



Attendance Policy

Introduction

Good attendance at school is the single most important factor to ensure that young people have the maximum life chances. Attendance is strongly linked to educational achievement. Success starts by children being at school. Regular attendance is a prerequisite to a good education and securing it must be a high priority for all.

There are proven links between absence rates and pupil attainment. Being out of school can cause serious long-term harm to young people's lives and ruin their chances of success. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils diminish the value of the education provided for them. Schools need to monitor and support pupils to maintain regular school attendance principally because:

- a. regular and punctual attendance at school is essential to the process of raising attainment;
- b. young people not in school are more vulnerable, i.e. to drifting into crime or other anti-social activity.

MOD Schools are to ensure that all children gain maximum benefit from the educational opportunities available in order that they achieve their full potential. The Policy Directive sets out the DCYP MOD Schools commitment to ensure that attendance is given a high priority in all MOD Schools and realistic targets for improvement are set. It is supplemented with practical guidance for schools, which reflect best practice as outlined by the Department for Education (DfE).

Principles

We believe high levels of attendance and a punctual start to the school day are important to all children. Our aim is to ensure that every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled and as a result achieve their full potential. We recognise the link between attendance and good learning and endeavour to work in partnership with all parents and carers to uphold and reinforce this message to impact on the outcomes for our pupils. As a school we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

Our policy is founded on our core values of happiness, compassion, respect, responsibility, achievement and independence.

Safeguarding

The British Forces School (BFS) fully recognises the responsibility it has under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to have arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Through their day-to-day contact with pupils and direct work with families, staff at the school play a crucial role in noticing indicators of possible abuse or neglect and referring them to SSAFA, and Senior Educational Social Worker, Pupil and Family Services.

Legal Requirements

The law (The Education Act 1996 & Pupil registration regulations 2013) requires all schools to record the attendance of each pupil at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions.

Schools should follow up on absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised;
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on the school's electronic register.

The Government expects: Parents/carers to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children attend school regularly and arrive to school on time.

- Schools and local authorities to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
 - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
 - Act early to address patterns of absence.

Our Home-school agreement informs parents/carers that we expect them to:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- Ensure that they contact the school daily of any absence;
- Notify school immediately of any changes to emergency contact details.

As a school we will:

- Provide a welcome atmosphere; Provide a safe learning environment;
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality; monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality;
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality;
- Inform parents of their child's attendance and punctuality on the annual pupil report and when an absence request is submitted;
- Ensure that this policy and the schools' procedures for absence requests are published and accessible on our school website.

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

Parents should refer to the school Parent Information Booklet which they will be given on admission, and is also available on the website, for full details regarding school timings for different phases.

Foundation Stage 1

All Foundation Stage 1 children should arrive at school promptly for the start of their allocated three hour session (08:45 – 11:45 with parents and children welcome for 'stay and play' from 08:30). The register will be open between 8:45 – 08:55. If a child arrives after 08:55 and before 09:15 they will be marked late in the register and receive an **L** code in the register.

Foundation Stage 2, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

All children should arrive at school between 8:15 and 8:25 and go straight to their classrooms on arrival. **Registration will close at 08:35.** Any child arriving after 08:35 and before 08:55 will be marked as late in the register and receive an **L** code in the register. The afternoon registration period is 13:00 – 13:05 (winter hours only). Any child arriving after 13:05 and before 13:30 will be marked as late in the register and receive an **L** code in the register.

If a child arrives at school after the close of registration they should be escorted by their parent to the school office and sign in to the late book stating the reason for the lateness and the time. If a child is more than half an hour later than the opening time for registration then they will receive a **U** code in the register. The school office will record the appropriate code in the register. A **U** code equates to an unauthorised absence for that session and will count towards their annual attendance which will be reported on the child's annual school report.

Persistent Lateness

The school follows a three step system for children who are persistently late:

Step 1 - When a child is considered to be persistently late (this is at the discretion of their class teacher, the AHT and/or the Headteacher)) then the school will arrange a meeting with the parents/carers to try to resolve the child's persistent lateness and the school's concerns.

Step 2 - If a child continues to be persistently late the school will send a letter to the parents/carers requesting a meeting to discuss the matter and see if there are any ways in which the school can help.

Step 3 - In the event that the child's punctuality still does not improve then the school will refer the matter to the MOD Schools Senior Education Social Worker.

Other Reasons for Absence

From time to time children need to be absent from school for other reasons such as medical appointments. Such absences usually only take up part of a day. School should be informed of such absences in writing in advance and children should be brought in to school for morning registration and back to school straight after the appointment. Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours where possible. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

If a parent informs school that their child has a medical appointment first thing in the morning i.e. between 08:15 – 08:35 then the appropriate code (M) will be recorded in the register to indicate this.

If a child attends a medical or dental appointment and returns before 13:05 the register entry will be amended to reflect that they attended the second session of the school day. Similarly, if a child leaves school to attend a medical/dental appointment before the start of the second session and does not return by 13:05 they will be marked as absent with an M for the second session.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the school informing the chain of command of concerns; if a child fails to attend school regularly, without lawful excuse, the parent will be guilty of an offence and may face disciplinary action.

Authorised Absences

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Parents/carers should notify the school before 08:35 on the first school day of his/her child's absence from school. If any child is absent and the school has not been notified, the School Office staff will call the family. In the event that contact could not be made, the Office staff will record this on the register. If there are any child welfare / safety concerns then the matter may be referred to the Unit Welfare team and/or Social Services. Examples of authorised absences are:

- Illness; Religious observance by the religious body to which the child's family belongs;
- Absences allowed by the school. These would usually include:
 - medical appointments;
 - exclusions;
 - extreme family emergencies/occasions such as bereavement.

Holidays During Term Time

In April 2013 the government issued amendments to 'The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. These amendments came into force on 1 September 2013. The amendments make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Therefore our school will only authorise holidays in line with these regulations. Exceptional circumstance will only be agreed very rarely.

The DCYP MOD Schools position is that there are no grounds for parents to apply for term time leave for their child/ren for family holidays. There are, however, two grounds on which parents can apply for term time pupil leave through the Headteacher, who has the sole authority to approve term time pupil leave.

They are:

a. **Exceptional circumstances.** Parents can apply to the Headteacher using the Application Form at Annex A. By definition this is decided upon by the Headteacher on a case by case basis. Examples of 'exceptional' would include bereavement or serious illness of relatives, medical needs where treatment is required in the UK by the child's primary care giver etc. Another example would be where service parents are employed in crucial roles and therefore, to fulfil the needs of the regiment, can't take leave at the same time as other service parents;

b. To link with **Rest and Recuperation (R and R) and POL** with a maximum of 10 days. Parents can apply to the Headteacher using the Application Form at Annex B. This application requires the prior signature by a Unit representative, confirming that the parent is *entitled to apply* for term time pupil leave.

POL. It is recognised that families face unique circumstances in a military community given operational tours. The entitlement to and granting of POL, for service personnel, is covered by JSP Page 5 760 Chapter 3 with DCYP MOD Schools acknowledging that section 3.004 requires POL to be taken '*as soon as possible and at the latest within one month, after a Service person's return from qualifying Operations or Deployments*'. POL therefore does frequently coincide with academic terms. POL is for serving personnel and is a valuable part of the staged process of returning from operational tours. It is, however, important that parents understand the potential detrimental effect on a child's education by them missing school. The Application Form makes note of that fact. The granting of POL to a serving parent is a separate issue to the authorisation, from a head teacher, for a child to be absent from school. It is essential to highlight that families can and do enjoy the POL of the serving parent without going away and without therefore requesting that their child is absent from school during term time.

When deciding whether to authorise such requests, the Headteacher will take into account a range of issues, for example the individual pupils' previous attendance record as well as their age and stage within the academic cycle.

Parents should apply by completing the form available from the school Reception or through our website if they are considering a holiday in term time. This should be done at least 3 weeks before the holiday is planned. The school will consider the request and let parents know in writing whether it has been authorised.

Unfortunately, there will be occasions when term time leave has been applied for by a parent, not agreed to by the Headteacher, but then taken anyway. For the purposes of school data, such absences should continue to be recorded as code G, defined as 'Unauthorised absence as pupil is on a family holiday, not agreed'.

In England there is a legal power to issue parenting orders and penalty notices; that power does not exist overseas. Where there is a concern over the welfare of the child the in-country social welfare services can be contacted. For persistently non-compliant parents Headteachers can work in partnership with the Unit Welfare Officer (UWO) to seek a solution, or at last resort inform the Service person's Chain of Command through the UWO.

Unauthorised Absences

MOD Schools use the DfE definition of unauthorised absence (also known as truancy): "*absence without leave from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absence*".

Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy;

- Unexplained absences;
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- Looking after other children/ birthdays or staying home with visitors;
- Day trips or holidays in term time not authorised by the school.

Whilst any child may be off school because of illness, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regards to attendance are best sorted out between the school, parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absences and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will seek to take action immediately. The school follows a four step system for children who are persistently absent:

Step 1 - When a child is considered to be persistently absent (this is at the discretion of their class teacher, the AHT and/or the Headteacher)) then the school will arrange a meeting with the parents/carers to try to resolve the child's persistent absenteeism and the school's concerns.

Step 2 - If a child continues to be persistently absent the school will send a letter to the parents/carers requesting a meeting to discuss the matter and see if there are any ways in which the school can help.

Step 3 - In the event that the child's attendance still does not improve then the school will refer the matter to the MOD Schools Senior Education Social Worker.

Step 4 - Joint Services Publication (JSP) 342, Chapter 4, Paragraph 4.1 states that: 'It is the duty of the parent of a child of compulsory school age to ensure that that child receives efficient fulltime education. Failure to ensure that a child of school age receives efficient education will be referred to the Commanding Officer where the parent is a member of the Services or to the parent's Head of Establishment in the case of other entitled persons.'

Monitoring

The School Governance Committee (SGC) is responsible for monitoring the impact of this policy and the Headteacher will report attendance figures termly as part of their report to governors.

This policy has been written with reference to the following:

- The schools core values;
- The Education Act (1996);
- Pupil registration regulations (2013);
- School attendance – departmental advice for maintained schools (October 2014);
- DCYP Policy Directive - Attendance in MOD Schools (November 2016).

Strategies for promoting and rewarding good attendance

Good attendance is a feature of BFS. Given that this is also a very small school, it is felt that it is not appropriate to reward individual/class attendance as this can inadvertently result in singling out an individual for authorised absences such as illness. In addition this could also result in parent/peer pressure for a child to attend school when they are unwell. The school has a range of procedures in place to promote good attendance and punctuality outlined below.

Summary of procedures to promote good attendance/punctuality:

The following tables show specific procedures to maintain and encourage excellent attendance at BFS

Daily procedures	By whom	Outcomes/action
Parents ensure pupils arrive at school on time	Parents/Carers	
Parents inform the school by 08:35 if their child is absent that day	Parents/Carers	Office/Support staff update registration codes
Teachers record attendance using the schools Integris registration system. This is done by 08:35 and 13:05 daily. Where teacher does not yet have a reason for absence a * is recorded on the register to be followed up by Office Staff	Teachers including supply Teacher/LSA	Staff use paper register, if required. Teacher takes responsibility for promptly informing Office Staff of any absences
Office Staff populate attendance sheet on whiteboard outside AHT Office with absences together with reason where known and kept	Office Staff	AHT informed of absence information via whiteboard
First day absence phone calls are made to follow up unexplained absences for that day.	Office Staff	Office Staff update attendance codes on Integris to reflect reason for late arrival (e.g. medical appointment) where reason received
Pupils arriving later to school are signed in by parents and are registered by Office Staff	Office Staff	Office Staff update attendance codes on Integris to reflect reason for late arrival (e.g. medical appointment) where reason received
Parents provide written note, including dates of and reason for absence upon the child's return to school	Parents/Carers	Office Staff collect at reception/ Teachers collect these and file in hardcopy register folders

Weekly procedures	By whom	Outcomes/action
Attendance/punctuality statistics produced by year group and school for AHT	Office Staff	Entered into Attendance Overview spreadsheet to allow for monitoring and analysis
Absence codes for individual pupils are updated using Integris to show reason for absence with agreement from AHT	Office Staff	Information provided here is used to provide targeted interventions as appropriate

Half termly and termly procedures	By whom	Outcomes/action
Analyse attendance/punctuality data to monitor trends and progress	AHT	
Discussions as required in response to specific attendance/punctuality concerns of a particular cohort of pupils	AHT/HT	
Individual attendance/punctuality discussed with pupils and families at parent's evenings	Class Teachers	Mentoring and advice on attendance/punctuality issues provided to all families
Analyse attendance/punctuality data and information to identify cases of concern and develop appropriate interventions	AHT	Targeted intervention for individual concerns
Meeting to discuss individual cases monitor progress and refer new concerns	AHT/HT	
Review success and impact of attendance/ punctuality strategies for the term	AHT/HT	Amend and refine interventions as appropriate

Policy written following DCYP/MOD Schools Policy Directive, template & Annexes: December 2016
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Annex A – Request for Term Time pupil Leave – Exceptional Circumstances

Name of child: _____ Class: _____

I would like to request permission for my child to take 'exceptional' term time leave from school for the following reasons and understand that family holidays are not a valid reason and that any absence may be detrimental to my child's education.

Outline of exceptional circumstances:

The exceptional leave I am requesting for my child is planned from (date) _____ until _____ resulting in a total absence of _____ school days.

I understand that I may be required to provide evidence of the above if required and that this may require this information to be discussed with the relevant Unit Welfare Office.

Signature of parent: _____ Date: _____

School Administrative use only

Thank you for your application for 'exceptional leave' for your child. Your child's attendance record for the last term/academic year is as follows:

% attendance

- a) I confirm that this exceptional leave has been agreed. A total of _____ days authorised absences have now been recorded.

Signed _____ (Headteacher) Date _____

- a) Your request for exceptional leave has not been agreed for the following reason:

Signed _____ (Headteacher) Date _____



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Annex B – Request for Term Time pupil Leave Pre/ Post Operational Leave (POL)

Name of child: _____ Class: _____

I would like to request permission for my child to take 'exceptional leave' from school during term time due to my own pre/post operational leave. I understand that any term time leave for children is discouraged and may be detrimental to my child's education.

Reason for exceptional leave:

I understand that DCYP MOD Schools expects that a maximum of ten days is applied for and that the Head of household must have returned from a minimum of a 3 months tour of duty which is deemed by the chain of command to be hazardous or dangerous. This request form is pre-signed by my unit, in the box below, confirming that I am entitled to apply – I understand that actual permission for this exceptional term time leave from school can only be granted by my child's Headteacher.

UNIT DECLARATION	Unit Stamp
Name of Unit:	
Rank/Name of Unit Representative	
This is to certify that _____ is entitled to apply for exceptional leave' for their child from school as a result of operational leave.	
Signature of Unit Representative:	

The exceptional leave I am requesting for my child is planned from (date) _____ until _____ resulting in a total absence of _____ school days.

Signature of parent: _____ Date: _____

School Administrative use only

Thank you for your application for 'exceptional leave' for your child. Your child's attendance record for the last term/academic year is as follows:

% attendance This % means that the number of sessions missed last term/year =

a) I confirm that this exceptional leave has been agreed. A total of ____ days authorised absences has now been recorded.

Signed: _____ (Headteacher) Date: _____

b) Your request for exceptional leave has not been agreed for the following reason:

Signed: _____ (Headteacher) Date: _____