

Malmesbury CE Primary School: Guidance on School Attendance

Updated September 2024

Missing School Means Missing Out!

Full time education is compulsory for all children from the term after they turn five. We encourage all pupils to be at school every day to benefit from the learning they need to be successful in the future. Research demonstrates that every missed day of school has a measurable impact on children's attainment. Please ensure that your child is only absent in extenuating circumstances when they are unfit to be at school.

Absences

If your child is absent from school, you must inform the school office with a reason for your child's absence by 9.30am every day that your child is absent.

Medical Absences

Children are often unwell. In most circumstances, please just let us know what they are suffering from and when you expect them to return to school. Where children have an infection, please keep them off school for 2 full days from the most recent episode of vomiting or diarrhoea, to avoid passing on the illness to others.

If your child is absent for five days or more, you must provide medical evidence (this must include your child's name) or it will be unauthorized. Evidence accepted can be: medical appointment card, prescription, medicine (prescribed by the doctor), medical letter from the doctor, or text messages sent to you by your doctor can also be shown to the school office.

If you report that your child is absent for medical reasons immediately before or after a school holiday or a term-time holiday, we will request evidence for this absence before it is authorized. This could be medical evidence as above, or evidence of flight times or bookings which do not overlap with the illness.

Flight Delays:

Sometimes flights may be delayed at the end of the school holidays, leading to a child returning to school after the start of term. If you can provide proof of your flight delay / change, these days can be authorized.

However, absences immediately after an **unauthorized holiday will not be authorized under any circumstances**. This includes delayed journeys or children being tired. If children are unwell when they return from holiday, medical proof will be required. If you are planning to take a term time holiday involving less than five days' absence, please bear in mind that any unforeseen delays could lead to you receiving a fine.

Fixed Penalty Notices (Fines)

The Local Authority issues fixed penalty notices when a child has five or more days of unauthorized absence. Each day consists of a morning and afternoon session. Any ten sessions counts as five days. A separate leaflet explaining the fines can be downloaded from the school's absence web page.

Criminal Prosecution for Absences

Under new legislation in force from August 2024, there is a cap on how many times you can be fined - 2 fines per parent in any 3 year period. Further unauthorized absence of 5 or more days within that period will lead to a criminal prosecution.

Term time holiday:

In accordance with Department of Education's guidance, leave of absence during term time will not be approved except in the most exceptional circumstances. This generally means the death or critical illness of a close family member. Families where a parent / carer is a member of the armed forces who is undertaking a tour of duty can also receive special consideration. Other occupations where holiday is limited to certain times of year are not sufficient justification for term time absence to be authorized.

All requests for leave must be made in writing (minimum of two weeks in advance) to the school office prior to any absences being taken and booking/arrangements being made. We cannot grant permission after the leave has been taken.

Please bear in mind when making requests that there are 13 weeks of school holiday a year and there should be a clear reason why a holiday cannot be taken at these times. **Reasons which are specifically *not* taken into account when considering a request are the cost or availability of the holiday, or educational opportunities which may arise while on holiday.**

Setting Work for Children While on Holiday

The school does not set work for children who are away from school on unauthorized absences. The education on offer is at the school, which is where children should be during term time. Giving an undertaking to do work with a child while away does not influence whether a holiday is authorized or not.

Work may be set during exceptional and unavoidable absences.

Weddings, Funerals and Religious Observances

Absences for funerals and weddings of close relatives are generally authorized. Reasonable travelling time can also be authorized. This would generally be a day each way, or possibly two if travelling abroad. Where a celebration and holiday are combined, only the dates for the celebration plus travelling can be authorized. Where funerals are concerned it may not be possible for families to apply two weeks in advance, but please give as much notice as you can.

A day's absence for Eid-al-Fitr can also be authorized for Muslim families, and other religious absence requests will be considered sympathetically.

Medical / Dental Appointments

Routine dental appointments should always be outside the school day. Emergency treatment and medical appointments should be made outside of the school day wherever possible.

Lateness

It is important that your child comes to school on time, every day. Arriving after everyone else is disorientating and embarrassing for children. They miss the normal settling-in routines and they find themselves behind the other children. If your child is late after the registers close at 09:00 then this is formally recorded as late.

Legally, lates count the same being absent for the session. The table below shows how being late has a cumulative impact:

Minutes Late for school	Amount of Learning lost per week	Amount of Learning lost per month	Amount of learning lost per half term	Amount of learning lost per term	Amount of learning lost per year
5 minutes late	25 minutes	1 hour and 40 mins	2 hours and 30 mins	1 day	3 days
10 minutes late	50 minutes	3 hours and 20 mins	1 day	2 days	1 week and 1 day
15 minutes late	1 hour and 15mins	1 day	1 and a half days	3 days	1 week and 4 days
20 minutes late	1 hour and 40 minutes	Over 1 day	2 days	4 days	2 weeks

Participation in Sports

Absences can be authorized for participation in sports and other competition at national and international level only. Each case will be considered on its merits and taking into account a child's existing absence record and current educational attainment. Club and county level events should be arranged at weekends or in school holidays.

Child Acting

Occasionally children have the opportunity to participate in acting performances, paid or unpaid. Absences for this reason can only be authorized for short periods unless other satisfactory arrangements for their education are put in place. Each case will be considered on its merits and taking into account a child's existing absence record and current educational attainment. As with other absences, a request must be made using the correct form, at least 2 weeks in advance.

Other Circumstances

This guidance exists to give clarity over the school's policy in most situations and to ensure that we are consistent in our approach. No guidance can fully cover the range of circumstances which may arise. If you have circumstances which are not addressed in this guidance then please contact the school for further clarification.