

Attendance Policy

Approved by: Mrs Zarah Gadatara **Date:** Autumn Term 2021

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Senior Management Team:

- Monitor and review Attendance Policy annually.
- Set and monitor attendance targets.
- Implement system of rewards and sanctions (student of the month).
- Ensure that parents and referring schools are aware of the attendance policy.
- Give attendance a high profile at tutorials/assemblies and school events.
- Meet with parents to discuss attendance problems as soon as they are identified.
- Meet with Attendance Officer and Education Welfare Officer regularly to review attendance.
- Assist attendance Officer with referrals to the Education Welfare Service.
- Ensure long term absentees and excluded pupils are provided with work to complete at home.

- Look for patterns of absences and consider impact of curriculum upon attendance alongside other possible causes.
- Keep an accurate register.
- All entries should be in ink (where electronic systems are not employed) and any corrections must be clearly distinguishable from the original entry. The register must be kept in school for at least three years.
- The record can be computerised so long as:
 - There is a print out at least once per year
 - Any corrections are distinguishable
 - When a pupil of compulsory school age is absent it must be marked as an ‘authorised’ or un-authorised absence’
 - Or: attending an approved educational activity — nature to be specified.
 - An ‘approved educational activity’ is defined as:
 - a) One taking place off the school premises
 - b) Approved by a person authorised by the board of trustees or the Head of school.
 - c) Supervised by a person authorised by the board of trustees or the Head of school.
 - d) Of an educational nature, including work experience, field trips and educational visits, interviews with prospective employers, or for a place in post 16 education.
 - e) Link courses where pupils attend an FE college for part of their education
 - f) Off- site at another location while remaining on roll
 - g) Supervision (e.g. sick children being taught at home)
 - h) Attending approved sporting activity.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class tutors

[Class tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School office staff

School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

Parents:

- Ensure that children leave for school on time every day.
- Provide written explanation for children’s absences from school.
- Endeavour not to take children out of school in term time.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when children are ill or are going to be late and provide a reason.
- If no letter has been sent in advance, telephone the school on the first morning child is absent.

Students:

- Arrive at 9.15 for registration every morning and 13.10 for registration every afternoon.
- Be on time for lessons.
- Make sure to have a note from parents explaining any absences or tardiness.
- If you need to leave early inform tutor at beginning of the lesson. The reason for leaving school early will need to be given with supporting evidence.
- Tell teachers if you are having any problems attending school.

Support Available:

- Attendance Reports (to combat lesson truancy).
- Attendance interviews and regular reviews.
- Meetings with Head of School, EWO and other external agencies to provide support for children and their parents.
- Re-integration programme on the first morning back in school after long-term absence.
- Re-integration timetables where appropriate.
- EWO involvement.

Rewards:

- Commendations.
- Half-termly, termly and annual certificates and letters home for individuals and form prizes for groups (student of the month).
- Good attendance references to potential employers/colleges.

Sanctions:

The school reserves the right to use any of the following sanctions to fulfill its obligations with respect to school attendance:

- Detention.
- Isolation
- EWO involvement and referral.
- Parenting Contracts

Penalty Notices issued by the school

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent commits an offence if his or her compulsory school age child who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly. This can result in the school issuing a penalty notice under section 23 of the Anti-social Behavior Act 2003 (by Head teachers and deputy and assistant heads authorised by them).

Parenting orders or penalty notices can also be issued by the Education Welfare Service on behalf of the LEA.

Prosecution by the Education Welfare Service on behalf of the LEA.

CME:

- Phone calls are made daily when students don't attend school
- If non-attendance continues, letters are sent home.
- If parents don't respond within 10 days, then a risk assessment is completed for a home visit.
- If the risk assessment is successful, then the home visit will take place.
- Staff members complete home visits to find out the reason for absence.
- If staff members are unable to access the home or if the home visit raises concerns, then a referral is made to the LA/EWO.

Parent guides to these measures are available on www.direct.gov.uk/parents

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by **09:15** on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 09:30 and will be kept open until **10:30**. The register for the second session will be taken at **13:10** and will be kept open until **14:00**.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by **10:00** or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Evidence such as a letter or appointment is required to be provided.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

➤ After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by contacting the parent on a daily basis.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will send out monthly letters to advise parents/carers of any unauthorised absences.

Parents/carers are informed of students current attendance and punctuality percentages within termly reports.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as one off events which are unavoidable, examples may include **the death of a close relative**, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveler pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travelers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travelers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveler 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

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

- Phone calls are made daily when students don't attend school
- If non-attendance continues, letters are sent home.
- If parents don't respond within 10 days, then a risk assessment is completed for a home visit.
- If the risk assessment is successful, then the home visit will take place.
- Staff members complete home visits to find out the reason for absence.
- If staff members are unable to access the home or if the home visit raises concerns, then a referral is made to the LA/EWO.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Rewards:

- Commendations.
- Half-termly, termly and annual certificates and letters home for individuals and form prizes for groups (student of the month).
- Good attendance references to potential employers/colleges.

Sanctions:

The school reserves the right to use any of the following sanctions to fulfill its obligations with respect to school attendance:

- Detention.
- Isolation
- EWO involvement and referral.
- Parenting Contracts

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a **weekly** basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above **5** days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by **Zarah Gadatara**. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full board of trustees.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveler absence	Pupil from a Traveler community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Example Letter 1

[INSERT DATE]

[INSERT ADDRESS]
[INSERT ADDRESS]
[INSERT ADDRESS]
[INSERT ADDRESS]

Dear [INSERT NAME],

Re: Attendance

According to our records, [STUDENT NAME] has recently been absent from school for [NO. OF DAYS] days.

You will be aware that it is the parent's responsibility to notify the school on the first day of a pupil's absence to explain the reasons why he/she is unable to attend school and an expected date when he/she should return.

I am therefore writing to you to give you an opportunity to explain the recent absences. Please complete the tear off slip below and return it to the school as soon as possible. Any absence that hasn't been explained within two weeks will be categorised as "Unauthorised" Absence.

If you wish to discuss this letter further, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Shaila Osman
Head of School

Please complete the slip and return to school as soon as possible.

Dates of unexplained absences: [INCLUDE DATES]

Explanation for the above dates of unexplained absence:

Parent/Car
er
Signature

.....
.....

..... Date.....

Appendix 3: Home Visit Form

Home Visit Report

Please use this form as a basis for a discussion between parents/carers and to record initial agreed actions. Please return this form to Kelly at reception.

* A copy of this report must be kept in the student's file and one sent to the home address.

Date of visit:		Child's Name:	
Parents/carers:		Child's DOB:	
Address:		Parent's tel. no/mobile	
LAC (Y/N):		Social Worker Name:	
Referring School:		Type of Concern:	

1. Initial Observations

What sort of communication occurred between the parents/carers and child before the home visit?

How did the parents engage with Just Learn staff?

How did the parents react to the concerns raised by Just Learn?

How did the student engage with Just Learn staff?

How did the student react to the concerns raised by Just Learn?

Additional support or services which may be needed for the student and parent/carer:

2. Objectives for Parents/Carers

Additional or updated information shared by parents/carers on the home visit (e.g. recent changes in family, child development or health concerns, other issues or worries) :

Ideas for supporting parents to resolve the concerns raised by Just Learn. Please say whether you have discussed these at this point and if any have been agreed:

What do/does the parent/s hope to gain from the support for themselves? (e.g. improve attendance, attainment or general behaviour):

3. Agreed Plan:		
What Just Learn agrees to do to help student meet agreed target(s):		
What the parent/carer agrees to do to help student meet agreed target(s):		
Targets the student agrees to work towards:		
Review date for agreed targets:		
Parent has copy of report YES/NO		Date:
Name of staff member completing report:		Date:
Signature of Just Learn staff member:		
Signature of parent/carer:		
Signature of student:		

Additional Notes:

Appendix 4: Example Penalty Notice Letter

Our Ref: [INSERT REFERENCE]

[INSERT DATE]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

Dear [INSERT NAME]

PENALTY NOTICE – [INSERT] Year: [INSERT]

I have been notified that [INSERT NAME] attendance for the period of [INSERT DATES] was [INSERT %]. [INSERT NAME] absences are either without authorised permission or without a justifiable reason being given to Just Learn.

GOOD ATTENDANCE IS VITAL FOR [INSERT NAME] FUTURE

The reward for good attendance:

- The majority of good attendees will leave education with GCSEs, or a qualification that will help to support their future training and employment.

The cost of non-attendance:

- 2 in every 10 truants will leave education without a qualification.
- 2 in every 3 young people convicted in crime have been truants.
- Yearly attendance of less than 80% over the course of secondary education is the equivalent of at least one year's education, which will have a detrimental effect upon [INSERT NAME] future opportunities.

The government has introduced new powers for Local Authorities to issue Penalty Notices in cases where parent/carers do not take responsibility for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance. **The Penalty Notice incurs a fine of £120.** I need to inform you that the level of [INSERT NAME] absence, if continued, will place you at risk of this penalty and/or prosecution in court. In the event of court action you could be fined up to £1000 and be subject to a Criminal Record.

I will commence formal monitoring of [INSERT NAME] attendance from [INSERT DATE] and will be in touch with you in due course. During the monitoring period any absence due to illness will not be authorised unless it is supported by appropriate medical evidence (please ask Just Learn for details). If you provide evidence of ill health in the form of a note from the medical health professional made in your child’s planner, this must be endorsed using the practice stamp. If the stamp is not clear then a second stamp should be requested. Evidence should be presented within 3 days of the return to education after the absence.

If there has not been an improvement I will arrange for your details to be passed to the Senior Education Welfare Officer at Merton Local Authority who will issue a Penalty Notice to you on our behalf.

Yours sincerely

Shaila Osman
Head of School

Date of issue: October 2016

Review date: August 2017 – Appendices added (Letter 1, Home Visit Form, Penalty notice letter)

Review date: July 2018 – Amendment made to the academic year date

Review date: July 2019 – Amendment made to the academic year date

Review date: July 2020 – Amendment made to the academic year date

Review date: September 2021 – Policy amended (support from The Key)

Review date: September 2022