

MPPS approach to term time absence requests September 2024

In line with the August 2024 DFE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' framework https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf our policy is that term time absence requests will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Children have 175 days off school for holidays and family events.

Key Principles at Moss Park Primary School

Any absence, even if it falls into the category of exceptional circumstances as detailed below, will not be authorised if it leaves pupils, following further absences or unforeseen illnesses, vulnerable to low attendance that could put them into the category of 'persistent absenteeism' (currently any attendance below 90%).

It is important to note that the Headteacher can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether the absence is authorised at all. The Headteacher's decision is final.

The principles for defining 'exceptional' are **Rare, Significant, Unavoidable and Short ('RUSS')**. By 'Unavoidable', we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Applying for a leave of absence

Parents should always read the school's policy before making the written request for a leave of absence so that they may make a considered view on whether the absence is likely to be accepted or denied. Should they feel their requests meets the criteria of 'exceptional circumstances' then further evidence may be requested.

Parents and carers must use the school's leave of application form, which is available from the Office or to download on the school website. This must be submitted 'for the attention of the Headteacher' two weeks in advance. No retrospective requests will be authorised.

The Headteacher does not meet with parents to discuss individual cases without a completed form, as virtually all circumstances are covered in this appendix. If the Headteacher feels there may be exceptional circumstances that need exploring, she will reach out to the parents for further information.

Exceptional circumstances that may be authorised include:

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Authorisation is only for one day.
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member - is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
- Absence to visit family members - not granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may need time to visit a seriously ill relative, but it must meet the **'RUSS'** criteria
- The needs of families of Service personnel should be taken into account when returning from long, operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled school holiday time
- Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities (with EHCPs)
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)
- Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):
 - Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
 - Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
 - Attending provision arranged by the local authority
 - Attending work experience
 - If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for exceptional leave of absence. The evidence parents and carers will need to provide depends entirely on what type of leave from school they are applying for, for example:

- Flight tickets to confirm the length of stay
- Proof of an exceptional event taking place
- An official letter from an employer stating that you have been allocated a holiday and that this date is non-negotiable
- Proof of service for military personnel

If parents are unable to provide the evidence requested then the leave of absence will not be granted

Where parents take a leave of absence without the Headteacher's authorisation, a fixed penalty fine will be applied by **Trafford Council**. Trafford protocol states:

Any leave during the term time taken without the approval of the Headteacher will trigger a Penalty Notice after 8 missed sessions (4 days). Penalty Notices provide an alternative to prosecution and will offer parents and opportunity to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying £80 (per parent per child) if paid within 21 days and £160 if paid within 28 days.

If the penalty is not paid by the end of 28 days, the local authority must withdraw the notice, or commence proceedings for the offence to which the notice relates. The prosecution is not for the non-payment of the notice but is for failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

If we have reason to believe that parents have taken a leave of absence without authorisation, we will actively contact the parents and do a home welfare visit. This is for safeguarding purposes. A failure to respond to the calling card will lead us to believe that a term time absence has been taken and a fixed penalty fine may be applied.

S Nunwick: Headteacher
 A Humphris: Chair of Governors
 July 2024