

Moorlands Schools Federation



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Attendance Policy

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MOORLANDS SCHOOLS FEDERATION

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Introduction

- 1.1. At Moorlands Schools Federation we believe that regular and punctual school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.
- 1.2. At Moorlands Schools Federation we believe that regular school attendance is key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and to becoming emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.
- 1.4 At Moorlands Schools Federation we are committed to providing high quality, engaging experiences and learning opportunities which enable all pupils, no matter what their strengths, to achieve their potential. In every lesson, every day, we aim to develop pupils' skills and understanding, carefully building on their prior knowledge and giving them the tools to succeed. Absence from any one of these lessons or experiences can cause anxiety for the child, as they feel that they have fallen behind, and may have an impact on a child's ability to succeed in the task that has been set. Frequent absence, or absence for blocks of time, will have a long lasting effect through the learning 'gaps' that are created in a child's understanding.
- 1.5 At Moorlands Schools Federation we believe attendance and punctuality are life skills which demonstrate an individual to be reliable, responsible and organised. It is the responsibility of the school and parents in partnership to prepare our children for the future and we believe that attitudes to attendance and punctuality developed at school will resonate throughout our children's life and chosen careers.

1.6 At Moorlands Schools Federation we value all pupils. As set out in this policy we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and to try and resolve any difficulties.

- At Moorlands Schools Federation, we recognise the significant benefits of a partnership with parents that supports learning. Our shared vision is to become 'an excellent school' and our school commitment to this vision is represented by the high quality **provision** we have put in place for learning. We believe that a key way parents can contribute to this shared vision is by ensuring that all children have **access** to this learning by aiming for maximum attendance and punctuality. A parents/carers role is to help your child help your child to achieve their potential by ensuring maximum attendance and punctuality

1.7 At Moorland Schools Federation we recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement.

2. Legal Framework

2.1 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

2.2 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

2.3 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

2.4 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.5 The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;

- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. Categorising absence

- 3.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- 3.2 Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.
- 3.3 Parents should advise the school by telephone by 9.30am on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return.
- 3.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:
- 3.5 Illness In most cases a telephone call from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.
- 3.6 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should inform the class teacher via the HASP book and show a copy of the appointment slip to the school office.
- 3.7 Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.
- 3.8 Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher or head teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.
- 3.9 Family Holidays and Extended Leave Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and should be made aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year. Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time.

- 3.10 However, up to 10 school days leave in any one school year **may** be granted at the discretion of the Headteacher. Any request must be made in accordance with this policy.
- 3.11 Parents wishing to take their child on holiday during term time are required to complete a Request for Absence to take holiday during term time or planned absence form (see Appendix A) before holiday arrangements are made. This must be submitted at least four weeks before a holiday and well before any holiday bookings are made and two weeks before any short term absence. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. The Request for Absence to take a holiday during term time or planned absence form should be completed within the following guidelines :
- a The absence form must be completed fully outlining why the school should consider that this is a request with 'exceptional circumstances'.
 - b Should there be any required clarification of the exceptional circumstances outlined in the absence request, then the Headteacher will contact the parents/carers.
 - c The school will return the completed authorisation form to the parents/carers to inform them whether the request has been granted or refused
 - d The reasons for refusal will be outlined on the returned absence form
 - e The decision of the headteacher is final.
- 3.12 Each request will be considered individually and in line with Government Guidance, parents/carers will be required to outline the 'exceptional circumstances' which form the basis for their request.and will take the following factors into account:
- Length of the proposed leave
 - Age of the pupil
 - The pupil's general absence/attendance record
 - Proximity of SAT's and public examinations – no leave will be granted to pupils in Year 6 during SATS week and the preparation time immediately beforehand, that is three weeks before.
 - Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
 - Pupil's educational needs
 - General welfare of the pupil
 - Circumstances of the request
 - Purpose of the leave
 - Previous term time holidays taken
 - When the request was made
 - No absence will be authorised during the first week of the academic year as this is an important time for a child's settling into their new class.

- 3.13 The school will only authorise one longer term application per pupil, per academic year if there are 'exceptional circumstances'. The planned absence must be on consecutive days.
- 3.14 Parents make the choice to take a child out of school when an absence has not been authorised, then the school will be required to follow Government guidance of recording it as an unauthorised absence, informing the CMEO and parents may risk a fine of up to £100.
- 3.15 It will not be possible to provide work for a child to complete during their period of absence as we do not feel there is any substitute for quality learning within the classroom, or that the extra preparation required is a reasonable expectation to be placed on staff.
- 3.16 Only in **exceptional circumstances** will absence of more than 10 school days be agreed. In such cases, consideration will also be given to cultural needs and family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parents will be required to justify why the holiday needs to be taken during term time.
- 3.17. The major exception to all of this is the extended leave of absence for family, work or cultural reasons. In this case, authority for absence can be granted for up to six weeks, but only if early discussion (at least 3 months in advance) takes place about the advisability of such leave, and the extent of school advice needed for such a trip. It is important to understand that children who take extended leave of absence usually fall behind their peers in learning and this can have a long-term effect on their education, especially if it becomes a regular occurrence. Attendance at a local school whilst you are away on an extended visit therefore would be beneficial for at least some of the time, if that is possible. If parents wish to clarify any matter regarding this, they should contact the head teacher.
- 3.18 If a pupil fails to return within 10 school days of the agreed date, and the failure is not due to sickness or any unavoidable cause, their name could be removed from the register following appropriate checks by the Attendance and Welfare Officers.
4. Religious Observance Moorlands Schools Federation acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

- 4.1 It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.
- 4.2 Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.
- 4.4.1 However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.
5. Late Arrival Registration begins at 8.45am at the Junior School and 8.55am at the Infant School, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 9.15am pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.
 - 5.1 On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.
 - 5.2 The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.
 - 5.3 The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry.
- 6 Unauthorised absence Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.
 - 6.1 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:
 - A pupil's/family member's birthday
 - Shopping for uniforms
 - Having their hair cut
 - Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
 - "Couldn't get up"
 - Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
 - Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Moorlands Schools Federation believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community. As such, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Regularly review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department of Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

7.2 The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues regularly to the governing body.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented

- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

7.3 Staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve

7.4 Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance and punctuality within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time, where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of booking the holiday

8. Using Attendance Data

- 8.1 The school sets an annual target for attendance based on its previous attendance figures. We will report this target figure at the beginning of each academic year in our school newsletter. As with all areas of our school, we are aiming for excellence. Academically, our school performs well above the national average however, our current

attendance figures are in line with the national average. Therefore, we are committed to raising the standard of attendance to well above the national average to meet our aim for excellence.

- 8.2 Attendance is registered twice daily and absence, dependant on circumstances, is either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. A full school report is produced termly which is monitored by the school and the Local Authority.
- 8.3 Every four weeks the Attendance Team will provide all class teachers with attendance data for the previous four weeks for each pupil within their class. The list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attenders at the top; every pupil will be colour coded as indicated below:

GREEN	pupils with attendance between 100% and 96%
LIGHT AMBER	pupils with attendance between 95% and 91%
AMBER	pupils with attendance between 90%- 88%
DARK AMBER	pupils with attendance between 87% and 86%
RED	pupils with attendance below 85%

- 8.4 The Senior Leadership Team will receive a complete set of data.
- 8.5 This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix A).
- 8.6 Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.
- 8.7 Moorlands Schools Federation will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the local authority as required.
- 8.8 All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

9. Support Systems

- 9.1 Moorlands Schools Federation recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example,

bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

9.2 Moorlands Schools Federation also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

9.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

9.4 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

9.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Moorlands Schools Federation, in partnership with Bath and North East Somerset (will consider the use of legal sanctions.

10. Legal Sanctions

10.1 Prosecution Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

10.2 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

- 10.3 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.
- 10.4 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.
11. **Conclusion** – During the school year we wish to encourage the highest possible individual attendance rate and we view this procedure as a necessary and important objective. Regular attendance and good punctuality is proven to improve attainment and establish good routines for life. At Moorlands Schools Federation we want our children to feel secure, enthusiastic and ready to learn.

Appendix A

Escalation of Attendance Interventions

GREEN **pupils with attendance between 100% to 96%**

Parents will receive a certificate at the end of the school.

LIGHT AMBER **pupils with attendance between 95-91%**

Class teacher will speak to the pupil to:

- Welcome the pupil back to school
- Confirm with the pupil the reason for absence and offer any support that may be required
- Update the pupil on other work they have missed and support any catch up required

A letter will be sent to parents advising of concern and outlining the parents' responsibilities

The Senior Leadership team and class teacher will be made aware of the attendance concerns.

AMBER **pupils with attendance between 90-88%**

Class teacher will speak to the pupil to:

- Welcome the pupil back to school
- Confirm with the pupil the reason for absence and offer any support that may be required
- Update the pupil on other work they have missed and support any catch up required
- Advise the school's inclusion leader of any concerns

A letter will be sent to parents advising of concern, outlining the parents' responsibilities and asking the parents to speak with the schools attendance team.

The senior leadership team and class teacher will be made aware of the concerns.

DARK AMBER **pupils with attendance below 87-86%**

Class teacher will speak to the pupil to:

- Welcome the pupil back to school

