



ATTENDANCE POLICY

MAY 2020

Contents

	Page
> 1. Introduction	3
> 2. School procedures	4
2.1 Absence	4
2.2 Lateness	4
2.3 Ten day's absence	4
2.4 Persistent and frequent absence	5
2.5 A Welcome back	5
2.6 Absence notes	5
2.7 Promoting / improving absence	6
2.8 Leave of absence	6
> 3. Attendance	7

> 1. Introduction

Merrywood House is a special independent school that caters for children with social, emotional and mental health needs. Our ethos is to provide children whom have additional needs the opportunity to achieve academically, socially, emotionally and behaviourally and therefore the attendance of our children is crucial for their development. We are committed to providing a therapeutic, fulfilling and efficient education to all children and embrace the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will provide an environment where all children feel valued and welcome.

We have high expectations for our children and work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to children and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance, and the link this has to achievement and attainment. Merrywood House promotes early intervention and prevention of poor attendance.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Skills. Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

> 2. School Procedures

2.1 Absence

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Only the CEO or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as 'no reason given' and a phone call made to the parents, followed by a letter if a reason is still not obtained. On the first day of absence parents should telephone the school to inform them why their child is unable to attend and how long they are expected to be absent. The school is then able to mark the register appropriately as either an authorised or unauthorised absence. The decision to authorise or unauthorise absence rests with the school.

If a child is absent from school, he/she should not be on the school site during the day of the absence.

2.2 Lateness

Breakfast is the first social activity of our nurturing day. Children prepare their own breakfast and sit together with staff in the dining room to check in, share their morning thoughts, and set daily targets. Breakfast is between the hours of 08:30-09:20, we take into consideration the fact that our children are brought into school through local authority transport and can come from a range of different boroughs. In order for our children to understand punctuality we have a bigger window to arrive. We want our children to get into the habit of arriving on time and achieve positive punctuality, a skill needed for children moving forward into adulthood. Morning registration will take place at 09:20, any child arriving after this time will be marked as late. If they arrive after 9.40am, they will be marked as having an absence, unless we have been given notice from a child's transport.

Afternoon registration will be at 13:20.

2.3 Ten Day's Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 days in a term will be notified to the SEN lead within the child's Local Authority, we will submit a referral to the Education Welfare Officer. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

2.4 Persistent and Frequent Absence

Registers are monitored regularly by the head, admin officer, Senior Leaders to identify any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a child begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem, depending on severity, using strategies such as:

- CEO talking to the parent and child.
- A letter from the CEO.
- A meeting with the CEO.
- A referral to the SEN lead for the child's borough.

Due to the additional needs our children have, we will try to work hand in hand with our children and families to deal with any concerns or issues the child may have that stops them from attending school. We understand that certain circumstances may stop a child from wanting to come to school and our staff members are experienced to deal with social issues relating to the child and their family. We work in a trauma informed way and are aware that children who have experienced trauma require a lot of additional support. We will ask our therapeutic team to work with children who are persistently absent on a 1:1 basis.

Where attendance falls below 90%, the school may request medical evidence (and provide parents with guidance on acceptable examples of medical evidence) for all future illness absences. The school may also refer the child to the School Nurse or the Specialist nurse in the Education Welfare Service if there is a high level of absence for medical reasons. If medical evidence as requested is not provided, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. A high level of unauthorised absence will result in a referral to the Education Welfare Officer who will issue a Penalty Notice warning. A monitoring period will then follow, and if attendance does not improve within the monitoring period, a Penalty Notice will be issued which carries a fine of £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. For children with appropriately evidenced illness, the school will follow appropriate protocols to offer support.

2.5 A Welcome back

It is important that, where appropriate, on return from an absence all children are made to feel welcome. This should include a discussion about the best way for the child to catch up on missed work where appropriate and be brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other children.

2.6 Absence notes

The school will retain notes of evidence for absence from parents explaining absence as per current protocol/legislation.

2.7 Promoting / improving absence

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education. We will provide data to all parties relating to their EHC plan. We celebrate time at school with a range of activities and believe that this enhances a child's want to be in school. We use our growing club and therapy dogs as a way to show the children that they are needed in school, have a sense of belonging and develop a sense of responsibility.

2.8 Leave of absence

At Merrywood House believe that leave of absence should be avoided if at all possible as it can have a damaging effect on a child's education and overall achievement. Only in exceptional circumstances, where sufficient evidence is provided to substantiate the circumstances will any absence from school be authorised.

The school policy is as follows:

1. Parents must request leave of absence to the CEO as far in advance as possible.
2. The request must include the reason why it is necessary to take such absence during term time, including evidence such as a medical certificate. For an emergency trip, evidence of last-minute booking of flights must be provided.
3. The request should be made in writing using the leave of absence form (available from the office). Emergencies should be followed by email.

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. Without the appropriate evidence, all leave of absence will be unauthorised.

A decision on whether or not to authorise absence will take into consideration:

1. Child's current attendance level;
2. Child's current academic achievement and attainment;

Any leave of absence that is not authorised is very likely to result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the child's local authority. The Penalty Charge Notice currently carries a fine of £120.

> 3. Attendance targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. Progress towards these targets will be analysed regularly by a member of the Team and strategies adopted in line with this policy will be implemented to achieve or exceed the target. It is the responsibility of the parents, staff and children at Merrywood House to ensure good attendance and achievement of targets.



The Old Pheasantry, Merrywood Grove, Tadworth KT20 7HF

01737 336352

admissions@merrywood.org.uk

merrywood.org.uk