

Mickle Trafford Village School



Cheshire West and Chester Council Attendance & Punctuality Policy including EBSN

Date of policy	Autumn 2024
Date for Review	Autumn 2025
Date policy approved by School Governing Body:	11.12.2024

We care, we learn, we belong

Cheshire West and Chester Council
Attendance & Punctuality Policy including EBSN

Introduction and Aim

Mickle Trafford Village School recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on children's progress, attainment, enjoyment of learning and relationships within school. Good attendance helps a child to realise their potential and ensure they are motivated, confident and enjoy a diverse range of curricular opportunities and experiences. Our school policy and prospectus promote good attendance, which is recognised and rewarded as an achievement. The school monitors attendance and ensures quick and early intervention if a problem is identified. We recognise that whole school preventative and proactive approaches are key to promoting children's wellbeing and attendance. A child must attend school every day that they are required to do so unless an exceptional circumstance applies.

Our policy is accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, and is published on our school website. It will be sent to parents with any initial information when pupils join the school and reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is updated. As the barriers to attendance evolve quickly, the policy should be reviewed and updated as necessary. In doing so, we will seek the views of pupils and parents. The Attendance & Punctuality Policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

Legislation

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement. Regular attendance is essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainment, opportunities and further development.

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that "The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".
- Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that "if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his parent is guilty of an offence".
- Section 576 Education Act 1996 - Meaning of "parent"

For the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a 'parent' and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

Registers

Registers provide the daily record of attendance of all pupils. They are legal documents and the register may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance in school.

‘Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006’ (section 6)

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day, morning (a.m.) and once during the second session, afternoon (p.m.).

On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and, Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school’s electronic register, or management information system as a priority and return to the school office in a timely manner. This is used to download data to the School Census.
- Consider early identification, assessment, intervention and support processes that may need to be implemented.

The register should be marked using the codes as advised by the Department for Education (DfE) ‘Working together to improve School Attendance Guidance’ (for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities) [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/19-August-2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Procedure

Children are expected to attend school regularly, unless there is good reason for absence.

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the school approves a pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (where school will not approve the absence)

The school has a duty to safeguard all its pupils. If a child is absent, the parents/carers should inform the school on the **first day of absence** and each following day of absence, stating the reason.

Parents should contact the admin team in the school office via telephone (01244 506480) or email (admin@mickletrafford.cheshire.sch.uk) on a day-to-day basis to report illness or absence, giving details of the child’s name, year group, and brief details of nature of illness/absence. Absence due to illness may also be reported to school via the schoolspider app.

For more detailed support on attendance, please contact Mrs Lyon (Headteacher) or Mrs Weston (Pastoral Lead) via the admin email address.

The Head Teacher, along with the Senior Leadership Team are responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school.

The school office will make contact with home when a child is absent by 9.30am if the parent/carer has not notified the school of the absence. If no contact can be achieved or the reason for absence is not accepted the absence will be unauthorised.

What can parents/carers do to help and working in partnership with Parents/ Carers?

Let the school know straight away why your child is absent. Home/school communication is extremely important in supporting your child to achieve and feel settled in school. Try to make any dental/GP appointments outside of school time.

It is important that school and parents / carers work together with a shared plan and outcomes when supporting a child / young person's attendance and wellbeing. If despite persistent attempts to work with parents, there continues to be a lack of engagement, then legal procedures may be followed to secure engagement and school attendance.

As a school we recognise that building respectful relationships with families and working in collaboration is essential to ensuring the best outcomes for children / young people. We require all parents to actively support the work of the school, including promoting attendance and engagement. We are committed to ensuring that systems and processes are in place with regards to promoting attendance and would encourage parents to make contact if they have concerns about their child.

We will provide parents / carers with information about Emotionally Based School Non-attendance to discuss needs and strategies to support their child, as appropriate.

Absence Monitoring

School robustly monitor and analyse attendance data to promptly identify and address possible concerns and allow early interventions to support the child/family's underlying needs. This will include –

- Weekly attendance code analysis
- Specific cohort and group monitoring – particularly for vulnerable groups
- Half termly analysis of absence below 95%, parents will be contacted if their child's attendance falls below 90%.
- The school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most.
- The school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority.

Early Identification and Intervention: assess, plan, do and review

Every pupil has a right to a full-time education and Mickle Trafford Village School sets high attendance expectations for all pupils. Mickle Trafford Village School will consider the individual

needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance and will consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For any child / child person who is absent from school it is essential to fully understand the reasons for this so that targeted, evidence-based interventions and support can be put into place. All staff have a part to play in promoting attendance. We recognise the importance of ensuring that the senior leadership team work in collaboration to consider and identify the holistic needs of the child/young person and to overcome barriers to attendance. In accordance with the principles of early intervention, a graduated approach of assess, plan, do and review will be followed utilising a range of school-based resources, evidence-based interventions and seeking advice and support from external services at an appropriate stage, when needed.

Appropriate assessments will be important to help understand the underlying reasons that may be contributing to attendance difficulties. This may be an assessment that focuses on the individual child's needs such as a Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) assessments and wellbeing assessments or may include the holistic needs of the family, such as a TAF assessment. Assessments will include the views of the child/young person as well as parents/carers, and identify strengths (what is working well) and needs (what is working less well).

Assessments undertaken may identify that a child/young person is experiencing underlying emotional based needs that are contributing to non-attendance. Cheshire West and Chester Council has developed guidance for schools - Emotionally Based School Non-attendance: Good practice guidance for schools. This is a whole school framework with a graduated approach to support the early identification and intervention of children/young people who may struggle to cope in school/attend school.

Information from assessments will inform a SMART action plan with focussed targets developed in partnership with families, and other services as appropriate. For example, Early Help and Prevention and Social Care may have a part to play in the delivery of support and intervention to promote engagement and attendance. SMART plans should be personalised to effectively meet a child / young person's needs and improve attendance and wellbeing outcomes.

Regular reviews of support and attendance plans are essential to monitor the impact of interventions and to adjust these accordingly. If, despite targeted support and intervention, attendance and wellbeing concerns persist, we may seek further advice and support from external services including mental health services, specialist teaching and education services.

Medical Absence

Absence due to illness should be reported to the school by phone, email or using the schoolspider app on the first day of absence and any subsequent days. School will contact parents during the first day if no satisfactory reason for absence has been received. The school will ask about the child's symptoms in order to record their absence accurately.

Any medical absences in excess of 5 days (10 sessions) per academic year will need to be supported by medical evidence. If no medical evidence is received, then the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. The school will work with all families on an individual basis if medical absences exceed the maximum threshold.

If a medical absence is likely to be ongoing or long term, then we will offer support in accordance with the school's policies and statutory guidance relating to Children with health needs.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>.

As a school we need to plan how children can access Education and how and when the child will return to school. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 the school must also demonstrate that reasonable adjustments are made to meet the child's Educational Needs.

For children who have a medical condition and cannot attend school, the school will refer to the Cheshire West and Chester Council's Medical Needs Team.

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/education-and-learning/medical-needs-service/medical-needs-policy-latest.pdf>

Their policy states that referrals must come directly from the child's school and must be supported by medical evidence from one of the following health professionals:

- consultant paediatrician or adolescent psychiatrist
- consultant child psychiatrist
- hospital consultant

Supporting evidence from a General Practitioner alone cannot be accepted.

Lateness and Punctuality

At Mickle Trafford Village School we will apply a robust day to day process to track and follow up on absence and poor punctuality. We will ensure registers are completed accurately and on time, twice per day, in accordance with the timings set out below.

This will indicate which pupils are absent from or are late for school.

- Our gates and classroom doors open at **8.40am**
- We expect all pupils to be in their classroom by **8.45am** ready for registration. If your child is in class at this time, they will be marked as present.
- Registers close at **9.10am**. If your child arrives at school after **8.45am** but before **9.10am**, they will need to enter the school by the main entrance and the parent will need to sign them in. They will be marked as late and will receive the **L code**.
- If your child arrives at school after the registers have closed at **9.10am**, they will be marked as late and will receive the **U code**. This is an unauthorised absence for that session.
- Afternoon registers will be taken at **1pm**.

In accordance with the 'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006', if your child arrives after the registers close, they will receive a mark, code U, that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action if the problem persists.

Children who are consistently late for school are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of other children. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, you will be invited to a meeting to resolve the issues. If there is no improvement following this meeting, further action will be taken which may include referral to external agencies.

You may approach the school at any time for support and advice if you are having difficulty getting your child to school on time or maintaining regular attendance.

Unauthorised Absence and Fixed Penalty Notice

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

- i. no reason for absence has been given
- ii. medical evidence is not received when requested
- iii. a request for a leave of absence has been unauthorised
- iv. a pupil arrives at school after registration has closed at 9.10am.

Parents/carers should be aware that Mickle Trafford Village School may contact the Local Authority if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences in the current term with a view to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action.

The first penalty notice issued to the parent for that pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first notice, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. A third penalty notice must not be issued within a 3 year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) times within those 3 years, a penalty notice cannot be issued and alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions. (*see appendix 1 for The National Framework*).

Promoting and Incentivising Attendance (Rewards and Incentives)

At Mickle Trafford Village School, rewards, incentives and competitions play an important part when working to improve attendance. **The most effective schools consistently promote the benefits of good attendance.** Rewards and incentives should be devised with the children's and families views at the heart. This will mean that our incentives and rewards are purposeful and meaningful. At Mickle Trafford Village School the School Council will play an important part in this to ensure that we improve attendance in the most effective way. School Council will be consulted to decide how to celebrate good attendance. **Schools that have good attendance recognise that it is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture.**

At Mickle Trafford Village School we understand that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. Therefore, it is important that attendance is recognised, celebrated and held in high regard, no matter how small the improvements might be. Improved attendance or improved punctuality should be recognised and praised, not just 'perfect' attendance. Every child has the right to feel they can achieve and be successful, so any reward/incentive system must be inclusive of those with children with additional needs. It is important that pupils see the attendance incentives and competitions as a team effort and not to blame individuals. At Mickle Trafford Village School pupils

will be taught about the positive link between attendance and high achievement through assemblies and dedicated PSHE sessions.

Attendance information should be readily available for both children and parents. At Mickle Trafford Village School, we will share attendance information in our newsletters, on our website and in assemblies. Barriers affecting attendance in our school will be explored, taking both the children and parents views into account, so that every staff member is clear about how they can help to improve attendance and/or punctuality. At Mickle Trafford Village School we will recognise and celebrate attendance allowing families the opportunity to achieve and feel successful. Consequences might be used alongside our rewards and incentives.

We are proud to be a Trauma Informed school, and as such, all pupils will be welcomed back to school by Mrs Weston or their child class teacher and reasons for their lateness or absence will be explored sensitively with barriers established and the necessary support provided. At Mickle Trafford Village School we recognise that some pupils will require their own individual reward systems.

Applications for Holidays During Term Time

As of 19th August 2024, the law ceases to include a leave of absence for a family holiday. A leave of absence should not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. Head Teachers are only empowered to approve a leave of absence when it is requested in advance by the parent or carer with whom the child resides and when circumstances of the requested leave are 'exceptional'.

The Head Teacher and the Governing Body will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request Exceptional Leave of Absence, they must complete an 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form available from the school office. It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of a consecutive 5 or more unauthorised days, then school may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carers.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Parent/carers' working commitments
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away but are less prepared for the lessons building on that

teaching when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid.

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with school policy.

Religious Observance

We recognise that some pupils may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance.

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs

We ask that parents/carers notify Mickle Trafford Village School in writing in advance where absence is required due to a religious observance.

Enforced School Closure

If Mickle Trafford Village School was forced to close for a period of time, we have the facility to operate an online virtual school via Google Classroom. The expectation is children will still engage with ALL activities when work is set. Procedures for online learning will be sent to parents as and when required.

Impact

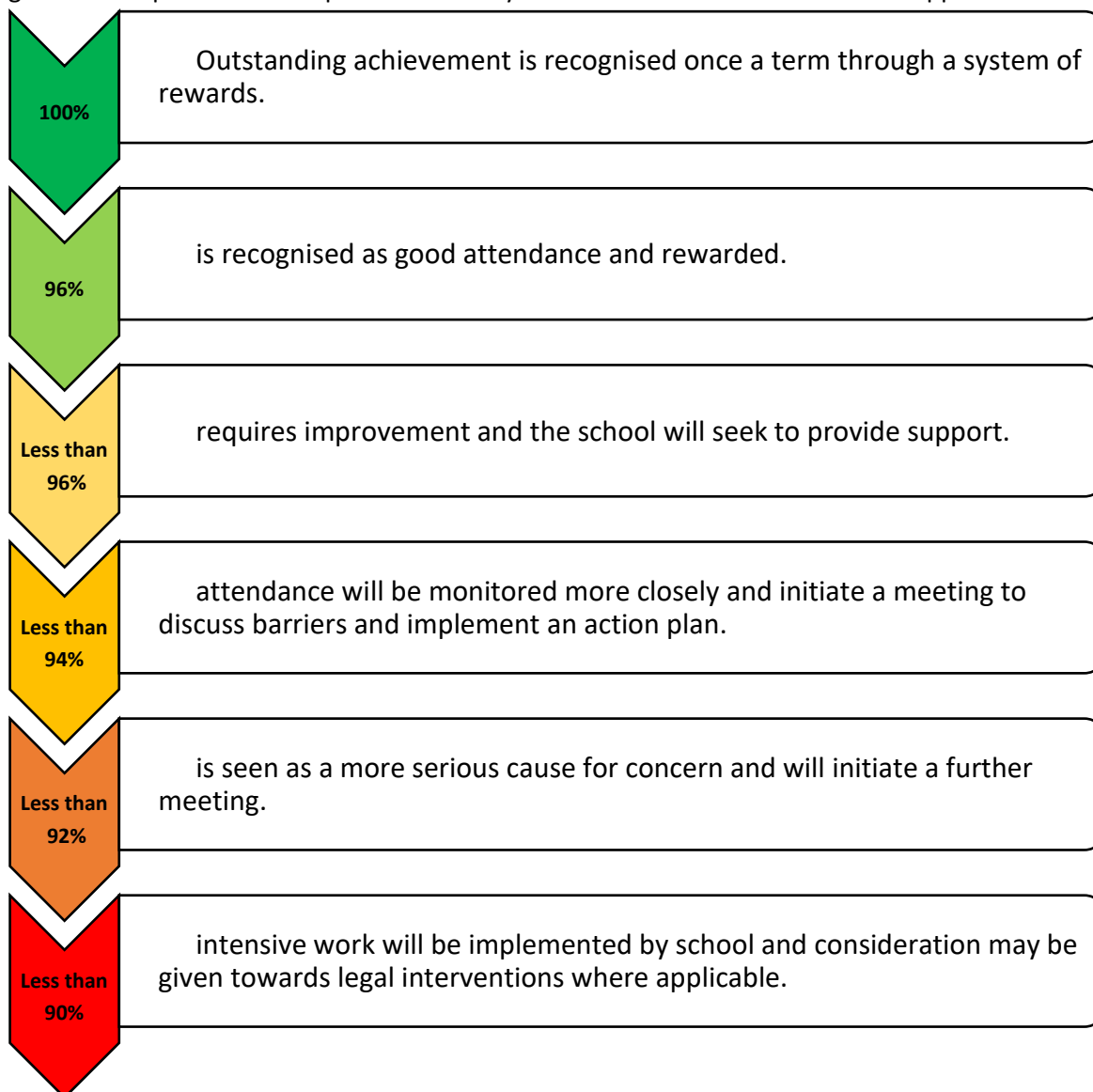
All pupils will achieve well by developing knowledge and skills on their journey through school. Due to robust monitoring of attendance, all pupils, including vulnerable children and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), will have fair and equitable access to school in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Pupils will leave Mickle Trafford Village School ready for a successful transition to secondary education.

The table below sets out the attendance targets and at what stage parents/carers will be contacted about their child's attendance.

Emotionally Based School Non-attendance (EBSN)

Emotionally Based School Non-attendance (EBSN) is a term used to describe the needs of Children & Young People (CYP) who struggle to attend school due to underlying emotional based needs, such as anxiety, unhappiness, and despair. These CYP may be reluctant to leave home and can present high levels of distress in response to parents' attempts to get them to school. This can result in prolonged absences from school. EBSN is complex and multifaceted, requiring a holistic approach to assessment and intervention. Good practice guidance emphasises the importance of early identification and intervention to support the needs of CYP who



may struggle to attend school, developing a SMART support plan, with timely review processes (CW&C, 2018). The EBSN framework is embedded within the school's Attendance Policy, and we use many of the tools and resources to underpin our early identification of need and targeted support and intervention approach. Schools can access EBSN training and Guidance (EBSN: Good Practice Guidance for Schools) via: eCWIP for Education - Cheshire West Industry Professionals

Appendix 1

National Framework for Penalty Notices for School Attendance

A new National Framework for Penalty Notices for School Absence came into effect from the 19th August 2024. A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to cause improved attendance without the need for a criminal prosecution.

The National Framework aims to:

- **Make penalty notices more effective** by ensuring they are only used in cases where they are the most appropriate tool.
- **Prioritise the support first approach** by expecting support to be used in cases where it is appropriate.
- **Improve consistency in the use of penalty notices across England** by introducing a new national threshold at which they are considered.
- **Improve the deterrent effect of a penalty notice** by increasing the amount and introducing a new national limit of 2 penalty notices within a 3-year period.

The National Framework includes:

- A single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The three-year period begins from the date of the first penalty notice issued on or after 19 August 2024.
- Unauthorised absence sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or sporadic (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The 10-school week period may span different terms or school years.
- The option of using a 'Notice to Improve' where support is appropriate to provide a final opportunity to engage with support to prevent a penalty notice being issued.
- The first penalty notice issued to the parent for that pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days. (this is less than an inflationary rise since 2013).
- Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first notice, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice must not be issued within a 3-year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) times within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

The penalty notice system is not a money-making scheme and local authorities do not have income targets. Monies should be first used for the administration of the penalty notice system and prosecution. Any revenues collected through the system must be ring fenced for attendance and any surplus must be paid to the Secretary of State. If you are having trouble getting your child to go to school, the school will discuss attendance problems with you and should agree a plan with you to improve your child's attendance. The Council offers support through Team around the Family (TAF) and Live Well. Home | Live Well Cheshire West (cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

What does 'percentage attendance' mean?

Parents/carers should be advised that from September 2015 the Government have categorised those pupils who have attendance of 90% and below as 'Persistent Absence' pupils (P.A.). RSA will be specifically targeting this cohort of pupils, in an effort to improve their attendance in the future. The table below shows the learning time lost against percentage attendance figures.

Attendance during one school year	Equivalent Days	Equivalent Sessions	Equivalent Weeks	Equivalent Lessons Missed
95%	9 Days	18 Sessions	1.4 Weeks	45 Lessons
90%	19 Days	38 Sessions	3.4 Weeks	95 Lessons
85%	29 Days	58 Sessions	5.4 Weeks	145 Lessons
80%	36 Days	72 Sessions	7.1 Weeks	180 Lessons
75%	48 Days	96 Sessions	9.3 Weeks	240 Lessons