MLP MAGNA LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Supporting your child's attendance

"The more children go to school, the better they do"



The power of partnership: Information for parents and carers - Your help needed

One chance

Missing a few days of school here and there may not seem a big deal, but research shows that it can have a significant impact on children's learning. Children who miss even a small amount of school quickly fall behind their peers. Most of the work they miss is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in their learning and in their personal development, which only grows as they get older.

Children who miss more than 10% of school (that's 20 days per year - I know crazy!) stand only a small chance of achieving good grades or making good progress. Across all of our schools students with good attendance - 97% and above, have between a 90-95% chance of making good progress, getting the best grades and progressing on to further education courses of their choosing.

Friendships can also be affected by absence: it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their classmates and staff members.

Establishing good attendance patterns from an early age helps children later in life, as most employers want to recruit someone who is reliable. **Children only get one chance at school; your child's chances of a successful future may be affected by not attending school regularly.**



What percentage is 'good' attendance?

An attendance rate of 97% is considered good across all MLP schools; this means children missing 6 days across the academic year due to illness. Persistent absence (PA) is defined as an attendance rate of below 90%. That's at least 20 missed school days per year out of 190. 90% might be good in a test but not when we are talking about attendance. Over 10 years that's 1 years' absence.



Attendance	Number of days absent in a year	Time missed in 5 years	Time missed over 10 years
99%	2 days	10 days	1 month
97%	6 days	1.5 months	3 months
95%	9.5 days	3 months	6 months
90%	19 days	6 months	1 year
85%	28.5 days	9 months	1.5 years
80%	38 days	1 year	2 years

Factors to support good attendance

Building good routines

Routines can help families with the busyness of the mornings during the school week. Set an early bedtime to ensure rest for the school day. Follow a night time routine:

- Set a consistent alarm, leaving extra time for unexpected delays
- Lay out clothing and supplies for the next day
- Place school bag, PE kit and shoes near the door
- Prepare packed lunch
- Have a back-up plan in case of transportation challenges





The importance of sleep

There are any number of studies that show that children with better sleep patterns and sleep routines attend better and subsequently achieve better in school. Building good routines and 'bedtimes' is crucial. Switch off screens or phones early in the evening. Try to send them to sleep at the same time every night and follow the same pattern. **Studies have determined that children aged 6–12 years should regularly sleep 9–12 hours per 24 hours and teenagers aged 13–18 years should sleep 8–10 hours per 24 hours.**

Factors to support good attendance

Unhappiness in school

If you suspect that your child is unhappy at school or missing school due to something on-going, please contact the school as soon as possible to ensure difficulties are resolved quickly.





Medical Appointments

If you need to make a medical or dental appointment for your child, please make it out of school hours. If this is not possible, please contact the school in advance. You may be asked to supply the medical letter or appointment card, giving details of the appointment. Should medical issues be ongoing please contact the school at the earliest opportunity.

What absences can be authorised?

The Department for Education (DfE) states that you can only allow your child to miss school if they are ill, or if you have advance permission from the Academy Leader. The following types of absence will be marked as **authorised**:

- Illness. You must notify your child's school on the morning of their first day of absence.
- Medical or dental appointments, although you should try to arrange these outside school hours if possible.
- Leave of absence authorised by the Academy Leader such as time off due to close family member bereavement or for religious observance.
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence when the family is travelling for occupational purposes only.
- Offsite educational activities: this could include music, dance or drama exams, or participation in a sporting event.

IMPORTANT NOTE: All approval is at the Academy Leader's discretion.

What absences will not be authorised?

Unacceptable reasons for missing school include: **waking up late, shopping trips, travel, holidays, birthdays, caring responsibilities, transport problems, not having uniform or uniform being in the wash and school refusal**. All of these put you, the parent, at risk of a penalty notice and are not authorised **(unauthorised)** by the school. If compassionate reasons apply, please do contact the school as these absences can be authorised for short periods of time upon request.



What happens if your child's absence is not authorised?

As a parent, it's your responsibility to make sure your child is at school, unless they have a long-term health problem. If your child doesn't go to school and you haven't contacted the school, you'll be contacted to find out why they're absent on the first day of absence. If the reasons for absence are not authorised your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

If your child is persistently absent, you will then be contacted by the school's attendance lead or Local Authority Education Welfare Officer. They will want to discuss your child's attendance with you and help you come up with a plan to make sure they get to school. The emphasis will be on providing support to help you improve your child's attendance. At all times we will **'listen, understand, empathise and support – but not tolerate'.**

You may be asked to sign an attendance contract: a voluntary written agreement stating that you will work with the school to improve your child's attendance.

Ultimately, if your child continues to miss school, legal action can be taken. Consequences include a parenting order compelling you to do what the court says to improve your child's attendance; a fine of £60, rising to £120 if you don't pay within 21 days; and prosecution, which could lead to a community service order, a fine of up to £2,500, or a custodial sentence of up to three months.

School Attendance Meetings (SAMs)

If your child's attendance falls below the expected standard set out in the school's attendance policy (this can be found on the school's website) or they have an unexplained absence of more than 2 days in a term, a School Attendance Meeting may be held. Parents will be invited in to discuss and agree an attendance contract. There must be a clear focus on the importance of attendance and agreement by all parties that attendance will improve and that any barriers to this will be removed by either home or school as necessary.

What to do if your child is ill?

When assessing whether to send your child to school or not, consider whether an adult would take a day off from work in a similar situation. If they are too unwell to attend school, please do keep them at home, but if they feel able to attend we have a medical facility and a medical officer should symptoms get worse during the day.

For sickness or diarrhoea, the school's policy is for a child to be off for 48 hours.

You do not need to keep your child home from school if they have:
Athlete's foot, Cold Sores, Conjunctivitis, Glandular Fever, Head Lice, Tonsillitis, Cold or Cough, Headaches, Sore Throat.

The NHS gives the following advice on how long children should stay off school if they are unwell. https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/

If we believe your child is absent without genuine reason, or they are frequently off with illness, we may request medical evidence or discuss your child with the Local Authority Educational Welfare Service.



What if my child is suffering with anxiety?

Attending school usually helps to protect your child's mental health, for a range of reasons, including giving them a chance to be with friends and to benefit from learning. However, some children can be anxious or worried about going to school, particularly around the start of the new year or joining a new school or class. This is **a normal emotion, and not necessarily indicative of an underlying mental health condition**. If their anxiety continues and becomes an attendance issue, you should speak to your child's school, together with your child, about why they are anxious and what can be done. Many of our schools have parent support advisors, trained counsellors and emotional support assistants.

You can find some useful advice at Young Minds, to help work through likely reasons together with your child, what to do and how to make sure that you get the right support if there are more serious issues.



Want to know more

More information can be found on the school website including the Attendance Policy. Here are some other useful websites for further advice:

Gov.uk - https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence

Wiltshire Council - https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/2144/Attendance-and-behaviour

Parentkind - https://www.parentkind.org.uk/for-parents/understanding-education/about-schools/behaviour-and-attendance

