

MERTON COURT SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

To be reviewed September 2026 by: Headmaster, Mrs A Macdonald, LT
Signed by Headmaster/Proprietor: 
Shared with staff: 9.9.25
Put on Website: 9.9.25

Applies to:

- The whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Breakfast Club, After School Club, Holiday Playscheme and all other activities provided by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours;
- All staff (teaching and support staff), the Proprietor and volunteers working in the school.

Other relevant documents:

- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Equality Act 2010
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SEND)
- Admissions Policy
- Children Missing Education (Updated August 2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2025)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (December 2023)
- Statutory Framework for the EYFS (September 2025)
- Working together to improve school attendance (August 2024)
- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (August 2024)
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (December 2015 – updated August 2017)
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- School suspensions and permanent exclusions (August 2024)

Availability

This policy is made available to parents and staff in the following ways on the School website, staff shared drive, and on request, a copy may be obtained from the School Office.

Monitoring and Review:

This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Headmaster/Proprietor who will undertake an annual review of this policy and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown, or earlier if changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Introduction

Merton Court School is committed to working with parents/carers, and children to ensure that all children enrolled at school attend regularly. It is underpinned by clear expectations, procedures and responsibilities which all staff, parents and children understand.

All children are likely to be absent from school at some time in their school life. However, persistent poor attendance is disruptive to the individual and to the work of the class and may be an early warning of other difficulties. Where there are genuine reasons for non-attendance, the school will work with parents/carers to ensure that the child's education is continued by means other than school attendance. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

The Headmaster/Proprietor is responsible for making sure the school keeps Admission and Attendance registers in accordance with the regulatory requirements. For all day children of compulsory school age our attendance registers record which children are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. An attendance record is also kept of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised. The attendance registers are kept electronically using the new absence codes introduced in August 2024. Parents are kept regularly informed about their child's attendance.

The school calendar and dates when school is open can be accessed from the home page of our website, www.mertoncourtprep.co.uk. Alternatively, our term dates and Calendar of Events can be obtained from the school office. School emergency closures for such things as extreme weather will also be published on the home page of our website.

The procedures that the school have put in place are aimed at ensuring the welfare of all its children. Parents are asked to help by co-operating with these procedures.

The school has appointed Mrs A. MacDonald who is a member of the leadership team as our 'Attendance Champion'.

Definitions

Punctuality

Parents/carers should ensure that their child/ren arrive in time for the bell going at 08.45. To arrive late and miss the start of the day is disruptive to both children and the class. The gates will close at 8.45 and access to the school will be via the School Office only. Late arrivals are logged on the school system and parents will be contacted if their child/ren are persistently late.

When children arrive late or miss school days, they miss crucial learning opportunities that cannot be fully recovered. Even a few minutes can disrupt a child's morning routine and impact their entire day of learning. Late arrivals also interrupt the learning environment for other children and require teaching to pause. Research consistently shows that regular attendance and punctuality are directly linked to:

- Higher academic achievement
- Stronger social connections with peers
- Better development of essential life skills

Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent. If a child is sick the office should be called before 9.00am on 020 8300 2112 to notify School of the reason. If a child's absence lasts longer than five school days, parents should keep the school informed of the child's progress and likely date of return.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. There are now tighter than ever restrictions on what can be classified as an unauthorised absence which the school adheres to.

Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, or a holiday is taken during term time, these will be marked as unauthorised absences (with the exception of Early Years). A morning and afternoon absence counts as two absences.

If a parent requests permission for their child to be absent, including children in the EY, a written letter/email should be sent to the Headmaster, via the school secretary, giving the length and reason for absence. A letter will be returned to them advising whether or not the absence can be authorised. We naturally expect parents to take their family holiday in the school holiday periods and not in term time.

Parents are reminded that we are monitored by Bexley's Education Welfare Officer, who visits school every half term to check on absences and may contact parents of children whose attendance falls below 95% attendance.

The Attendance Percentage Report (collated via BromCom) is found in Appendix 1.

If a child is not present in school and the school has received no notification from the parents regarding the absence by 9.00 am, school staff will contact parents using the contact details they have provided to the school. It is extremely important that parents inform School of any changes in contact details.

Every school day matters and developing good attendance habits now will benefit children throughout their academic journey and into their professional life.

Taking your child out of school during the school day

From time to time, a parent may need to take their child out of school during the school day perhaps for an appointment, because the child is unwell or because of a family emergency. Children who need to leave school during the school day will only be released into the care of a parent or other adult, who has been authorised in writing by the parent or verbally by phone, to collect that child. If someone new is collecting a child, parents should notify the school of a 'password' to be used on collection.

Where possible, parents should try to make dental, medical and other appointments for their child outside of the school day, although we do appreciate this is not always possible.

Long-term Absences

When children have an illness that means they will be away from our school for over five days, the school will use its best endeavours to put work onto the Yeargroup Google Drive. Parents will be able to collect any necessary paper-based materials from the school office.

Monitoring and Review

- It is the responsibility of the Headmaster/Proprietor and our Attendance Champion to monitor overall attendance and punctuality and seek to ensure that the attendance figures are as they should be.
- The school keeps accurate electronic attendance records on file for the duration of a child's time at Merton Court School.
- Form teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way.
- Any ongoing absences, 'lates' or unauthorised absences for holidays are followed up by the Education Welfare Officer for Bexley Council.
- If there is a concern about a child's absences, the form teacher will contact the school office and this will immediately be followed up by Mrs Macdonald.

- Parents have access to early intervention and support (targeted at the whole family) before any legal action commences if the situation becomes problematic.
- The School will ensure that those children missing because of mental or physical ill-health or those children with SEND will be given where possible extra support, by considering the individual needs of the child.
- Attendance teams in the local authority will work in tandem with 'Early Help' to provide a whole family response, with a single assessment plan and lead practitioner.
- School values the views of parents through 'Parent Voice' and Parental Forums, as well as keeping parents informed via Yeargroup coffee morning, 'Zoominars', Newsletters and on our website.
- Staff will be made aware of how to remove barriers to attendance and understand the avenues for support, both within and outside of the school.

APPENDIX 1

MERTON COURT PREP SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PERCENTAGE REPORT.

AUTUMN TERM 2024: YR 1-YR6 AVERAGE ATTENDANCE = 96%

SPRING TERM 2025: YR1-YR6 AVERAGE ATTENDANCE = 95%

SUMMER TERM 2025: YR1-YR6 AVERAGE ATTENDANCE = 96%

AUTUMN TERM 2025: YR1-YR6 AVERAGE ATTENDANCE = 96%

