



Midhurst Rother College

The best in everyone™

Part of United Learning

Midhurst Rother College

Attendance Policy

Written by: Philip Lloyd

Approved by LGB: November 2020

Date: October 2009

Displayed: College website

Revised: November 2020

Review cycle: Annual

Attendance Policy

Introduction and rationale

Midhurst Rother College is outstanding and your child plays their part in making it so. For students to gain the greatest benefit from their education at College, it is vital that they attend regularly and should attend College, on time, every day that the College is open (unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable).

Irregular attendance means that students will miss out on aspects of the educational experience on offer at Midhurst Rother College. Any absence affects the pattern of a student's learning and regular absence will seriously affect their progress. Student absence disrupts the learning of others.

Students need to understand that if they are absent or late they will not get full access to their entitlement of learning for success. Furthermore, the development of their social skills, key learning skills and their ability to achieve academically will be severely compromised.

Ensuring your son's/daughter's regular attendance at College is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from College without a good reason is an illegal offence and may ultimately result in prosecution. It is very important that you ensure that your child attends College regularly, and this policy sets out how we will achieve this as a partnership.

Understanding absence

Every half-day absence (session) from College **has to** be classified by us (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Information about the reason of any absence is always required. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from College for a good reason such as illness, emergencies or other reasons the **College** deems to be unavoidable.

Regular days absent may be challenged. Lack of any medical evidence for these absences may lead to the College unauthorising the absence, which may lead to the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Unauthorised absences are those which the College does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This may include:

- Truancy
- Late arrival
- Looking after siblings/family members
- Birthday treats
- Day trips and holidays
- Absences which are not supported by medical evidence
- Parents/carers keeping students off College unnecessarily
- Absences for which no reason is provided.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance drops to 90% and below in the academic year, for any reason. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or below, or is at risk of moving towards that point, is given priority and a parent/carer will be informed of this. PA students are monitored and may be referred to the Local Authority if no improvement is seen, this may result in Fixed Penalty Notices or legal action.

Holidays in Term Time

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law for holidays taken during term time. We do not authorise holidays unless there are **very** exceptional circumstances. If this is the case, then the College may authorise leave of absence. Parents/carers should apply to the Principal using the **Student Absence Form** which must be submitted in advance. In making a decision, the College will consider the circumstances of each application individually. Should the application be declined, a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued. This form can be collected from Reception or downloaded from the website.

Punctuality

Lateness is a form of absence; poor punctuality is not acceptable. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons. College start at 8.25 am and late arrivals are expected to sign in at Student Reception. When students miss the start of the day they can miss essential work. Students who are late to College may have a detention issued. Parents/carers may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss and resolve the issues leading to poor punctuality. If students arrive significantly late (after registers have closed) without a valid reason, this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Truancy

Regular truancy checks are undertaken, this may be in partnership with the Local Authority or the Police Liaison Officer. These checks will target known truants. Lesson truancy checks are made in College. Parents/carers will be informed if it is found that their child is missing from a lesson.

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, students and all members of College staff.

As a College we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular data report sent home for each student
- Provide up to date information on Connect
- Inform you in writing of your child's attendance once it becomes a concern
- Report attendance rates and patterns regularly
- Celebrate good attendance
- Reward good or improving attendance
- Provide advice, help and support to improve student attendance
- Run promotional and information events where parents, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the College.

Students should:

- Aim for 100% attendance, only being absent through genuine illness or other unavoidable reasons
- Arrive at College by 8.25 am and be punctual to every lesson
- Register at Student Reception if they are late
- Ensure that a parent/carer contacts the College to provide a reason for any unavoidable absence
- See individual teachers and catch up work missed during the period of absence.

Parents/carers should:

- Always call to notify the College before 8.00 am if your child is going to be absent from College, by telephoning 01730 812451 then selecting option 1 or by emailing attendance@mrc-academy.org
- Book holidays outside of term time
- Book medical appointments, as far as possible, outside of College time
- Ensure that, in the event of an unavoidable absence due to medical appointment or similar, the child does not take a whole day for a short appointment
- Emphasise the importance of good College attendance with your child
- When your child returns to College provide a written explanation for their absence, this may include doctor/hospital appointment cards, medical notes/letters
- Work with the College to find ways to support, and improve attendance if required

Staff responsible for, and available to support attendance:

- Members of the Attendance Team
- Tutors
- Pastoral Leaders
- Vice Principal overseeing attendance
- Link Governor

Improving attendance

Most students may, at some time in their College career, be too ill to attend College for the occasional day. Where absence due to illness is more frequent and regular, a support plan may be created to enable the child to access as much education as possible. Medication can be held at the Student Reception (contact reception for further details) and other strategies can be put in place to make the day at College easier when the child is suffering with symptoms of their illness. Medical evidence will be required for the College to continue to authorise absence.

Students can be reluctant to attend for a wide range of reasons, including friendship difficulties, concerns about lessons or homework or worries about home. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the College, the parents/carers and the student directly. If the student is reluctant to attend, it is never advisable to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. Early intervention is nearly always successful in improving attendance and if you talk honestly with staff at College, we can provide support and signpost you to outside agencies if appropriate. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, we may refer the student to the Local Authority who will try to resolve the situation. If ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the College can use additional actions such as Fixed Penalty Notices, or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Parents/carers or students may wish to contact the Attendance Team, to ask for help or information and appropriate advice.

Legal action

Unauthorised absences can result in legal intervention being taken against parents/carers. Legal intervention that may be considered include the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice or consideration may be given to a prosecution in a Magistrates Court under the Education Act 1996.

Penalty notices are issued by West Sussex County Council. A penalty notice is a fine of £60 (per parent, per child taken out of College) which increases to £120 if not paid within the first 21 days. If the penalty remains unpaid this may result in legal action. A conviction of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 may result in a fine of £1000. If the matter is more serious, then proceedings can be taken under Section 444(1A) and fines can be up to £2,500 or a prison sentence imposed.

Absence Procedures

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to contact us before 8.00 am.

If a student is absent and no reason has been provided the College will:

- Send parent/carer a message via our automated system requesting parent/carer to call the College
- Make phone contact to ascertain the reason for the child's absence
- Conduct a home visit, and/or contact the Police and Children's Services if we cannot make contact, in order to ensure that the child is safe.

Further actions:

- The parent/carer may be contacted and asked to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription or medical appointment card
- A return to College meeting may be carried out with their child
- Parent/carer will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss attendance if the College is concerned about levels of attendance
- Ten unauthorised absences (5 days) in a ten-week period may lead to a Fixed Penalty Fine
- A referral may be made to the local authority.

Children Missing Education (CME)

The Department for Education (DfE) defines CME as – 'all children of compulsory College age who are not on a College roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in an alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually four weeks or more)', Children who are disengaged from education, whether not being registered in provision or children persistently absent are at significant risk of exposure to harm. They may be at significant risk of exploitation (both criminal and sexual), forced marriage, teenage parenthood, mental health, substance misuse, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), criminal and anti-social behaviour.

Please see the separate policy on the website for further information on CME.