



Middlezoy and Othery Schools

Attendance Policy

Reviewed: September 2024
Next Review due: September 2026

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Introduction

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage our children to attend and put in place appropriate procedures for them to do so when, for example, bad weather makes attendance difficult.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

It is the aim of our school that pupils should enjoy learning, experience success and realise their full potential.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by promoting good attendance; ensuring every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled; and acting early to address patterns of absence.

This policy sets out our school's position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents should follow to report their child absent from school.

It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age. If their child is unable to attend school for any reason, the parent should inform the school on the first day of absence.

We want our pupils to attend school every day, unless they are really not well enough to. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our pupils to enjoy school, grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential in the workplace and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend, will be better prepared for the attendance expectations in the workplace.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community
- Raise our pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Provide support, advice and guidelines to parents, pupils and staff
- Work in partnership with parents
- Celebrate and reward good attendance and punctuality.

Safeguarding and Attendance

Our school will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023 version, or as updated by the DfE) we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare. (Please see our school's Safeguarding Policy for more information.)

What the Law Says and Our School Procedures:

Contents of Attendance Register

The law makes it clear that schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion the school must record whether each pupil is:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Attending an approved educational activity; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Present at School (and Lateness)

Pupils are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration, they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

The Headteacher will meet with parents of those children who are frequently late arriving at school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.

STANDARD TIMINGS

Our pupils must arrive by 8:45 am on each school day. Our afternoon register is taken at 1:00pm for Middlezoy and Othry Schools.

A pupil who arrives late after the registers close will be marked as absent. If the pupil is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised. If the pupil is late for no good reason, they will be marked with the unauthorised absence code 'Late after registers close' (U).

When a child arrives late to school, they miss important events like assembly, teacher instructions and introductions. Children often also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others.

Minutes late per Day	Equates to Days of Teaching Lost in one Year	Which means this number of lessons missed
5 mins	3 Days	15 Lessons
10 mins	6 Days	30 Lessons
15 mins	9 Days	45 Lessons

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/carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or 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. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Waiting at home for a washing machine to be mended, or a parcel to be delivered
- Day trips
- Long weekends and holidays in term time (unless very exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing, in advance by the school)
- In the case of term time leave - if a pupil is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

If a child is absent

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. A record is kept in the office for absences notified prior to the close of the register. After checking the register and 'late book' the Office Manager will telephone the parent/carer that morning to check the situation and record information on the appropriate forms. This is then checked and monitored by the school office.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence. For example, if a child has a medical appointment.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher will inform the office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent/carer, in order to check on the safety of the child.

Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school follows the 2022 DfE School Attendance Guidance which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence.

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some instances, the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil's GP directly.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

If your child is unwell and will not be attending school, please contact the school office and let them know **by 9.15 am** on the day that your child is unwell. They will pass the relevant information on to your child's teacher. If we have not heard from you regarding your child's absence, the school office will contact you to check that all is well. This is to make sure that we keep your child safe.

If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

Pupils taken ill during the school day

If a pupil needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the pupil must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

Requests for leave of absence

The Government have issued schools with new legislation which will only allow Head Teachers to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. If parents/carers make a request for holiday in term time it will only be authorised if the school deems that there are exceptional circumstances and reasons for this to happen. Such exceptional circumstances may be:

- Where forces personnel are on leave from a foreign posting.
- Where parents have significant employment restrictions.
- Where significant family events and circumstances occur such as bereavement.

Any unauthorised absence such as taking holidays in term time when they have not been approved by the school may result in a fixed term penalty notice being issued by the Education Attendance Service.

The Fixed Term Penalty Notice fees are currently £80, (rising to £160 if you don't pay within 21 days) per child. Please click on the link below for more information:

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance#:~:text=Your%20local%20council%20can%20give,it%20will%20be%20%C2%A3160.>

Long-term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork.

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

Repeated absences

Any child whose attendance falls below 90% will be discussed at regular attendance meetings. The school will contact the parent/carer of any child whose attendance is considered to be of concern. Each half-term holiday the school will contact parents of all children whose attendance is less than 90%. If the situation does not improve the Attendance Officer may intervene and in the case of unauthorised absences this may mean that a penalty notice will be issued if this is deemed necessary to improve overall attendance.

Unauthorised absence will be reported to the Attendance Officer at the regular half-termly meetings.

Attendance targets

Our whole school aim for attendance is 96%, and we will work to achieve this target.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. Governors meet termly to examine closely the information provided for them on attendance, and to seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

The rates of attendance will be reported in the school profile and school data dashboard as produced by OFSTED.

Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Head teacher/Deputy Head teacher, who will contact the parents/carers.

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.