



## Merley First School

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23rd September 2022

Dear Parents/carers

### **Maintaining good attendance at Merley First school**

Why is good attendance important?

In recent years much research has been carried out on the effect that poor attendance can have on children's progress at school and how well they achieve in life. It is essential that these good attendance habits are formed at the beginning of their school journey and Merley First School makes good attendance a top priority.

We are proud to work with Wimborne Academy Trust and BCP Local Authority Inclusion team to support and improve attendance.

### **How parents and carers can help: Work together with us.**

- Send your child to school every day, on time, unless they are genuinely ill.
- Avoid taking your child out of school for holidays, trips or visits to family or friends.
- Contact the school office, phone number 01202 888455 or report the absence through ParentMail on the first day of absence to explain the reason why your child is away from school.
- If your child is absent for more than one day, please keep the school informed each day during your child's absence.
- If your child has a medical or dental appointment please make them out of school hours if possible. If they are in school hours please bring in evidence of the appointment so we can keep a record on their file.
- It is important to let the school know if your child has ongoing health problems so that the right support can be put in place.

### **When will absences not be authorised?**

The school will not authorise absence for any of the following reasons: holidays, shopping, looking after or visiting other members of the family, minding the house, birthdays, family days out or similar events. Children will be marked in as late after 8.55am and children arriving after 9.30am are recorded as an unauthorised absence.

**Family holidays during term time:**

The school does not authorise absence for family holidays during the school term unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents and carers who choose to take their child out of school for holidays should be aware that such absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised' on the child's record and may be subject to a fixed penalty notice. This is a fine, issued by the local authority, at £60 per pupil, per parent.

**Punctuality**

It is very important that all children arrive on time. If your child arrives late, they will not be able to come into school via usual morning entrance doors but should instead come through the main school entrance. Please note that if your children arrives at school later than 9:30, we are required to mark them as absent for that half day session.

If children are regularly late, a parent will be expected to attend a meeting to look at how punctuality can be improved.

**What will happen if my child is often absent from school?**

The school monitors the attendance of all children. If your child's attendance falls below 95%, you will receive a letter informing you. If absence continues, you will be invited into school to discuss the reasons for your child's absence. If necessary, a referral will be made to the attendance team at BCP Council, so that the absence can be further investigated and support put in place.

**Promoting Attendance and Support**

We believe that working together with parents is the best way to result in positive attendance outcomes for our children. Headteacher Katharine Anstey or Inclusion Lead Mrs Waldron are happy to work with both children and families to improve attendance and punctuality. Come and talk to us if you are having problems.

**Statutory guidance states:**

- Each school day contains two sessions and an attendance mark is awarded for each.
- Once your child's attendance figure is below 90% they become a persistent absentee.
- If your child is absent due to holiday, a Penalty Notice may be issued.

We appreciate the challenges that some parents face when booking holidays, particularly during the school holidays. However, regular attendance at school is vital in helping children and young people to achieve their full potential and get the best possible start in life.

Thank you for your support,



Katharine Anstey  
Headteacher