



Policy Name: **Pupil Attendance and Absence Policy**

Owner: Head of Pastoral

Review Date: April 2024

Next Review date: September 2025

This policy will be revised as regulations or review demands

At Mayfield School, we recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential for pupils to get the most from their school experience. The Education Act 1996 outlines the basic legal obligations on parents to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are 'properly educated, either at school or otherwise'.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school in exceptional circumstances such as compassionate leave.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "Working together to improve school attendance" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school;
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

It seeks to ensure that all stakeholders involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued;
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of Mayfield School that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the *Headmistress*, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

The above clarifies the framework within which Mayfield School is legally bound to operate.

The role of the DSL in Attendance

Mayfield School attendance officer ensures that the DSL is kept informed of attendance patterns, and where there are concerns for individual pupils the response to this will be considered within the context of safeguarding. In line with KCSIE September 2024 we recognise that pupils who are absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions are particularly vulnerable to safeguarding concerns and the DSL must respond in a timely and supportive manner.

Promoting Regular Attendance

At Mayfield school, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The name and contact details of the Senior Leader who is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school, is:

Mrs Jodi Stone (Head of Pastoral) - jstone@mayfieldgirls.org

The governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is:

Mrs Lumi Henshaw - lhenshaw@mayfieldgirls.org

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Promote the benefits of high attendance;
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law;
- Reward outstanding attendance;
- Contact parents should their daughter's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance, which is above 93%.

Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a pupil's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Ensuring a pupil's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, is counterproductive to the progress and success of their daughter.

There are two types of Absence:

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your daughter before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would **not** affect their ability to learn e.g a common cold;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- shopping trips;
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- their own or family birthdays;
- holidays taken during term time under DFE regulations and not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headmistress, including any arranged by other family members or friends;
- day trips;
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as 'severely absent'. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

Requests for authorised absence (only given in exceptional circumstances)

If parents need to take their daughter out of School for family emergencies for one or two consecutive days, their request is to be made on the Mayfield Parent App, which will be reviewed by the relevant Head of School. In such cases, parents are asked to give as much notice as possible. If absence is requested for three days or more, parents are required to apply for this **by email** to the Headmistress on headmistress@mayfieldgirls.org Authorisation of long-term absence is given only by the Headmistress and

only in exceptional circumstances (to attend a family funeral, wedding, or for compassionate grounds). If the Headmistress feels the absence is not in the pupil's best interest, she has the right to deny permission, and this will be recorded as unauthorised absence on the pupil's file. Mayfield School strongly recommends that prolonged planned absences (more than two consecutive days) are avoided at all costs, as this has a significant impact on a pupil's educational progress.

Day Pupils

If a day girl is ill and will not be attending School that day, parents should email absence@mayfieldgirls.org or telephone the Absence line on 01435 874600 ext. 500 before 08:30 on the first day of absence and every day thereafter unless the illness is prolonged, in which case the parent or guardian may be asked to provide a medical note and state the anticipated period of absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS and East Sussex County Council Guidance on School Absence and Childhood Illness.

If a day girl arrives late at School and fails to register, or if she fails to register for any other reason, parents will be telephoned by the receptionist or one of the school secretaries by 10:00am as we shall need to establish her whereabouts and, hence, her safety. If we are unable to make contact with parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding. A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be "missing from education."

In the case of medical or dental appointments that cannot be made outside of school hours parents should contact their daughter's Tutor who will in turn contact the attendance officer so that the absence is correctly recorded on their daughter's registration record.

Boarders

If a boarder is delayed or unable to return to School for any reason, her parents should inform her Houseparent at the earliest opportunity clearly stating the reasons why so it can be determined as to whether it would be an authorised (could not have been avoided) or unauthorised absence.

Term dates are published at least a year in advance. Girls returning overseas should ensure that flights are booked with these dates in mind, so that all girls start term on the correct date and do not leave before the end of term.

Parents and guardians should ensure that all girls have return flights organised when they arrive at the beginning of term and inform Houseparents'/Housemistresses. When flights cannot be arranged at convenient times, before or after term ends, and girls cannot be accommodated at School, guardians will be expected to take responsibility for the girls in their care and deliver or collect them from School at the correct time.

Absence Procedures

We monitor and review all pupils' absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 8:30am, when our register closes, by either telephone or email;
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorized;
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 8:30am;
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS and East Sussex County Council Guidance on School Absence and Childhood Illness.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or email you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us;
- If we are unable to make contact with parents by telephone or email, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding;
- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be "missing from education."

If absence continues we will:

- Email you if your child's attendance is causing concern, and/or where punctuality is a concern;
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with either the relevant Head of School or Head of Pastoral.
- Create a personalized Attendance Support Plan, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child;
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority if attendance deteriorates following the above actions. We are legally obliged to inform the Local Authority if your daughter accrues unauthorized absence for more than 10 days.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help pupils as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their form tutor.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Mayfield School are:

Registration starts: 8.20am

Registration closes: 9.00am

End of lessons: 4:30pm

End of school day: 6:00pm

If your daughter has a persistent lateness record, you will be asked to meet with either the relevant Head of School or Head of Pastoral, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your daughter to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we value good individual punctuality.

Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any pupil may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. An individual support/wellbeing plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils, however we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

School Attendance and the Law

In 2024 new legislation was passed in England which included the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 introducing a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headmistress, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headmistress or her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance. The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

At Mayfield 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the Headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The Headmistress may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide online lessons for pupils to do during their absence. It is the responsibility of the pupil to ask their subject teachers for any work that has been missed.

Informing the Local Authority (LA) about new students

Where the particulars of a girl are entered in the Admission Register for Mayfield, in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, Mayfield must make a return to the Local Authority for that girl by the end of the **fifth** day after the day on which the particulars of the girl are entered in the Admission Register. This list will include overseas girls.

The particulars to be passed securely to the LA are:

- a. the girl's name in full;
- b. the girl's gender;
- c. the name and address of every person known to the proprietor of Mayfield as a parent of the girl and, against the entry on the register of the particulars of any parent with whom the girl normally resides, an indication of that fact and a note of at least one telephone number at which the parent can be contacted in an emergency; where a parent of the girl notifies Mayfield that the girl will normally reside with a parent at a specified other address in the future, whether in addition to or instead of the address at which the girl normally resides:-
 - i. the full name of the parent with whom the girl will normally reside;
 - ii. the specified other address, and

- d. the girl's day, month and year of birth;
- e. the girl's day, month and year of admission or re-admission to Mayfield;
- f. the name and address of the school last attended, if any; and
- g. where a parent of the girl notifies Mayfield that the girl:-
 - i. is also registered at another school; or
 - ii. will be attending a specified other school in the future, the name of that other school and the first date on which the girl attended or is due to attend that school, where it is reasonably practicable for Mayfield to obtain that information; and
- h. whether there are any Child Protection concerns.

For the purposes of this regulation, a girl is a girl at Mayfield from the beginning of the first day on which Mayfield has agreed, or has been notified, that the girl will attend Mayfield.

The Local Authority will be informed if:

- There have been **ten** continuous days of **unauthorised** absences; (Child Missing Education);
- A girl fails to attend regularly, or is sporadic in attendance, as this could be a sign of neglect;
- The girl leaves and is deleted from the Mayfield register before completing the Upper Sixth Year, or in accordance with East Sussex LA guidelines, if different;
- The girl has been taken out of Mayfield by her parents and is being educated outside the school system e.g. home education;
- The girl has been certified by a medical consultant as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend School before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither she nor her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend Mayfield after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- The girl has been in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final Court Order and the governing body does not reasonably believe they will be returning to Mayfield at the end of that period; or
- The girl has been permanently excluded.

The Local Authority will be informed when Mayfield has decided to remove a student from the register for any of the reasons listed above. This will be done as soon as the grounds for removal from the register have been met and in any event before removing the student's name from the register.

The information to be securely passed to the Local Authority is:

- a. the full name of the girl;
- b. the full name and address of any parent with whom the girl normally resides;
- c. at least one telephone number at which any parent with whom the girl normally resides can be contacted in an emergency;
- d. if applicable, where a parent of the girl notifies Mayfield of a specified other address in the future, whether in addition to or instead of the address at which the girl normally resides:-
 - i. the full name of the parent with whom the girl will newly normally reside;
 - ii. the specified other address, and
 - iii. the date from which it is expected the child will normally reside there, where it is reasonably practicable for Mayfield to obtain that information.
- e. where a parent of the girl notifies Mayfield that the girl:-

- i. is also registered at another school; or
 - ii. will be attending a specified other school in the future.
- f. the name of that other school and the first date on which the girl attended or is due to attend that school, where it is reasonably practicable for Mayfield to obtain that information;
 - g. whether the girl is a boarder or day girl;
 - h. the ground under Regulation 8 (Children Missing Education, 2016) upon which their name is to be deleted from the Admission Register;
 - i. whether there are any Child Protection concerns;
 - j. the last date the girl attended and the date and the reason for the removal.

Why is it so important to attend every day?

- Pupils with good attendance, generally achieve higher grades and enjoy learning at school more. Having a good education will help to give your child the best possible chances in life.
- Learning is a progressive activity; each day's lessons build upon those of the previous day.
- It also gives children the opportunity to:
 - Make lots of friends and feel included
 - Boosts social skills, confidence and self esteem
 - Develop their skills and learn new things
 - Achieve their full potential
 - Improve their career prospects.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we recognise there are always unforeseen circumstances and illnesses that may affect a pupil's attendance. It is our prerogative to ensure that we continue to work with you to provide the best education for your daughter and that we are duty bound to monitor every pupil's attendance at School.

At Mayfield, we want to work in collaboration with Parents to ensure their daughter thrives and reaches her full potential. Regular attendance plays an essential part in a pupil's journey and must be taken seriously by all stakeholders.