

Attendance policy

Policy Reviewed: September 2021
Next Policy Review Date: September 2022

Prepared using the DFE publication;

- School attendance Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities October 2014
- Guidance for full opening of schools, August 2020
- Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2021 to 2022 academic year (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2021-to-2022-academic-year>)

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. The Moorland Waldorf school fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the College of teachers at our school works to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children, who are absent from school frequently, developing large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and trustees in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.

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- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to kindergarten aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non - attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data, both in hard copy and in electronic form
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the college of teachers.
- Parents will receive a letter at the end of term outlining their child's attendance for the term and highlighting if their attendance has dropped below the school target of 95%.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the college of teachers where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.

College of Teachers is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Reporting to the board of Trustees general trends in attendance across the school.

Administration staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Contacting parents of absent children, on the same day, where no contact has been made.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Parents /Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school **regularly and punctually** unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office **on the first morning** of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time, in writing. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

All the school doors open at 8.25 am and the duty teacher is responsible for the arriving children. At 8.30am, at the beginning of the school day, the doors will be locked as this time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance.

Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

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Registers are then returned to the school office.

Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

If any child arrives late they must ring the doorbell for admission.

If a child arrives late and after the registers close (at 8.35am for the morning session, 1.25pm for the afternoon session), this is recorded as an unauthorised absence for the session.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school late will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning and settling in time.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

ABSENCES

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absence for illness must be done either in person or via telephone.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on register

It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The college of teachers has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)

Lateness

If a child arrives late but before the register closes, this is recorded as 'Late' in the register, but the child is still counted as present for the session.

If a child arrives late and after the register closes for either session, then the child is marked as 'Late After Register has Closed' and this will be counted as an unauthorised absence for the session.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process.

Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent.

There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

As an independent school, we can allow, in special circumstances holiday absence, say if the holiday is of great value to the child or is for a wedding or funeral. This cannot be a habitual occurrence.

However, in order to obtain this the parent must apply to the class teacher in writing **at least 2 weeks before the event**.

The communication must have the reasons that you wish to take your child out of school and what benefit it will have on the child.

We will then assess this within the College of teachers and inform you of our decision.

If we feel being out of school will be detrimental to your child's education we will not allow such absence.

We will be assessing the following;

- Your child's progression in the class
- The importance of being in school at that time in the school year

Taking your child out of school in an emergency

If you need to take your child from school in an emergency, this must be done by providing the class teacher a letter explaining why you need to remove your child and how long you expect this time out to be.

Under no circumstances are parents allowed to disrupt the class to take their child there and then.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the College of teachers to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns

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about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance.

Where a child's attendance record falls below 80% over a period of time without improvement, or if there is a worrying pattern of absence, then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

General points:

- All classes are to maintain daily pupil registers for morning and afternoon sessions.
- Coding must be used to minimise error.
- Concerns about attendance are in the first place discussed with the parents then, if deemed necessary, to the LEA officer.
- Attendance issues relative to health are dealt with supportively and clearly.

Coronavirus update

Following the closure of all schools in spring and summer terms of 2020, the government expects all pupils to attend full-time school from September 2020 and schools are required to complete registers, track attendance and follow-up on poor attendance as normal. There may still be official school closures, either locally, regionally or nationally. We will inform parents in good time if this is going to happen. No child with coronavirus symptoms should attend school and parents should notify school immediately if a child is sick with suspected symptoms. We appreciate that some parents may still be concerned about sending their child to school and ask that you share those concerns with us if this is the case.

If children cannot travel to, or attend at, school because of circumstances relating to COVID-19 this will be recorded as COVID-19 absence (Attendance code X). Children's absence in this instance may only be recorded as COVID-19 absence if a pupil's travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19 from UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19

Endorsement:

Name: Linda Parker

Position: Chair of ECTE

Date: 05/09/2021