

MILDMAY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Robin Way, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 8AU

Telephone: (01245) 250021
Email: admin@mildmayprimary.org
Website: www.mildmayprimary.org

Headteacher: Mr D Mulholland



30th September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Attendance Matters

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to fulfil their potential. Attendance for all children is monitored, and the school will seek to work actively with parents to ensure that regular high levels of attendance are maintained. The following paragraphs are for your information with regard to attendance matters.

Attendance Thresholds:

There is a 90% threshold for attendance (set by the Department for Education) below which your child will be classified as a 'Persistent Absentee'.

If/when this occurs, we are required to investigate the circumstances and gather evidence to validate the level of absence.

90% attendance implies that a child will have missed 38 sessions (almost 4 weeks) of schooling over the academic year and is considered to be significantly detrimental to his/her learning.

An additional threshold of 50% will mean your child is classified as 'Severely Absent' and significant additional measures will be taken to try and rectify this issue.

Good and Acceptable Attendance:

There is no published definition for what constitutes 'Good' or 'Acceptable' attendance at school. According to the DFE, all children should endeavour to be in school for **100% of the 190 school days** in each academic year.

As a school we would expect to see the vast majority of children attending **in excess of 97%** of the available time; however, even at this level a child will have missed 1 week of schooling from their 38-week entitlement. We wholly understand that certain medical conditions and other circumstances may impact on a child's ability to attend school and will take account of such circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

Where attendance is low (at or below 94%), irregular, or a pattern of absence is observed, the school will write on a half termly basis to all families where there is a concern; in more significant cases you may be asked to attend a School Attendance Meeting (SAM) to formally discuss the issues, seek to resolve the problem and improve your child's attendance. If a problem persists, this may be escalated to an Attendance Contract meeting.

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Lateness to School:

Incidents of lateness to school are recorded and do constitute 'broken attendance'. Persistent lateness may be brought to the attention of the Local Authority Attendance Compliance Team.

Where lateness is regular, or a pattern of lateness is observed, you may be required to attend a School Attendance Meeting (SAM) in just the same way as you would for absenteeism. Please be reminded that all children should be on-site, in their classroom and ready to start the day by 8:55am each day.

First Day Absence Communication:

For clarity in our school registration, we require that we be notified of any child's absence on the first day that he/she is absent. Please use our school telephone system to leave a message stating your child's name, class, a brief reason for absence and an anticipated date for return to school.

If an absence overlaps the weekend, we also request that an additional communication is received on the Monday morning of the second week.

Leave of Absence Requests:

All schools, by law, must follow the Department for Education's statutory guidance relating to school attendance. They must use the appropriate national attendance or absence codes, and follow the criteria set out within the guidance. The statutory guidance states:

- A leave of absence must not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances and must be requested in advance.
- A leave of absence must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with.
- Schools must judge each application individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.
- Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school.
- A need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.
- A school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, the leave of absence should not be granted.
- Where this guidance refers to a parent, the school and/or local authority will need to decide which adult(s) is most appropriate. Generally, parents include:
 - All biological parents, whether they are married or not;
 - All those who have parental responsibility
 - Those who have day to day responsibility for the child

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Please note that all schools are expected to regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence.

Taking your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to their educational progress. If the absence is not authorised and the leave is taken, schools may refer to the Local Authority for legal action.

In line with the DFE statutory guidance and the school attendance policy, please be advised that the following circumstances **do not** constitute exceptional circumstances and therefore applications made on these grounds will not be authorised:

- surprise bookings made by grandparents,
- milestone birthdays and anniversaries,
- extended family events and
- flight days/times

Penalty Notices and Legal Action:

If leave is not authorised but is taken anyway, the school is required to request that the Local Authority Attendance Compliance Team take appropriate legal action.

There is a single consistent national threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by ALL schools in England, this is:

- 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period
- These sessions **do not have to be consecutive** and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (For example, a 5-day unauthorised leave of absence would meet the national threshold)
- The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, the fine amount will be £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days (If not paid within 21 days, the fine will increase to £160 per parent, per child, payable between the 22nd and 28th day. The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, a reduced rate is not available. The amount, therefore, will be £160 per parent, per child (payable within 28 days).

The third time an offence is committed, a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court. Prosecution can result in criminal records and fines of up to £2,500. Cases found guilty in a Magistrates Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate (Disclosure and Barring Service) due to a 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

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I very much hope that none of this information is entirely new to you but felt that clarity and understanding of my decision making and the parameters I am bound by regarding authorised and unauthorised attendance is important for all parents.

I trust that you will be keen to work with us to ensure that, for the benefit of your child's education, s/he maintains the highest levels of school attendance possible.

Yours sincerely,

Dominic Mulholland

Headteacher

