



# Madginford Primary School

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Headteacher: Mrs. Amanda Woolcombe

Dear Parents and Carers,

## A Reminder About School Attendance

At the beginning of the school year, we would like to remind all parents and carers of the importance of regular school attendance and arriving at school on time.

Regular attendance at school is essential. Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives a full-time education and, where their child is registered at school, to ensure that they attend regularly.

**Our expectation is clear: every pupil must attend school every day that the school is open and arrive on time, unless there is a genuine reason why they cannot attend.**

Coming to school every day enables children to keep up with their learning, maintain friendships and take part fully in all the opportunities school has to offer.

**Every school day matters and every session missed is lost learning time.**

### ATTENDANCE CONTACTS - PLEASE KEEP FOR REFERENCE

#### Reporting your child's absence

School Office: 01622 734539 - please use the automated absence reporting system.

Online absence form: [www.madginfordprimary.co.uk](http://www.madginfordprimary.co.uk)

#### Attendance concerns, support and Attendance Action Plans

EYFS and Key Stage 1: Miss Allen - Head of School

Key Stage 2: Miss Stamp - Head of School

Please contact the relevant Head of School through the school office on 01622 734539.

#### Requests for term-time leave

Requests must be submitted in writing and in advance for consideration by the Headteacher.

**Please contact us early if there is a genuine difficulty affecting your child's attendance. Do not wait until attendance has fallen to 90%.**

## School Times and Punctuality

Registration takes place at 8.50 am for the whole school.

Pupils who are not present when the register is taken will initially be marked absent. If they arrive after registration but before the registers close at 9.00 am, they will be marked as late.

Pupils arriving after the registers close at 9.00 am will be recorded as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

Any pupil arriving after this time must enter via the school office and be signed in using the school entry system.



Regular lateness is also an attendance concern. Arriving late means that children miss learning, disrupt the beginning of their school day and can find it more difficult to settle into lessons.

## Reporting Absence

Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence, as soon as practically possible.

This can be done by telephoning the school office on 01622 734539 and using the automated system, or by completing the absence form on the school website: [www.madginfordprimary.co.uk](http://www.madginfordprimary.co.uk)

If an absence continues, parents/carers should continue to keep the school informed.

If we have not received a reason for a child's absence, our office team will contact parents/carers to establish why the child is not in school.

Absence due to genuine illness will generally be authorised. However, where illness-related absence becomes frequent or prolonged, the school may contact parents/carers to discuss the child's attendance and what support may be required.

**Medical or dental appointments will normally be recorded as authorised where the school has been informed appropriately. Wherever possible, routine medical and dental appointments must be arranged outside school hours.**

Where an appointment during the school day cannot be avoided, pupils should attend school before and/or return after the appointment wherever practicable.

## What Good Attendance Looks Like

**Our expectation is that every child attends school every day that the school is open unless there is a genuine reason why they cannot attend.**

We expect pupils to maintain the highest possible level of attendance and encourage all families to aim for at least 96% attendance.

Attendance percentages can sometimes make the amount of education missed appear smaller than it really is. Over a typical school year:

- 100% attendance - no school days missed.
- 96% attendance - approximately 7-8 school days missed.
- 95% attendance - approximately 9-10 school days missed.
- 90% attendance - approximately 19 school days missed, equivalent to nearly four weeks of education.
- Below 90% attendance - a significant amount of education is being missed.

Absence can accumulate very quickly and may affect a child's learning, progress, routines, friendships and ability to participate fully in school life.

It is important to understand that authorised absence still affects a child's overall attendance percentage. We recognise that there will be occasions when children are genuinely too unwell to attend school, but every absence means education has been missed.

## Persistent and Severe Absence

The Department for Education considers a pupil to be persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of their possible school sessions.

This means that a pupil whose attendance is 90% or below is persistently absent, regardless of whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised.

A child attending at 90% over a full school year will miss approximately 19 school days - nearly four weeks of education.



A pupil is considered severely absent when they miss 50% or more of their possible school sessions.

Persistent and severe absence will be treated seriously. Where there are genuine barriers to attendance, we will work with the child and family to understand those barriers and identify appropriate support.

## What Happens When Attendance Starts to Fall?

**We will not wait until a child reaches 90% attendance before taking action.**

Attendance is carefully and regularly monitored throughout the school year. We will look at overall attendance as well as patterns of absence, repeated absence and punctuality.

Where we identify falling attendance or an emerging pattern of concern, we will intervene at an early stage.

**Early concern:** We will contact parents/carers to make them aware of their child's attendance level and discuss any emerging concerns or barriers.

**Continued decline:** If attendance does not improve, parents/carers will receive a formal attendance letter setting out the number of sessions missed and their child's current attendance percentage. Attendance will continue to be closely monitored.

**Persistent absence or significant concern:** Where attendance continues to be a concern, parents/carers will be invited to a formal attendance meeting with the relevant Head of School:

**EYFS and Key Stage 1 - Miss Allen**

**Key Stage 2 - Miss Stamp**

At this meeting, the reasons for absence and any barriers to regular attendance will be discussed. Parents/carers will be expected to work with the Head of School to identify what needs to change and what support may be required to secure improved attendance.

Where appropriate, an Attendance Action Plan will be put in place. This will set out clear expectations, agreed actions, achievable steps, reasonable adjustments and any support required for the child and family.

A review period will be agreed and attendance will be closely monitored.

**Parents and carers are expected to attend these meetings, engage with the Attendance Action Plan and work with the school to improve their child's attendance.**

## Where Attendance Does Not Improve

Where attendance does not improve following the meeting and Attendance Action Plan, the Head of School will arrange a further meeting with the parent/carer to review progress, identify any continuing barriers and determine the next steps.

Our priority is to work with families to secure improved attendance.

However, where support has not resulted in sufficient improvement, where parents/carers do not engage with the school, or where unauthorised absence continues, the matter will be escalated in accordance with the appropriate attendance procedures.

This may include referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service and consideration of formal attendance intervention, Penalty Notices and, where appropriate, prosecution.

## Holidays and Leave During Term Time

**Holidays must not be taken during term time and will not be authorised.**

Parents and carers must arrange family holidays, trips and other non-essential activities during the school holidays.



### **There is no automatic entitlement to take a child out of school during term time.**

Cheaper holidays or travel, availability of accommodation, family celebrations, birthdays and other leisure activities are not acceptable reasons for a child to miss school and will not normally constitute exceptional circumstances.

The Headteacher may only grant leave of absence during term time where they consider there to be exceptional circumstances. Any request must be made in writing and in advance of the proposed absence. Each request will be considered individually, taking account of the particular circumstances.

### **Parents/carers must not book or pay for a holiday or trip during term time on the assumption that permission will be granted.**

The fact that a holiday has already been booked or paid for will not result in the absence being authorised.

Where leave has not been granted by the Headteacher and a child is subsequently absent, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in referral to the Local Authority for enforcement action.

## **Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence**

Parents and carers need to be aware that unauthorised absence, including unauthorised term-time holidays, can result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

Under the national framework, a Penalty Notice must be considered when a pupil has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

Ten sessions are equivalent to five school days.

The sessions do not need to be consecutive and can include different types of unauthorised absence, including unauthorised leave and unauthorised late arrival after the register has closed. The 10-school-week period may also span different terms or school years.

Where a Penalty Notice is issued:

- A first Penalty Notice is £160 per parent, per child, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. If not paid at the reduced rate, the full £160 must be paid within 28 days.
- A second Penalty Notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year period is £160 per parent, per child, with no reduced rate.
- A maximum of two Penalty Notices can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year period.
- Where the threshold is met for a further offence within that period, a further Penalty Notice cannot be issued and other legal action, including prosecution, will be considered.

It is important to understand that Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per child. Where more than one child has unauthorised absence, separate Penalty Notices may therefore be issued in respect of each child.

## **Prosecution and Further Legal Action**

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

### **Failure to pay a Penalty Notice within the required period may result in prosecution for the original attendance offence.**

The Local Authority may also consider prosecution where attendance remains a serious concern, where unauthorised absence continues or where other attendance interventions have not been successful or appropriate.

Where a case proceeds to court, the consequences can be significantly more serious than a Penalty Notice.



Depending on the offence and circumstances, court action can result in a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or, in the most serious cases, a custodial sentence of up to three months. A court may also make a Parenting Order.

We therefore strongly encourage parents and carers to work with the school at the earliest opportunity where there are genuine difficulties affecting their child's attendance.

## Supporting Families

We recognise that cases of persistent and severe absence are not always straightforward.

Where there are genuine barriers preventing a child from attending regularly, we want parents and carers to speak to us early.

We will listen to families, seek to understand the barriers affecting attendance and consider appropriate support, reasonable adjustments and involvement from other services where necessary.

The school will also work with parents/carers and appropriate services where there is long-term absence due to ill health so that pupils receive appropriate support with their education.

However, avoidable absence is different.

Holidays, days out, leisure activities and other non-essential absences must not be arranged during term time.

Our approach is clear:

**We will support families where there are genuine barriers to attendance.**

**We will challenge avoidable and unauthorised absence.**

**We will intervene early when attendance begins to fall.**

**Where unauthorised absence continues or attendance does not improve, we will follow the appropriate Local Authority and legal procedures.**

As a school, we are also working alongside other schools as part of the Attendance and Behaviour programme to reflect on our systems, share effective strategies and embed sustainable improvements.

## Further Information and Guidance

For further information about school attendance, unauthorised absence, Penalty Notices and the legal responsibilities of parents/carers, please refer to the following official guidance:

### **Department for Education - Working Together to Improve School Attendance**

Statutory guidance setting out expectations and responsibilities for schools, local authorities and families.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

### **GOV.UK - School Attendance and Absence: Legal Action to Enforce School Attendance**

Information for parents and carers about Penalty Notices, prosecution and other legal action.

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

### **Kent County Council - School Attendance and Absence**

Information for Kent families about school attendance, authorised and unauthorised absence and the action that may be taken when children are absent without a valid reason.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-attendance/school-absences>

### **Kent County Council - Pay a School Penalty Notice**



Information about Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence, payment amounts and what may happen if a Penalty Notice is not paid.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-attendance/school-absences/pay-a-school-penalty-notice>

## Our Aim

Our aim is simple:

**Every child in school, on time, every day - happy, learning and able to enjoy all the opportunities available to them.**

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation in ensuring the best possible attendance for all our pupils.

Warm Regards,

Mrs A Woolcombe

Headteacher

*Madginford Primary School • Inspiring learning for life*

