



Attendance policy

Person responsible	
Governor appointed	
Date of first draft	
Last review	
Date adopted by Governors	
Changes made	This policy has been overseen by the Deputy Headteacher and CSAWS representative, Lynne Nash. Significant changes have been made where required.
Date of next review	
Signature of Chair of Governors	

MIDDLEMARCH JUNIOR SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2023-24

This document is to enable the Governing Body of the school to fulfil its statutory responsibilities under Section 175 and that the school complies with legal requirements regarding the safeguarding of children of the Education Act 2002. Our procedures follow the expectations set out by the Department for Education in the guidance Working Together to improve school attendance (September 2022).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Middlemarch School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance. Our procedures are based around the principles and stages of:

- preventing poor attendance
- early intervention and Early Help to address early patterns of poor attendance and agree ways to improve
- targeted interventions (including Early Help and Formal Interventions) for those children are persistently absent or severely absent
- understanding barriers to individuals' attendance and agree individual plans for children with specific needs
- formal statutory interventions where support has not been effective or engaged with

1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents, carers, teaching staff, support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

1.3 The policy has been drawn up after consultation with the Governors and representatives from the school community and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

2. SCHOOL'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Whole School Responsibility

All staff (teaching and support) at Middlemarch School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

2.2 Attendance Lead

The Head teacher and Deputy will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Deputy is the school's Attendance Champion and regular attendance meetings with relevant parties will be held, minutes recorded and agreed actions implemented. The Head teacher and Deputy will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body termly. The Head and Deputy will ensure issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any barriers.

2.3 Attendance Team

In addition to the Head and Deputy, responsibility for dealing with attendance lies with the Office Manager in addition to class teachers and support staff.

2.4 Registration:

1) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: once at the start of the day and once at the start of the afternoon session. Class teachers (who take the registers) and office staff (who process the registers) are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown below).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	PRESENT (AM)	
\	PRESENT (PM)	
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	
C	Other authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	
D	Dual registration (ie pupil attending other establishment)	
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	
H	Family holiday (agreed)	
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	
J	Interview	
L	Late (BEFORE registers close)	
M	Medical/Dental appointments	
N	No reason yet provided for absence	
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	
P	Approved sporting activity	
R	Religious observance	
S	Study leave	
T	Traveller absence	
U	Late (AFTER registers close)	
V	Educational visit or trip	
W	Work experience	
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	
Y	Enforced closure	
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	
#	School closed to pupils	

2) The register will be called promptly by the class teacher as pupils come in between 8.30 and 8.40 allowing for a 10 minute period before it is saved. In the afternoon registers are taken at 1.10 and closed at 1.20.

3) Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. (Add the time your register closes in the morning ie: 9.30am) Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness. Where a pupil arrives after the register closes, this will be classed as an unauthorised late absence (code U as per DFE compulsory attendance codes).

2.5 Absence

1) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. If a child is absent from school parents should contact the school on the first day of absence to inform the school of the reason for absence. Parents are expected to maintain contact with the school throughout the absence.

At 9.10 school registers are checked for any absences where there has been no contact by parents and reason given. School staff will send text messages to parents to ascertain a reason for the child absence from school.

It is a school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In the majority of cases, a parent's explanation of their child's illness can be accepted without question or concern. In circumstances where there are concerns about a child's attendance or reason for absence, further evidence of a child's illness may be requested.

The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher.

2) Middlemarch School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. **A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.**

3) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised.

4) Absences will be authorised:

- in **exceptional** circumstances where permission has been granted for a leave of absence for which the parents have sought permission.
- the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend (including 48 hours clear after sickness and/or diarrhoea)

In addition, one day's absence will be granted for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.

2.6 Medical Appointments

Where at all possible, parents are encouraged to arrange medical appointments for children outside of school hours. In circumstances where this is not possible a pupil should **attend school for registration** and only leave premises to attend the appointment returning straight after. Taking extra time around the appointment adds to learning time missed and should be avoided. Parents are required to provide a copy of the appointment letter or card prior to the day of the appointment.

2.7 Approved educational activity

If a pupil is attending an off-site approved educational activity, details must be provided in advance detailing the event, location and time. School will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.8 Staff training

The Head Teacher will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receives sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

3.1 Reporting data and trends

Half-termly, the Attendance Lead will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed, shared with the senior leadership team and reported to parents and the governing body. The governors' report should include commentary against the school target (96%). The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Where there is cause for concern, this information is shared with CSAWS during regular attendance meetings held at school. CSAWS then follow up attendance concerns with parents and carers on school's behalf.

Information regarding attendance concerns may also be shared with the Local Authority as part of statutory processes and in Attendance Targeting Meetings at least termly in line with "Working together to Improve Attendance 2022".

3.2 Monitoring Categories

Attendance is monitored by year group, class and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs, Looked after Children and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

3.3 DfE

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

4. SYSTEMS AND STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING AND IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at Middlemarch School and is regularly included in assemblies and class discussions. Parents are regularly reminded on class dojo about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment. The importance of attending school is included in a weekly assembly led by either the Head teacher or her Deputy. Regular reminders of the whole school target is shared with parents alongside the whole school weekly attendance. Celebration of attendance improvers is shared in class assemblies.

4.2 Throughout the year attendance and punctuality improvement will remain a focus through: themed attendance days, attendance improver certificates, 100% days, no lates days etc.

4.3 Both individual and class attendance will be regularly discussed with pupils emphasising a sense of individual responsibility to attend school regularly, particularly among the older pupils. Class blogs should be used to reflect upon attendance as well as the week's learning.

4.4 Children receive attendance certificates at the end of each term:

Bronze: 96% and over

Silver: 98% and over

Gold: 99% and over

5. ATTENDANCE AND SAFE-GUARDING

5.1 First-day calling

Middlemarch School has in place a system of first-day contact. This means that parents will be sent a text on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence and to ensure their safety and well-being. If no contact is made with the parent/carer, a phone call will be made. Where school staff have concerns about a child, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the

individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated (DFE Attendance guidance 2022).

This includes telephone calls to parents, other emergency contacts, home visits, referrals to the CSAWS Attendance and Welfare Officer and to the police for a safe and well check.

5.2 Children Missing Education

A child missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School should follow the school's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

All schools are required to make the local authority aware of every registered pupil who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 10 school days education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulation 12).

5.3 Home contact

Each pupil should have 3 numbers available for school to contact a parent, carer or additional adult. These must be kept up to date. Responsibility lies with the parent/carers to inform school of changes.

6. MMS Strategies to Tackle Absence and PA

The Deputy Headteacher is responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that Middlemarch School intervene in non-attendance at an early stage.

New Year 3 Pupils:

- a) Summer term liaison with feeder primary schools prior to starting at MMS
- b) Advise parents at the end of September if below 94%. Set a review date.
- c) Review date – acknowledge improvements. In case of a decline or lack of improvement, CSAWS, Compass will be informed.
- d) CSAWS and school meeting.

Existing Pupils:

- a) Summer 2 we will identify pupils sitting below 90% and will inform parents of a September review.
- b) Review date – acknowledge improvements. In case of a decline or lack of improvement, CSAWS, Compass will be informed.
- c) CSAWS and school meeting.

Persistent absence is deemed as being below 90%. By focusing on those pupils at risk of falling into this category, MMS will aim to reduce the number of pupils classed as PA. This figure is published nationally and we are held accountable for it.

7. Involving governors and WAS

7.1 MMS has a governor whose primary responsibility is to that of attendance. They will receive half-termly updates regarding attendance trends and will challenge school leaders to strive towards making continual improvements. The attendance governor will be asked to intervene in cases of non-attendance when

parents will be invited to discuss school's concerns and parental responsibility to ensure good school attendance.

7.2 Referral to WAS – the Warwickshire Attendance Service – will be made if there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specified time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all). Regulations (Education Pupil Regulations 2006) require schools to inform the LA of every pupil who has been continuously absent without a good reason (i.e. the absence is unauthorised) for 10 school days or more. Schools must also inform the LA of every pupil who fails to attend regularly which is interpreted to mean those pupils who have patterns of unauthorised absence without amassing 10 continuous absences.

8. PUNCTUALITY

8.1 Lateness and punctuality: School gates are open on a staggered basis allowing each class a ten minute safe arrival time. Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in their classroom for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late.

8.2 A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other pupils with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to WAS.

8.3 Pupils who arrive within half an hour of registers closing are logged as late using the L code. Persistent lateness is followed up via DAILY monitoring of registers and the late book. A meeting will be arranged with parents by the Learning Mentor (Mel Diver) to discuss strategies to improve punctuality.

8.4 For health and safety and safe-guarding reasons, it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the main office with their parent who should sign the late book. **It is important that parents of all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.**

8.5 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day are signed out at the main office.

9. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- Head teachers **shall not grant any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.

- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council.
- The Warwickshire Attendance Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council’s Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>).
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council’s Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

The resident parent should complete a Leave of Absence Request form available from the school office or the school website. The head teacher may ask parents to provide supporting evidence when assessing a parent’s case for exceptional circumstances.

10 PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

10.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child).

10.2 Middlemarch School expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children’s attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

10.3 Parents/carers MUST notify the school on the first day of absence by either:

- Telephoning the school
- Texting using the absence number
- Using the Study Bugs app

CLASS-DOJO MUST NOT BE USED TO ALERT SCHOOL OF A CHILD’S ABSENCE

10.4 Parents are expected to:

- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;

- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and parents' evenings, signing homework diaries, supporting home learning tasks, taking an interest in their children's work and reading with their child;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. The school will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

11. PUPILS' RESPONSIBILITIES

11.1 All pupils are made aware of the importance of regular school attendance through plotting individual attendance, sharing in whole school and class assemblies, celebrating attendance in the school newsletter, receiving rewards and certificates. . If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak in the first instance to their class teacher.

11.2 Pupils should attend school on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they will be supported in catching up on missing work.

12. GOVERNORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 175 (2)

12.1 The governing body shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

The review of this policy will be carried out annually and as required in response to national requirements or considering continuous school-based monitoring and evaluation data.

