



Threemilestone School

TMS Attendance Policy (pupils)

Ratified: 13th July 2021
Next Review Date: July 2022

Safeguarding

Threemilestone School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. We expect all our team members to share this commitment.

Teagle _____ Dated _____
Author

Teagle _____ Dated _____
Headteacher

SDove _____ Dated 13-7-21
Chair of Governing Body

This policy reflects the DfE regulations which came into force in September 2013 which state:

'Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.'

Threemilestone School is committed to providing a full and enjoyable educational experience for all children. We believe that if children are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all children. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of the school to celebrate achievement and attendance. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all our children.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and children the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is a concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a child's attendance we will investigate, identify, and strive in partnership with parents/carers and children to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the child to full attendance at all times.

Objectives

- To encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To monitor attendance and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism
- To ensure a consistent approach throughout the school
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school including children, parents, teachers and governors
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and children
- To work effectively with other services and agencies to support these objectives

The following will be considered when dealing with attendance and punctuality.

- Start and finishing times of registration: A child arriving after 8.45 will be marked as late.
- Guidance for staff on the accurate completion of registers.
- The importance of punctuality and the response to lateness. If a child arrives at school between 8.45-9.15 they will be marked as late before registers closed - L (but the session will count as in attendance) and those arriving after 9.15 will be marked as late after registers closed - U (this will be marked as absent for the session).
- Daily contact between parents/carers and school when a child is absent.
- In line with Health Protection Agency guidelines, a period of **48 hours** absence is required for any pupil with vomiting or diarrhoea. Such absence due to illness is authorised.
- Clear guidance to parents/carers that Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.
- Referral routes with roles and responsibilities for pupils with emerging attendance difficulties.
- The threshold used to determine persistent absence (PA) was lowered in September 2015. A child is now persistently absent if he or she does not attend for 10% of sessions or more. Previously, this figure was 15%.
- The inclusion of attendance information in school documentation e.g the website, reports, newsletters.

- Annual reports to parents/carers include a record of their child's attendance.
- The Headteacher's termly report to governors records the attendance figures for the academic year to date.

Good Attendance

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics prove a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.
- Regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with.
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular attenders have an easier transfer to secondary school.

Children will be happier, healthier and achieve more in school if they attend regularly.

Parents/carers are asked to help support their child's learning by:

- Ringing school on the first morning of all absences with the reason and date for return.
- Arranging routine medical appointments out of school hours or during school breaks.
- Keeping us updated if their child has an extended absence due to **illness**.
- Ensuring that family holidays are taken during school holidays.

School Roles and responsibilities

- Acknowledge and praise good attendance.
- Follow up unexplained absences by text on the first day, and a text or phone call or email on the second day and all days thereafter.
- Remind parents/carers of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters and on school website.
- Take the registers each session.
- The Headteacher and Governing Body monitor patterns and trends over time.
- The Headteacher is responsible for decisions about any leave of absence requested for exceptional circumstances during the term time.

Good Practice

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately.
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers.
- Regularly analysing attendance data.
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance through a letter home.

It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of the whole school.

Any unauthorised absence is damaging to a child's education. It also gives children the wrong messages about the importance of education which may lead to problems later in schooling. Good attendance and punctuality are important values for later in life.

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as 'Authorised absences'. For example, if a child is ill, family bereavement, religious observance, music exams.

We understand that there are occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent. In these cases, please make an appointment to speak to the Headteacher and we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are **not** permitted by law. These are known as 'Unauthorised Absences'. Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Waiting on a delivery
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Parents being ill
- Going shopping or for a haircut
- Because it's the child's birthday
- Unapproved holidays
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation for the absence is considered unsatisfactory

The school will contact you and the Local Authority may consider taking legal action against you if your child has unauthorised absences.

Leave of Absence During Term Time (Exceptional Circumstances)

Schools are no longer allowed to authorise holidays during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Before deciding whether to authorise leave of absence Headteachers will consider:

- The impact for the child's academic progress of any absence
- The child's attendance over the academic year
- Whether it falls within any key stage national tests or exams

Examples of exceptional circumstances

Below are examples of exceptional circumstances; however this is not an exhaustive list.

- Where it is company policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time – a letter from the employer would be needed.
- Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark on a tour of duty.
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a child or parent's recovery from a medical or emotional issue – evidence must be provided.
- Funeral of close relative or family friend – Headteachers should use their discretion having heard from parents/carers about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA.
- Time off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by the Local Authority
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 s444(3) (c), states 'on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs'. This would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions. Headteachers may specify that only one day will be authorised at a time.
- Weddings of parents and siblings - weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however, we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave should only be

authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a familial reason for attending the wedding during term time.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Availability of cheaper holidays during term time.

Legal Note

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full-time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on the law and on Best Practice guidance produced by the Department of Education and Skills and the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However, in some cases parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if unauthorised absences continue.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is important to set realistic targets; these targets may be set in consultation with the Local Authority or with the Governing Body. The School will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

School Target

Our school target for attendance is set at 96%.

Persistent Absence Definition

Attendance below 90% is defined by the DFE as persistent absence (Sept 2015).

Definition of 'Parent'

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' to include:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

When evaluating success, the school will consider whether or not:

- Patterns and trends in the school's attendance and child's punctuality are improved.
- Parental response to absence has improved.
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance by celebrating good attendance within the school, governing body and the local community.
- Children and parents are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and aware of the attendance procedure operating within school.
- Parents and governors are made aware of the current law on attendance.
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies or RSHE lessons.

Attendance is monitored half termly for any emerging patterns below 95%. Parents/carers will be routinely contacted if attendance falls below 90%.

