

Attendance Policy



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School name	Minet Junior School
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1. Introduction

Minet Junior is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they regularly attend school and your child should be at school on time every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important, therefore, that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

2. Why regular attendance is so important

- Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.
- Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.
- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will

- Give you details on attendance in our regular school newsletters.
- Children causing concern in terms of attendance will be highlighted and the school will report to parents/carers on expected improvements on a half termly basis until the school is happy with attendance.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements – through regular newsletters, prizes given in assembly and end of term achievement.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and prizes
- Provide support for vulnerable families through our Attendance Officer, Family Support Worker, Learning Mentors and "Free" Breakfast Club

3. Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. An attendance register is taken twice in one school day, am and pm. These registers count as sessions, meaning in any one school day there are two sessions a student can be marked as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

To avoid the possibility of penalisation for absences Minet Juniors ask for a reason (preferably in writing) and medical evidence where possible. Absence due to illness will be authorised providing the school is satisfied the illness is genuine. To confirm the illness, the school may ask for parents to provide medical evidence, such as an appointment card or appropriate form of evidence.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

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 Local Authority Attendance Support Team using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

A referral to the Local Authorities Attendance Support Team, can lead to sanctions and / or legal proceedings can be taken up against you.

This includes

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Parental illness
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Excessive illness without medical evidence
- If a sibling is absent, the other sibling must attend school

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is not advisable to cover up their absence or to give in to the pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Bring your child to breakfast club
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with your child's school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
- Encouraging your child to invite friends' home for play dates

Religious Observance

One day per year is recognised by the Local Authority for religious observance. Although this is an authorised absence it will still be reflected in the child's attendance record as a day not attending school. This is in line with the Department of Education guidelines. A maximum of three days per year is allowed for religious observance, however only one day in a term is permitted to be authorised for recognised religious observance.

4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'Persistent Absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops below 90% and they miss more than 10% of schooling across the academic year. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we expect parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include additional support through our Family Support Worker, Wendy Page. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the school Attendance Officer.

5. Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible not later than 9.00am by telephone or email.

If your child is absent we will

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Follow up with a phone call if no contact is received.
- If no response is received by the third day staff will visit the home that day (*where a pupil/family are considered by the Senior Leadership Team to be vulnerable this will be on the first day of absence*).
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer, if absences persist.
- If attendance does not improve a formal attendance panel / parenting contract meeting will be held with a parent. A four week review period will take place where no unauthorised absences should be had. In the event of six missed sessions / three missed days from school is considered a failed panel. Your case will then be referred to the Attendance support team, where a fine or other legal proceedings will be enforced.

6. Home Visits

If no contact is made by phone, a home visit will be carried out. Home visits are not pre-arranged and can be made at any time. Staff will carry their school ID and will expect to see the child in question, if only briefly, in order to ascertain how they are.

7. Attendance Support Service

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way and the attendance issues persist the school may refer the child to the school Attendance Officer. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices (currently £80 rising to £160 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A). 'If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.'

8. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at **8.40 am**
Registers are marked by **9.00 am**

At **9.00 am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a late mark that shows them to be on site, but this will count as a present mark. However if they arrive after **9.10am** this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Late Collection

It is a parent's duty of care to ensure that their children are collected at **3.15pm**. Details of children who are regularly collected late after school will be forwarded to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and / social care for further action if necessary. Further information can be found in our Late Collection of Child Policy.

9. Exceptional leave

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to take time off during the school terms to go on holiday. If you decide to take your child out of school for a holiday you will be referred to the Attendance Officer who on return may refer to Attendance Support Services to issue a penalty notice for unauthorised absence. This is a fine of £80 per parent per child that increases to £160 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay will result in prosecution at Uxbridge Magistrates Court. Information about your child attendance stays on file throughout their education.

The Attendance Support Services can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised absence. Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned and for each child's absences. If unauthorised leave is repeated the Attendance Support Services may summon each parent to Court.

10. Penalty Notices

School Attendance and the Law - (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 gives powers to Hillingdon Council to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of, but is unwilling to, secure an improvement in their child's school attendance

What is a Penalty Notice?

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are unauthorised by school. Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution which does not require an appearance in court whilst still seeking to secure an improvement in a pupil's attendance. Payment of a Penalty Notice enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction. A child would need to have missed 10 sessions of school in a 10 week period and the absence would need to be recorded as unauthorised. The 10 week period can span two terms. Only two Penalty Notices can be issued per child, per parent in the space of three academic years.

When are they used?

Hillingdon considers regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps)
- Parental condoned absence
- Leave during term time that school know or suspect is due to a family holiday being taken during the school term. Headteachers have discretion to consider exceptional leave and look at each case on its personal merit
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)
- All pupils who are suspended or permanently excluded from school are required not to be in a public place, during school hours, without justification. This includes being accompanied by their parents. In every case (except exclusion) a pupil will have had a minimum of 10 school sessions (i.e. five school days) lost to unauthorised absence before a Penalty Notice is considered. The authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions.

11. Child Missing Education (CME) Safeguarding Procedures

As stated in KCSIE (2023 p.175) "Children being absent from education for prolonged periods of time and/or on

repeated occasions can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues.” This may include abuse and neglect, mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of FGM or risk of forced marriage and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

It is important that the School responds to persistently absent pupils and children missing education in order to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and in the case of absent pupils, to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in the future. Staff should therefore be aware of the School’s attendance policy, particularly unauthorised absence and CME

Removing children from the school roll

If a child is out of school for more than 10 days without contact, the Local Authority are informed. Should parents take their child out of school for longer than 20 unauthorised days, the child’s name may be removed from the school roll by the Attendance Support Services. Parents will need to re-apply for a school place on their return to the Hillingdon Borough Admissions Team. A child may only be re-admitted if the school has a vacant place for them.

12. School targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child’s attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Hillingdon.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be posted on our website or put in newsletters and we ask for your full support.

13. People responsible for attendance matters in this school are

Mrs R Taylor
Assistant Headteacher, Inclusion
Designated Safeguarding Lead
Attendance Lead

Attendance Team
Mrs G Dobson
Attendance Administrator

Mrs Rochelle Short
Attendance Administrator

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures & its attendance policy to parents and promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their child/ children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Please note:

A copy of the Attendance Policy will be kept in the school reception (available to all parents/carers) and on the school website. Any families requiring support will be given a copy of the policy and asked to sign for it. Staff, Governors and Pupils will have access to the policy. It will be reviewed on an annual basis.