



Merry Hill Infant School and Nursery

Attendance Policy

Name/Title of responsible committee/individual:	Curriculum Committee
Date issued:	October 2020
Review frequency:	Annual
Target audience:	All stakeholders

The Governing Body shall conduct the School with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement.

Merry Hill Infant School and Nursery is committed to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different groups. These factors were considered in the formation and review of this policy and will be adhered to in its implementation and application across the whole school community.

The School will promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and will actively challenge pupils, staff or parents expressing opinions contrary to fundamental British Values, including 'extremist' views.

Version	Date	Notes

Contents

1	Purpose	3
2	Guidance and links with other policies	3
2.1	Links with other policies	3
3	Policy	3
3.1	Leave of absence	3
3.2	Authorisation of absence	4
4	Responsibilities of school, parents and pupils	4
4.1	School	4
4.2	Parents	5
4.3	Pupils	5
5	Arrangements for monitoring and review	5
5.1	Policy review	6
	Appendix 1: Absence procedures	7
	Appendix 2: Application for Leave of Absence	9

1 Purpose

Promoting regular school attendance is a key component in the Government's strategy to raise educational standards. The DfE's view is that unnecessary absence from school is unacceptable and must be prevented and tackled by schools.

The law requires that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. Parents of children registered at Merry Hill Infant School and Nursery ("Merry Hill") have a legal duty to make sure that their child attends regularly.

The school is required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, on an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

2 Guidance and links with other policies

This policy takes account of:

- HCC guidance for schools on creating an attendance policy;
- DfE advice on *School attendance* (September 2020),
- Statutory guidance for local authorities, school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and the police – *School attendance parental responsibility measures* (January 2015, updated May 2020)

2.1 Links with other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Merry Hill policies:

- Child Protection
- Security
- Education of Children with Medical Needs
- Home-School Agreement

3 Policy

The quality teaching and learning delivered at Merry Hill does not benefit pupils if they are not present. The School believes that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and establish a commitment to work which will be carried forward into adulthood.

Merry Hill gives a high priority to good punctuality and attendance and there is an expectation that the whole community – governors, staff, parents and pupils – will share this commitment to high standards of attendance and punctuality. The importance of school attendance will be emphasised to parents in the 'new joiner' information packs and reiterated during the school year.

3.1 Leave of absence

The Headteachers are only permitted to authorise leave of absence in *exceptional* circumstances and if a leave request is granted, it will be for the Headteacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school.

The taking of family holidays during term time is strongly discouraged and the School's policy is therefore that such absences will not generally be authorised unless there are exceptional and extenuating circumstances.

Where children are absent from school, School Office staff will follow up to:

- ascertain the reason;
- ensure the appropriate safeguarding action is taken; and
- identify whether the absence is approved or not.

Excellent attendance will be celebrated through our monthly correspondence with parents in Merry Hill Matters and the award of Herts County Council certificates for 100% attendance at the end of the school year.

If a child's attendance begins to drop, class teachers will liaise with families and offer initial support. If attendance continues to drop, our School Office Staff will contact parents/carers to ascertain the reason for the absences and work alongside the family to address and overcome any barriers.

3.2 Authorisation of absence

Where a child is absent from school, a written communication (letter or Email) should be sent to the school *before* the event if possible. It should be noted that a letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence: only if the Headteacher is satisfied with the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

Absence will be authorised if:

- the pupil is absent with permission previously granted by the school;
- the pupil is ill or is attending an unavoidable medical/dental appointment¹;
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
- the pupil's home is not within walking distance of the school, and has no suitable travel arrangements have been identified by the Local Authority;
- there is a close family bereavement;
- the pupil is taking part in public performances or music examinations;
- the pupil is involved in an *exceptional* special occasion. (In authorising such absences, the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered.)
- the pupil is attending an approved off-site educational activity.

Any absence that does not comply with these criteria will not be authorised and will be marked as such on the class register.

4 Responsibilities of school, parents and pupils

4.1 School

School staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality.

The school will:

- ensure that records of attendance are maintained according to Government legislation;

¹ Routine medical and dental appointments will be normally marked as unauthorised.

- encourage good attendance and investigate all unexplained and unjustified absence;
- follow up all instances where attendance and punctuality give cause for concern;
- support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance;
- be sensitive to the needs of individual parents in the way in which attendance issues are addressed;
- inform parents of their children's attendance/punctuality record via the end of year school report;
- communicate this attendance policy and procedures to all parents, pupils and staff.

4.2 Parents

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance and should:

- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and ready to learn;
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly;
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings;
- work in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance;
- ensure they are aware of the School's attendance procedures (*see Appendix 1*) and notify the school if their children are absent;
- avoid arranging routine medical/dental appointments during school hours;
- avoid booking holidays during term time.

4.3 Pupils

Pupils are expected to attend punctually and be ready to learn.

5 Arrangements for monitoring and review

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance at their school.

The marking of class registers must comply with the DfE Advice on School Attendance; it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure they are familiar with the requirements and that they adhere to them. The School Office will monitor and advise if incorrect markings are used.

If there has been any absence for which a written explanation has not been received, a form will be sent to the child's parents via pupil post. If no response is received, a reminder will be sent by email. In some circumstances, the absence of a written explanation may mean the absence is recorded as unauthorised.

Where children are persistently absent or late, the School Office staff will inform the Headteacher. On a monthly basis, a report showing children with attendance below 90% in the year to date, and a second report showing children who have been late on two or more

occasions in the previous calendar month, will be prepared for the Headteacher, who will decide whether or not it is necessary to contact parents.

Absence figures for the year to date, differentiating between authorised and unauthorised absences, will be reported to governors in the termly Headteacher's Report.

Annual attendance statistics are provided in the School Prospectus which is published on the school's website.

5.1 Policy review

This policy shall be reviewed every three years in accordance with the Governing Body Year Planner or earlier at the request of the governing body or in the event of any changes to statutory or non-statutory guidance.

Appendix 1: Absence procedures

1. The School Day

Doors to the classrooms open at:	The school day formally begins at:	The class registers are closed at:
8.45am	8:55am	9.05am

- 1.1 Pupils must not be on the school premises before 8.40am.

2. Late arrival

- 2.1 Any child arriving after 8.55am must enter the school via the main entrance and be signed in by an accompanying adult.
- 2.2 Unless there is an acceptable/exceptional reason for the lateness, late arrivals after the registers are closed at 9.05am statistically count as unauthorised absence and School Office staff will insert the appropriate mark in the register.
- 2.3 The Headteacher will be consulted if there is any doubt as to which mark should be applied. (NB the Government guidance on Attendance Codes makes it clear that if a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) because they couldn't find their shoes/their school uniform was drying in the tumble dryer/their younger sibling was playing up etc., that the unauthorised late code is appropriate.)

3. Leaving the premises during the school day

Appointments should be made outside of school hours where possible. If children are required to leave the premises during the school day, the school should be notified in advance. Children must be collected by a known adult and signed out at the Pupil Signing In/Out book in the School Office. On return to school, they must be signed back in.

4. Absence procedure

4.1 First day of absence due to illness

Parents are asked to telephone/email (to admin@merryhill.herts.sch.uk) on the first day of absence – preferably before the start of the school day – to inform us why their child is not in school. If possible this communication should indicate the expected duration of the absence. This information will be recorded in the register and passed to the class teacher.

Should no explanation for a child's absence be received by 9.30am, School Office staff will attempt to contact the parents to ascertain the reason for the absence.

NB: Parents should make clear if their child is absent whilst awaiting a COVID-19 test result or if they are required to self-isolate as have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.

4.2 Procedure for continuation of absence due to illness

The school expects parents to maintain reasonable communication with the school during the absence of their child. For absences of three days or less due to illness, parents are not expected to telephone other than on the first day of absence.

Should the absence become prolonged, the school would expect that a doctor or hospital would become involved. For any absence of over two weeks, unless the child has been hospitalised, the school will require a letter from the child's GP indicating the reason for the absence.

4.3 Return to school

On return to school the parent/carer should send a letter indicating the reason for the child's absence (even where this was previously notified) and any information the school needs to support the pupil on their return.

The attendance registers are monitored weekly by School Office staff and a form sent to parents via pupil post if there has been any absence for which a written explanation has not been sent. If the form is not returned, a reminder email will be sent. Thereafter, if no response is forthcoming a decision will then be made as to whether the absence should be authorised or not.

4.5 Medical appointments

For absence from school due to medical appointments, parents should send an email to the School Office or write a note addressed to the class teacher and it is sufficient to hand this in on the morning of the absence (although notice should be given where possible). However, it should be noted that it is expected that routine dental appointments and non-urgent medical appointments will normally be made outside school hours and, unless the appointment is unavoidable, the absence will be marked as unauthorised in the class register.

4.6 Leave of absence

For all absences other than for illness or medical reasons, the parent should write to the Headteacher at least one week in advance (if possible), using either the Application for Leave of Absence Form (*Appendix 2*) or sending in a letter explaining the circumstances. Leave of absence will only be granted for the categories of absence set out in Para 3.2 of the school's Attendance Policy or where the Headteacher considers there are exceptional circumstances. Absence due to holiday will be marked as **unauthorised** on the pupil's record.

Appendix 2: Application for Leave of Absence



Merry Hill
Infant School and Nursery

Headteacher: Ms. Melissa Adams MA, NPfI

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Legislation makes clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. In particular, there is no longer discretion to allow up to 10 days in a school year for a family holiday or to agree to extended leave for parents to visit their country of origin. If there are exceptional circumstances behind your request please discuss these with me before the date when you want the absence to start.

For further information please go to

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a00223868/regulations-amendments>

Yours faithfully,

Melissa Adams
Headteacher

Name of child: Class:

Name of child: Class:

I request that my child(ren) be granted leave of absence

From to 20__

Reason:

Signed: Date:
(Signature of Parent/carer)

For school use			
Authorisation given	Yes	No	Signature of Headteacher
Teacher informed			Marked on SIMS



Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you for your recent application for leave of absence for

This absence will be recorded as **authorised / unauthorised** in the school register.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, I would be happy to meet with you. Please contact the school office to arrange a meeting.

Melissa Adams
Headteacher