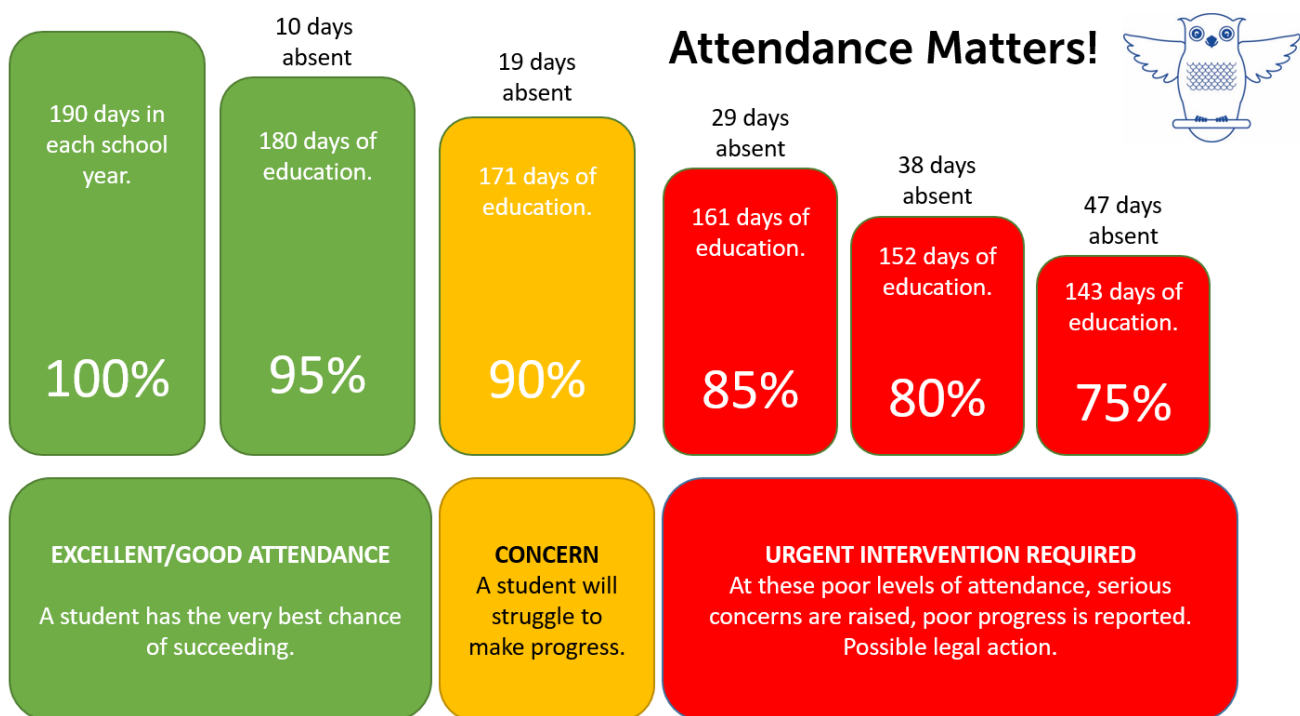


'Every Day Counts'

Merton Junior School Guide to Attendance Expectations

At Merton Junior School we believe that every child gets one chance to get the best education. If they are not in school, they are not learning. Every day counts. Excellent and regular attendance is essential for a child's education to be successful. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child attends School. We thank those parents who ensure that their child's attendance is 96% or above. Absence should only occur in the extreme of circumstances.



The graph above shows the impact of any drop in attendance with regards to the number of days of learning that are lost. When learning is lost in this sense, it is difficult for a student to catch up. It is a known fact that the performance of students with poor levels of attendance will be adversely affected by not being in education and they will fall behind their peers in terms of progress and sometimes their social development too. When a student has poor attendance other issues can then develop including a drop in self-confidence and sometimes barriers appear regarding returning to School (sometimes referred to as school refusal). At Merton Junior School, if a student is not in School and their attendance levels drop, we have a legal responsibility to investigate to find out why and to help improve matters quickly. Please take the time to view the information contained in this document which explains the framework we operate within, to manage attendance at Merton Junior School.

How parents/carers can encourage good attendance:

- Expect your child to go to school every day and ensure that your child knows this. Parental attitude has a key influence on a child's school attendance and parents/carers can do much to encourage even reluctant students to attend.
- Make sure your child gets enough sleep and is up in plenty of time for school. Have clothes ready the night before.
- Ask your child about their day at school and talk about what they might be doing in the future at school.
- Approach the school sooner rather than later if you have issues with attendance. We are always happy to speak with you.
- Arrange routine appointments outside of the school day or as close to the end of the day as possible.

Reasons for Absence:

Lack of Sleep - Please still send your child into School when possible. Please contact us to advise that your child will be late.

Ongoing Medical Absence - It may be necessary for us to request medical evidence* advising that the student is unfit to attend. This must also state how long this will be for.

Please note that the Education Act 1996 places the responsibility on parents/carers to provide medical evidence when requested by the school. There is an 'Information Sharing Consent Form' available from your GP practice where a parent can give consent for the GP to share information about their child.

Appointments - Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of the School day wherever possible. If the appointment is during the morning, we will expect your child to return to school for the afternoon session, and if the appointment is in the afternoon, we would expect your child to be in school for the morning session. Evidence of all appointments are requested.

Absence of siblings - The absence or illness of a student should not affect the education of their siblings. If one child is poorly, the sibling is still expected to attend school. If a student has an appointment (particularly at the beginning or end of the school day) arrangements should be made to ensure that the other sibling is either dropped off or collected on time.

My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

We ask that the parent/carer contacts us immediately and openly discuss your worries.

If the matter is confidential then please state this so we can arrange for an appropriate person to speak with you. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, anxieties, friendship problems, and family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

Who is involved in attendance monitoring?

We have an attendance lead who is supported by an attendance officer, they review attendance on a regular basis. Other school leaders, teachers and our ELSA may also speak with you and / or your child about attendance. The Admin Team are a daily contact point for reporting an absence, or general attendance questions.

For additional guidance on general school attendance management please visit the Hampshire County Council website:

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL GUIDANCE ON ATTENDANCE

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

Absence for Holiday:

School holiday dates are published well in advance on the Hampshire County Council Website: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schoolholidays>

They are also available to view on the school website.

Holidays in term time will not be authorised. Requests for absence may be authorised if there are exceptional circumstances but the length of time authorised is likely to be limited.

FIXED PENALTY NOTICE INFORMATION

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/merton-junior/UploadedDocument/56bf2b91-5494-4048-803c-f6bb261db895/penalynotices-for-non-attendance-guidance-parents-carers.pdf>

Absence Request Form

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/merton-junior/UploadedDocument/f26283b4-7b03-4426-80a2-91efaa241c9a/leave-of-absence-form-sep-2024.pdf>

NHS LIVE WELL GUIDANCE

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

- There remain a lot of absences for common coughs and colds. Please treat with some paracetamol/Calpol prior to the school day. A top-up can always be provided during the day by the Admin Team, then if your child becomes worse after this, contact can be made with yourselves to arrange collection. You will need to supply the medication in the original packaging and it must be age appropriate. Please bring it to the office and complete a form which will enable us to administer the medication on your behalf.

- Hampshire County Council guidance states if your child has no temperature but has a cough, cold, headache, earache, sore throat, then as with adults, the medical advice is to give them paracetamol and send them to school. We are likely to challenge an absence if these are given as reasons. We will always contact you if your child's condition worsens or if we believe their illness is contagious such as Chickenpox, vomiting, etc.
- A polite reminder that Government guidelines state that the authorising of any absence from school is at the discretion of the individual setting and not an automatic right.

Reporting Absences:

- Remember to contact the School for any absence, explaining the reason. Parents/carers should contact the School **before 9 am** EVERY DAY that their child is absent. If this is not done, you will receive a phone call from the School.
- If there isn't a reason for absence provided, and we cannot contact you, we may conduct a home visit.
- During out of office hours, or at busy times, the phone could go to an answerphone. When leaving a message, please tell us the following information: 1. Your name. 2. The name of the student who will be absent (or late). 3. The students' class name. 4. The reason for absence. This needs to be a clear explanation. Simply reporting them as 'Unwell', 'Poorly' or 'Sick' is not acceptable and will result in a phone call from School to establish the actual reason for the absence.

Home Visits:

As a School, we have a policy that when a student's attendance is low, no reason is given for absence, or we are repeatedly told they are unwell without details or medical evidence, we will seek further clarification of these reasons. If we are concerned about the welfare of a child we may carry out home visits. It could be conducted at any stage of an absence to help support a student coming back into School. These may be arranged in advance or unannounced.

Our School Attendance Policy can be viewed on our website:

<https://www.mertonjuniorschool.co.uk/attendance>

Please remember that we are always happy to speak with you about any worries or issues that you or your child may have. Just come in and see us, or give us a call / email, or speak with your class teacher at the end of the day.

