

MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Statutory Policy – Biennial review

GOVERNORS' EDUCATION & WELFARE COMMITTEE

Date next due for review by committee	Reviewed by committee	Any Changes YES/NO	Approved by Full Governors
	24 Feb 2009	Yes	7.7.09
Feb 2010	2 Feb 2010	No	
Feb 2011	8 Feb 2011	No	
Feb 2012	6 Nov 2012	Yes	4 Dec 2012
Feb 2013	11 Feb 2014	Yes	1 April 2014
Feb 2015	3 Feb 15	Yes	7 July 2015
Feb 2016	17 May 16	No	Policy ratified by committee
May 2018			

MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Here is a quotation from the DCSF's "Policy and Practice on the Categorisation of Absence."

"Regular school attendance has always been important. Without it, the best efforts of the best teachers and the best schools will come to nothing. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in law. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. It places children at risk and, in some cases, can result in pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour."

We take attendance seriously at school and have put a lot of time and energy into getting our procedures as efficient and effective as possible. We urge you to give this matter the priority it deserves.

Magdalen College School recognises that good teaching that stimulates, challenges and supports students, provides the best incentive for them to come to school and behave well.

AIMS

- To raise achievement by ensuring the highest standards of attendance and punctuality;
- To create an active partnership between students, parents, the school and the wider community to support maximum attendance;
- To both emphasise to the students and to secure from them, the importance of maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities;
- To make explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations over attendance levels;
- To promote a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance;
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- To communicate to all relevant parties (staff, parents, students) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put simply: absence means missed learning. It is also a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. **Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our pupils.**

Attendance is a national priority and all schools have to submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will clearly be scrutinised by OFSTED. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance and high examination performance. **In 2003, 75% of pupils with absence levels below 6.5% achieved 5 A*-C. Where absence was between 7.5% and 8.5%, the percentage achieving 5 A*-C fell to 52%.*

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

All students should aim for 100% attendance.

The vast majority of our pupils achieve over 96% attendance and this is what we expect from all our pupils as a **minimum**. OFSTED views 90% as the **absolute minimum** acceptable attendance rate. Sickness occurs usually in a block of time over a continuous period; it is desirable that a student's attendance shows unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the pupil is marked present on all ten sessions); pupils should **NOT** have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

Authorised Absences

The Department for Children and Families (DCSF) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- (i) When a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) Days of religious observance notified in advance;
- (iii) Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as "Approved Sporting Activity" that can be authorised, and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school, and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged **out of school hours wherever possible**.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.
- Absences of a student where concerns have already been aired and patterns and overall attendance rates are unacceptable.

The DCSF guidelines state that the following activities would classify as **unauthorised**:

- minding the house;
- caring for relatives;
- awaiting repair people;
- shopping;
- a birthday or family celebration.

There are clearly some grey areas. The DCFS guidelines look at the area of "Special Occasions" and make clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised. Absence resulting from a pupil attending the graduation of an older brother or

sister would probably be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a Theme Park would **NOT**.

We ask parents to **notify the school well in advance** (Preferably 4 weeks notice) of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits and fine judgements will have, on occasions, to be made.

The DCFS guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. **A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.**

Holidays

The guidance from the Department for Education is as follows:

Head teachers should not give leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

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A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm.

We strongly discourage holidays from being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child (this message is conveyed in our information booklet to parents and in letters home). Holidays are generally not agreed.

The school cannot legally authorise holidays unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. The school will **not** authorise holidays retrospectively.

Magdalen College School in conjunction with all the other 11—18 secondary schools in the county, asks parents who feel it is absolutely unavoidable to take their annual holiday in term time to write explaining the circumstances to the Headteacher **at least four weeks in advance**.

The School will not authorise holidays for any student whose attendance rate is less than 96% or where the holiday requested will reduce the overall attendance to less than 96%.

Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

- (i) do all they can to ensure that their child arrives **on time** for morning and afternoon school. School begins at 8.40 in the morning and at 2.20 in the afternoon. **Parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken.**
- (ii) notify the school **on the first day of absence if their child is ill** with an estimation of the likely length of absence, by 9.30am.
- (iii) send in a written note with their child on the first day s/he is back at school following an absence. This should be given to the form tutor. This is needed for our records and also authenticates the telephone message. **NB.** This does not guarantee that the school will authorise the absence.

- (iv) get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude to school.

In return the school will:

- (i) contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home;
- (vi) contact home over any unexplained absences.
- (vi) follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or wellbeing in, school;
- (vi) involve the School Support Services to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances as necessary
- (vi) regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- (vi) reward good or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

Poor attendance

When a student has poor attendance the school will contact parents to discuss the situation and to put support strategies into place. If attendance does not improve the school will use the services of an external service to provide Education Welfare support.

In extreme cases the Education Welfare support service will, under the instructions of the school, initiate legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility of getting their child to school. Before a case goes to court, Parenting Contracts will be drawn up setting targets for attendance levels; there may also be interviews which could lead to a fixed penalty notice. The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis.

Child Missing from Education (CME)

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The DSL will monitor unauthorised absence, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions.

We follow the DfE legal requirements for schools in respect of recording and reporting of children who leave school without any known destination.

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 should make an immediate referral to Northamptonshire Education Entitlement Service (EES), using the contact form at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/ees

*Reasonable steps include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts
- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- Possible home visits where safe to do so
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts

- Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the pupil/family
- All contacts and outcomes to be recorded on the pupil's file

Upon receipt of a referral from the school, the EES will carry out an initial search and contact the school after 10 days to advise or inform them that they can remove the child from the school roll. If the student has not been found the case is passed to the Child Missing from Education (CME) team within EES. After the EES have confirmed that the student can be removed from the roll, school staff must upload data file onto School to School (S2S) and enter accurate reason for leaving in the SIMS.

Magdalen College School can only end date a pupil from their roll in circumstances that comply with Regulation 8 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Magdalen College School also follows Regulation 5 in relation to the placing of children on school roll.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/UKSI-20061751.pdf>

EES and Admissions have jointly produced procedures for placing a student on roll and removing them from roll. These procedures are followed by Magdalen College School in order to fulfil our duties in relation to the 2006 regulations

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/educationandlearning/services/attendance/pages/placing-children-on-roll-and-end-dating-procedures.aspx> (Northamptonshire website search - roll)

Rewards for Good Attendance

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance the school offers the following rewards:

- Vivo Points for 100% attendance in a short term.
- Certificates for 100% attendance are presented by Leaders of Learning. Prospective employers and Colleges of Further Education view attendance as an important indicator of motivation/attitude and the Certificates are very valuable evidence of reliability.

Attendances and absences are also included in Reports home on a regular basis.

Roles and responsibilities:

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie.

At Magdalen College School the form tutor, Leader of Learning, pastoral support assistant and administrative staff work effectively to ensure attendance procedures are followed to support students in achieving the highest possible levels of attendance.