

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 2015	Yes	7 July 2015
Feb 2016	17 May 2016	No	Policy ratified by committee
May 2018	19 June 2018	Yes	Policy ratified by committee
May 2020	16 June 2020	Yes	Policy ratified by committee
June 2022	14 June 2022	Yes	Policy ratified by committee
June 2024			

MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school is important for your child's education. Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, it is also a legal requirement; parents are responsible for ensuring their children receive sufficient full-time education. It is also essential for pupils to attend school regularly in order to maximise the opportunities available to them.

Magdalen College School pupils are expected to attend school regularly and on time. This policy aims to make clear the importance of maximum attendance at school to enable pupils to take full advantage of their educational opportunities. This is every child's fundamental right and every effort will be made by staff to help students engage in their education in a positive and rewarding way.

Magdalen College School is keen to work in partnership with pupils, parents and outside agencies to support all families to ensure students make progress with their education and learning for life.

To achieve this, school and home need to work together so that:

- Pupils are committed to their education; they understand the importance of good attendance and the direct link between attendance and attainment
- Parents instil in their child the expectation to attend school daily and support school if it becomes necessary to monitor attendance as is their legal duty
- School has clear lines of responsibility for dealing with attendance and are consistent in the implementation of the policy
- Provide a wide range of positive intervention strategies if concerns continue, rewarding and celebrating good and improving attendance in a consistent way

Regular School Attendance

Regular attendance at school is vital. Pupils who miss school can often fall behind with their work and not fulfil their true potential.

Good attendance and punctuality are a life lesson and show potential employers that your child is reliable. Children who go to school regularly could also be at less risk of getting involved in antisocial behaviour or crime.

Attendance is a national priority and all schools have to submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual basis) every term. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance and high examination performance. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will clearly be scrutinised by OFSTED.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

All of our pupils should aim for 100% attendance at Magdalen College School. The vast majority of our pupils achieve over 96% attendance and this is what we expect from all our pupils as a **minimum**. Sickness usually occurs in a block of time over a continuous period; it is desirable that a pupil'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 Education 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**. **Specialist appointments will be authorised if supported with evidence**.

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
- where a student has been absent from school for more than 5 days due to illness and no medical evidence has been provided
- Absences of a student where concerns have already been aired and patterns and overall attendance rates are unacceptable.

The DfE 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.

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.

The DfE 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 in term-time

The Law states that requests for leave can only be granted in exceptional circumstances and family holidays do not fall into this category. If parents feel it is absolutely unavoidable to take their annual holiday in term time then they should put their request in writing to the Headteacher, explaining the circumstances and the reasons for the request at least 4 weeks in advance.

Guidance from the DfE is: schools cannot authorise any absences after they have been taken.

- No request for holiday absence will be authorised. You may choose to take your child out of school but this will be recorded on your child's attendance record as unauthorised absence
- If you take your child out of school for a period of 5 days (10 sessions) over a period of six weeks we are obliged to refer this to the LA and you will be at risk of incurring a Penalty Notice. This risk increases if there are existing concerns relating to your child's attendance and intervention programmes have been in place
- If your child's attendance rate falls below 96%, all absences will be monitored and attendance targets will be set for improvement

N.B. Parents can be fined by Northamptonshire County Council (the Local Authority) for taking their child on holiday during term time without the consent of the school. **A Fixed Penalty Notice of £60 could be issued to each parent for each child and so the penalty for a two parent family with two children this would equal a fine of £240.** (The fixed penalty notice fine for each parent/child is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt. Failure to pay within 28 days may result in a court summons.)

Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Vital information is given out during tutor time and your child will be at a disadvantage because of this. The school day starts at 8.45am and we expect your child to be in tutor time at that time. Pupils arriving late also disrupt lessons during the day.

Lateness to school

Any student arriving after 8.45am must report to Student Services' reception to sign in. Lateness will be followed up by your child's Leader of Learning and may result in a sanction being issued.

Lateness to Lessons

Any student who arrives late to lessons will have the time recorded in Go 4 Schools. These will be reviewed weekly for each group and any student with more than a total of 10 minutes late in any one week will be issued with a sanction.

Parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late after the register has officially closed. We monitor persistent latecomers and action will be taken.

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:

- Do all they can to ensure that their child arrives **on time** for morning and afternoon school. School begins at 8.45 in the morning and at 2.10 in the afternoon. **Parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken**
- Notify the school of their child's absence **on the first day** by using the dedicated absence reporting process online, with an estimation of the likely length of absence and a full explanation of the illness, by 9.30am
- Keep the school informed on a daily basis where absence extends to two days or more by use of the absence reporting process online
- Send in a written note with their child on the first day s/he is back at school following an absence. This is needed for our records and also authenticates the online message. **NB.** This does not guarantee that the school will authorise the absence.
- Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude to school. Failing to attend school can be indicative of underlying stresses or concerns and it is important to try to resolve these before a pattern of poor attendance develops. Please contact your child's Pastoral Support Assistant (PSA) or Leader of Learning

In return the school will:

- Contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home. This will be by way of a text service which requires the parent to respond to the message received. Any student on the Child Protection register will be contacted by manual phone call
- Follow up home visits if no contact has been received within 3 days. A visit may be made on the first day of absence for any student on the Child Protection register
- Contact home via email/post and manual phone regarding any outstanding unexplained absences
- Follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or wellbeing in, school
- If necessary, involve the School Support Services to help pupils re-integrate into school after long-term illness or other individual circumstances
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Reward good or improving attendance and action any concerns
- Ensure tracking systems are in place to identify and monitor students' attendance across the year
- Have regular attendance meetings in school to identify, monitor and support students with attendance issues
- Work with parents to identify other agencies who may be able to support the child and family. This may involve implementing an Early Help Assessment.

Poor attendance

Attendance surgery

- When a student has poor attendance (less than 94%) the school will contact parents to discuss the situation and to put strategies into place
- A target of 96% for 5 weeks will be set and reviewed regularly

Parent Contract Meeting

- If a student has unauthorised absence of over 5% within a monitored period, parents are invited into school for a Parent Contract Meeting with the Education Welfare Advisor and the Pastoral Support Assistant
- An Early Help Assessment may be offered to help address concerns that may be impacting on the student's attendance in school and a Parenting Contract will be drawn up
- A target of no less than 96% over the next 4 weeks will be set. If the target is met then attendance continues to be reviewed closely for 4 weeks. If the attendance does not show signs of hitting the 96% target, then the case is referred to the Education Inclusion and Partnership (EIP) part of Northamptonshire County Council
- In extreme cases the EIP can also initiate legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their legal responsibility of getting their child consistently to school. Parents may be made subject to a fixed penalty notice of £60 per parent per child payable within 21 days, then £120 per parent per child if paid after this date. Failure to pay within 28 days may result in a court summons. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 Sec. 444(1) and 444(1A)

“If any child of compulsory school age is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence”.

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 Inclusion and Partnership (EIP)

*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 EIP will refer the case to a CME tracking officer who 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.

Rewards for Good Attendance

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

- House 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.

Additional Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>