing Board has overall responsibility for:

- The implementation of this policy and procedures for Mapledown School
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' (2024) when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

2.2. The Headteacher is responsible for the day to day implementation of and management of this policy and procedures for the school, and distributing these to parents.

2.3. Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too. They are also responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. Members of their class team may carry out the recording, but it remains the class teachers' responsibility.

2.4. Parents are expected to take responsibility for the attendance of their child during term time. Parents are expected to promote good attendance behaviour and ensure that their child attends school every day.

2.5. Office/reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

2.6. The school will ensure that absence procedures are understood by pupils, parents and carers.

2.8. Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.

### 3. Definitions

3.1. For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

- **"Absence"** as:
  - Arrival at school after the register has closed.
  - Not attending school for any reason.
- An **"authorised absence"** as:
  - An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
  - Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave.
  - Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave (1 day).
  - An absence due to a family emergency.
- An **"unauthorised absence"** as:
  - Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
  - Absences which have never been properly explained. – Arrival at school after the register has closed.
  - Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.

- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.
- **“Persistent and severe absenteeism”** as:
  - Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for **any reason is considered persistent absence.**
  - Missing 50% or more of schooling across the year is **considered severe absence**

## 4. School Procedures

### 4.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) 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 and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

### Timing of the school day/Transport

The school runs from 9:15am until 3:20pm. The majority of pupils are brought to school by LA transport and the times for pick up and drop off are arranged by the Transport department.

The register for the first session closes by 10am. The register for the second session closes by 1:45pm.

### 4.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.15am or as soon as practically possible. It is not the responsibility of transport staff to relay this information.

Parents will send a note in on the first day that their child returns to school with a signed explanation of why they were absent.

Alternatively, parents may call into school and report to the school office where arrangements will be made to speak to a member of staff.

### Notifying the school of unplanned absence

Parents/carers must phone the school by 9.15am in any case of absence to indicate the reason for the absence and the possible length of absence. This should be done on a daily basis

Telephone number: 020 8455 4111

### 4.3 Authorising absences

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. Applications will be made in advance, by completing the Absence from School Request (see appendix), and the headteacher will be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave. The headteacher will determine the amount of time a pupil can

be away from school during term-time. Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If parents take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the headteacher, they may be subject to sanctions such as penalty fines.

**Absences are authorised** for the following:

- **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 doctor's note, prescription, appointment card 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.
- **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. Parents need to write the details of the appointment prior to the day of the appointment in the pupils' home-school book or phone reception. 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.
- **Days of 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 to confirm whether the day is set apart. Parents will inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance, and complete an Absence from School request (see appendix)
- **Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes** – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- **Exclusion** whether fixed or permanent should be regarded as authorised absence. Exclusions are very rare at Mapledown School and cannot exceed 45 days in any academic year.
- **Unexpected personal circumstances** such as bereavement or domestic emergency will be considered on a case by case basis.

**4.3. Absences are unauthorised** for the following:

- Lateness after closure of the register (10:30am)
- Inability to establish contact with parents/carers
- Family holidays. There is no parental right to take children on holiday in term time. This can result in legal sanctions

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon

- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Suspended or permanently Excluded
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school (i.e. non compulsory school age)
- T = Parent travelling for occupational purposes (Used when Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) or New Travellers are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school).
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y1 = Unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
- Y2 = Unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
- Y3 = Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
- Y4 = Unable to attend due to whole school closure
- Y7 = Unable to attend due to other unavoidable cause
- Z = Pupil not on admission register
- # Planned school closure (holidays, INSET)

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

#### **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. Pupils will not be penalised if they are late due to an SEN transport issue.

#### **4.5 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.

- If a parent does not notify the school directly of their child's absence, then a member of the School's admin team under the supervision of the Senior Leadership Team will phone the parent. This is 'first day calling'.

- If it is not possible to establish contact with the parents then a home visit will be made. If this does not result in personal contact then the child will be deemed ‘Missing from Education’ and a safeguarding referral will be made.
- In the case of persistent absence, arrangements will be made for parents to speak with the Attendance Champion (Deputy Headteacher).
- The school will inform the LA, on a termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation.
- If a pupil’s attendance drops below 85 percent, the attendance officer will be informed, and a formal meeting will be arranged with the parents.
- Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries.

#### **4.6 Reporting to parents**

Parents are given attendance information at the EHCP reviews. Pupils’ whose attendance falls below 85% receive a letter and this is also followed up by a member of the Leadership team to establish what support the school needs to put in place to improve attendance, including support from the Education Welfare Service and where appropriate multi-disciplinary support (including Health and Social Care colleagues).

### **5. Legal sanctions**

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. 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. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

### **6. Attendance monitoring**

The Deputy Head (Attendance Champion) and Deputy office Manager monitor pupil absence on a weekly basis. Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see above). They are expected to call daily if they are unable to state at the outset how long their child will be absent.

If a pupil’s absence goes above ten days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this. If after contacting parents a pupil’s absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer. As part of our safeguarding duties, we may contact a pupil’s sibling school, and liaise with relevant agencies, including social care.

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. However, the disability or impairment that the child has may well impact on their attendance and this will be taken into account when pupils' absence is monitored.

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. Out attendance targets and data fall in line with the national targets for schools with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autism and are aspirational. They are not, however, directly comparable to mainstream schools.

## **7. Training of staff**

7.1. The school recognises that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, teachers will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training.

7.2. Teachers and support staff will receive training on this policy as part of their induction.

7.3. Teachers and support staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

## **8. Pupils at risk of persistent absence**

8.1. The SLT will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
  - Sending letters to parents.
  - Having weekly monitoring by the Deputy headteacher
  - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
  - Using fixed penalty notices.
  - Creating attendance clinics.

8.2. The governing board will engage in attendance panels to reinforce messages and outline relevance in terms of training and employment.

8.3. Pupils potentially at greater risk of harm who need a social worker will be supported with pastoral and academic support, alongside action by statutory services in response to any unauthorised absences.

8.4. Teaching staff will:

- Welcome pupils back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

- Meet with pupils' families to discuss absence, patterns, barriers and problems.
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Make regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

## 9. Parental Involvement

9.1. The school will build respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement.

9.2. The school will communicate openly and honestly with pupils and their families about their expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.

9.3. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. if a pupil has a social worker.

9.4. Parents will be expected to:

- Treat staff with respect.
- Actively support the work of the school.
- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

## 10. Attendance officer/Attendance Champion (DHT)

10.1. If they are persistently absent, pupils will be referred to the attendance champion who will attempt to resolve the situation through a parent agreement.

10.2. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the attendance officer has the power to refer to the Local Authority Education Welfare Services, which may lead to sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices to be issued to parents.

10.3. The attendance officer will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence.

10.4. The attendance officer will provide regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures.

## 11. Monitoring and review

11.1. The school monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year.

11.2. Mapledown School attendance target is 90 percent.

11.3. This policy is reviewed every three years by the headteacher; the next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2025.

11.4. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff and parents

## Appendix

### Absence from School Request

#### Absence From School – The Law

The following bullet points are requirements of the law and have not been set by Mapledown School. They apply to all children who attend school, not just Mapledown.

As a parent, carer, or person with parental responsibility for a pupil registered at Mapledown school, you are responsible for making sure your son / daughter attends school regularly.

- If you want permission for your son or daughter to miss school, you should ask permission well in advance, giving full details. This includes all hospital / doctor's appointments and stays in hospital or hospice.
- Please do not expect permission to be granted or the absence authorised. The Headteacher will consider your request carefully and take your child's attendance into account.
- If you wish to proceed, please fill in the form below and return it to the Headteacher.

#### **Request for permission for Absence from School**

May my son / daughter be absent from school? The details are given below:

Today's date: ..... Name of student: .....

Date of absence: ..... Date of return to school: .....

Reason for absence:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

#### **School Response**

The Headteacher authorises the absence from school.

The Headteacher does not authorise the absence from school.

Signed: .....

Date: .....