THE MOUNTBATTEN SCHOOL

School Improvement Committee

Attendance Policy

October 2025

Review Date: October 2027

Company No. 07560175

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Section 1

Rationale

This is a successful school and each student 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 students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school on time every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Failing to attend The Mountbatten School on a regular basis may also raise welfare and safeguarding concerns.

We monitor absence closely so that we can ensure our students are safe.

This policy sets out how together with parents, students, and outside agencies we can secure outstanding attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a significant, direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95% (absence of 10 school days or 20 sessions)
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regularly attenders find school routines enable them to build relationships, succeed and enjoy school life
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders have greater success transferring from primary to secondary school and into Further Education and Higher Education, employment or training.

Section 2

2.1 Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

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

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide attendance details on EPraise for parents to access
- Report to parents on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance rate is and how this relates to their progress;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Send a text message to parents if a child fails to register in the morning.

2.2 Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. The school requests that any absence is communicated to the school before 9.00am.

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

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable or exceptional and for which no “leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority or school using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absence can include:

- Parents/Carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

This is not a definitive list of unauthorised absences.

If a student has 10 unauthorised sessions in any 100 session period (a session is half a day) then the school will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice via the Local Authority.

2.3 Persistent Absenteeism

The school will regard a student as a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and must be tackled. We monitor all absences thoroughly.

2.4 Roles and Responsibilities

A member of the Senior Leadership Team 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. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child’s absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student’s home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities

- Liaise with the Attendance Manager on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support students with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of students
- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time
- Take responsibility for registering at the Attendance Office in the main reception block if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of parents/carers
Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:
- Inform the school on the first day (and ALL subsequent days) of absence, before 9.00am, by telephone, text, email or letter if a phone is unavailable
- Discuss with the tutor/class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance. (An Exceptional Leave of Absence form must be completed and submitted to the Attendance Office in advance of the absence).

Section 3

3.1 Recording Attendance, Lateness & Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their tutor getting vital information. Students arriving late to lessons is also disruptive.

The school day starts at **8:40am** and we expect students to be in their tutor base at that time.

Registers are marked by **8:41am**. Students arriving after this time are recorded 'late'.

At **9.00am** registration ends, students arriving after this time must sign in at the Attendance Office in the main reception block. Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

Sanctions for lateness increase in proportion to the number of times a student is late in any given term-for example:
- 3 lates
    - o Tutor faculty detention at break time and tutor will contact home.

- 6 lates
    - o Head of year sets a respect detention at break time
    - o Conversation with the student explaining that if this continues, parents will receive a warning letter.
- 10 lates, or patterns of lateness
    - o HOS sets a leadership detention for afterschool
    - o Warning letter sent to parents
    - o Parents, guardians or carers of students will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved.
- If lateness persists:
    - o Parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered
    - o Parents will be told, either at the meeting or in writing, that ANY instances of lateness (arriving into school after 8:40) will be coded as 'U'
    - o The school will follow the Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice.

3.2 What to do if my child is absent?

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must:
contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence no later than 9.00am.

If your child is absent we will:
- telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- invite you in to discuss the situation with our attendance officer and/or pastoral leaders and Assistant Headteacher if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Legal Intervention Team if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

3rd day of Absence
Please note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start *child missing in education* procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family and sending our Outreach and Transition Manager to visit the family address, supported by PCSOs if appropriate.

Ten days' absence
We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is

at risk of missing. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Section 4

4.1 Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2024: The Education Regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that the Headteacher can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an 'Exceptional Leave of Absence form' available from the website under 'Student Absence' or the School Attendance Office in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire County Council's *Code of conduct,* and within this policy, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code.

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 out during school time.

Section 5

5.1 Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures:

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

5.2 Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for students of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting Contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting Orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire County Council's *Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The *Code of conduct* is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

Schools are now authorised to issue Penalty Notices to parents who attempt to avoid penalties by scheduling holidays below the threshold, including during weeks containing Bank Holidays or INSET days. This ensures that attempts to manipulate absence thresholds are treated consistently in line with Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct.

A copy is available from:
Attendance guidance for parents/carers | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council

The *Code of conduct* states that schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the student has been:

- Absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive,
- Persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed,
- Persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness,
- (Code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met,
- Absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance,
- Absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance,

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance, then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
2. One or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a student has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
- a holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's Attendance Policy and website. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parents/carers** for each child. **NB:** This could mean 4 Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, i.e. one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the penalty is automatically increased to £160 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Section 6

6.1 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling:

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as *B*, an authorised absence.

6.2 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Section 7

7.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Associate Headteacher (Student Services) will have overall responsibility for the strategic oversight of attendance and for the monitoring and evaluation of attendance in school. Working with other members of the Pastoral Team and the Attendance Manager, the Associate Headteacher (Student Services) will:

- Ensure that data systems allow all staff can track the attendance of all students;
- Ensure that the needs of all students are met with appropriate interventions, and other strategies to maximise attendance in school;

7.2 Reporting

It will be the responsibility of the Associate Headteacher (Student Services) and the Student Services Attendance Manager to produce a termly report to the Headteacher. This will report on:

- The attendance figures for the school
- The attendance figures for vulnerable groups of students in school, including Student Premium and Looked After Students
- An analysis of the attendance data compared to previous years.

Policy Agreed

Signed by: …….. Date:
Chair of Trustees

(Signed copied kept in school)