



# Moorlands Schools Federation

## Attendance Policy

**Date of Policy:** September 2020

**Review Date:** September 2022

**Senior Member of Staff Responsible:** Katy Pearson (Acting Headteacher)

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## 1. Rationale

At Moorlands Schools Federation we require the highest level of attendance from every child. Regular attendance is a legal requirement and provides the opportunity for each child to develop his or her potential during their time at school. It is important that children have the opportunity to experience the full range of a balanced curriculum with its contribution to their daily moral, spiritual, cultural, mental and social development. Irregular attendance and lateness lead to children feeling out of touch with school life and falling behind with their work.

Optimum levels of attendance can only be achieved when responsibility is accepted and shared by all concerned. This includes Bath and North East Somerset Council, governors, school staff, parents, children and the local community.

This is reiterated in our home/school agreement (**Appendix i**).

## Aims

**In this policy, it is the school's aim to:**

- Make it clear that the expectation for each pupil is 100% attendance unless the child is prevented from attending due to illness or any *unavoidable* cause.
- Maximise attendance for each child in order that they may achieve their full potential academically and socially
- Ensure their safety and wellbeing
- Provide a positive, caring and stimulating environment where children will enjoy coming to school

## 2. Attendance records:

The school sets an annual target for attendance based on national expectations and the school's previous attendance figures. We 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. Therefore, we are committed to raising the standard of attendance to well above the national average to meet our aim to be an outstanding school. That is why we say that the expectation for each pupil is 100% attendance unless the child is prevented from attending due to illness or any unavoidable cause.

2.1 Attendance is registered twice daily and any absence is either **authorised** or **unauthorised** depending on circumstances. A full school report is produced termly which is monitored by the school and the Local Authority's Children Missing Education department.

2.2 Any child whose attendance is falling below the school attendance target during the academic year will receive a letter indicating that the school has some cause for concern (**Appendix ii**). The parents/carers of any child whose attendance figures fall below 90% will be invited to discuss the issue with the Headteacher to identify whether there is any support that can be provided by the school (**Appendix iii**). Children with significantly low attendance will be referred to the Children Missing Education Officer (CMEO) at the Local Authority (**Appendix iv**).

### 2.3. Lateness

The beginning of the school day is an important time to ensure that children are settled, organised and ready to start learning. Children are expected to arrive in school between 8:35 and 8:55am daily, in time for registration at 8:55am. The parents of any children arriving after this time will be expected to sign the 'late' book, giving a reason for their late attendance. If they arrive late but before 9:15am, a late mark is entered in the register. If a child arrives after 9:15am it will be deemed as unauthorised absence for that session. The Headteacher will contact the parents/carers of any child who is persistently late to discuss and resolve any barriers that may be preventing a child from attending school on time.

### 3. Absence through illness:

3.1 If a child is unwell he/she will need time at home to get better. Parents can support other families by ensuring that children with contagious diseases (e.g. sickness bug, conjunctivitis, flu) are better before returning them to school. Further guidance is given in our School Handbook.

3.2 At these times, parents should contact the school before 9.30am on the first day of absence, explaining the reasons. The school would be concerned if a child was absent frequently from school for short periods of time and would contact the parents/carers to discuss any issues and identify whether support could be provided (e.g. from the school nurse) to enable fuller attendance. It is likely, at this point, that a [medical action plan](#) will be introduced to ensure that each child's needs are being fully met. This would involve absence for medical reasons being unauthorised unless supported by information from medical professionals such as an appointment card.

3.3 If we are unable to reach parents when a child is absent and no explanation has been given, we will continue to attempt to contact them on a daily basis. After 10 days we will report this absence to the [Children Missing Education Officer](#), as a safeguarding precaution, and they are very likely to conduct a welfare check at the child's home.

3.4 The school would follow guidance from the Children Missing Education Service (CMES) in cases of prolonged absence to ensure full support.

### 4. Planned absence from school:

If parents request a period of planned absence the school will provide an appropriate form to complete providing the circumstances/timing. Absence will only be authorised if it is unavoidable or arises out of exceptional circumstances. The decision whether or not to authorise absence is the headteacher's, taken with the support of the school governors.

Also, if a pupil does not return on the date given, the school will attempt to contact the parents. If we are unable to make contact, we will pass this information on to the Children Missing Education Service as a safeguarding precaution.

### 6. Regular planned absence:

There may be some exceptional circumstances where it is necessary for a child to be regularly absent from school (e.g. on a weekly basis). Reasons for this may include medical treatment or counselling. Should such circumstances arise, the parent would need to complete the form - **Request for Regular Planned Absence** outlining the 'exceptional circumstances' for such a request. In this case, the 'exceptional circumstances' outlined will be required to prove that this absence is necessary because it supports a child in a way that is beyond current school provision.

### 7. Request for absence to take holiday in term time planned absence:

Parents and carers who wish to request holiday in term time, or a longer term planned absence for their child from school, are required to complete the form - **Request for Absence to take Holiday During Term Time or Longer Term planned absence (more than two days)**. This must be submitted at least two weeks before the intended absence and well before any holiday bookings are made. Any requests that are not submitted within these given requirements will automatically be refused. In line with Government guidance, parents/carers will be required to outline the '**exceptional circumstances**' which form the basis for their request. Absence will only be authorised if it is unavoidable or arises out of exceptional circumstances. The decision whether or not to authorise absence is the headteacher's, taken with the support of the school governors. The school considers that any significant absence is likely to have a negative impact on an individual's education. Parents have a legal duty to ensure regular attendance in school. Unauthorised absence may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued by the local authority.

## **8. Equalities**

At Moorlands Schools Federation, we treat all parents and pupils equitably, while taking into account specific medical needs when it comes to handling pupil absence. We recognise that we have pupils on roll with specific needs and work closely with parents to take these into account. Medical Action Plans will be introduced to support this process at the discretion of the head teacher.

We also recognise that we currently have pupils on roll who are the children of members of staff. Their absence from school will be treated in the same way as for any other pupil. In particular, the decision whether or not to request that a child be taken home by a parent will be made by school staff other than the pupil's parent. The absence will be authorised when this has happened, as it would be for any child.

## **9. Duties and Responsibilities**

### **The Head Teacher**

- Has overall responsibility for whole school attendance ;
- Monitors registers for accuracy of marking (in accordance with LA guidelines) ;
- Provides opportunities for class teachers to register concerns about attendance
- Initiates school-level contact with parents ;
- Liaises with the CMEO (Children Missing Education Officer), Attendance Manager and the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator ;
- Refers cases of poor school attendance to the Local Authority to request parental support and challenge.

### **The Class Teacher**

- Is responsible for keeping accurate attendance registers ;
- Informs the Headteacher of ongoing concerns ;
- Keeps accurate records of any contacts with parents regarding attendance;
- On first absence from morning registration ensures the office is aware of any absence who will then make every attempt to contact the parent to ensure the child's safety. If no contact can be made the CMEO is informed for safeguarding purposes.

### **The School Administrator (Attendance Manager), or Administrative Support Staff**

- Transfers attendance data from class lists to the computer module daily ;
- Provides attendance statistics for monitoring purposes, including DfE census requirements and annual pupil reports ;
- Makes initial contact with parents ;
- Advises the head teacher of any immediate concerns ;
- Contacts parents regarding late arrivals and pupil sickness.

### **Parents**

- Are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school ;
- Must provide an explanation for any absences.
- Must inform the school of the date when they are expecting their child/children to return to school or contact the school on a daily basis, to give an update on the absence until their child/children return to school.

### **Children Missing Education Officer**

- Will liaise with the Headteacher regarding concerns over student absences each term ;
- Will work with the Headteacher on whole school and individual attendance issues ;
- Will accept referred cases of pupils with poor school attendance, from the Head Teacher.

## ADDENDUM – COVID-19 ARRANGEMENTS FROM 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020 UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Please note that this supersedes the previous COVID-19 arrangements from 1<sup>st</sup> June

- We will adhere to all [government guidance on attendance](#) during this period; if it conflicts with anything in this policy, the current government guidance will take precedence. Key information from that guidance is given below:

### Attendance During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

From September 2020, all pupils will be required to attend school. As such, the arrangements set out in the main body of this policy (above) will be adhered to. This appendix has been developed in line with the latest government guidance to set out the additional measures that have been put in place to support pupils' attendance at school.

#### 1. Attendance expectations from September

1.1 From the beginning of the 2020/2021 academic year (September), attendance is mandatory for all pupils.

1.2 From September, the usual rules on school attendance (as set out in the main body of this policy) will apply, including:

- Parents' duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly.
- The school's responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence, in line with the procedures in the main body of this policy.
- The availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with the LA's code of conduct.

#### 2. Shielding or self-isolating pupils

2.1 Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August. This means that pupils who were shielding can return to school, as can pupils who have family members who were shielding.

2.2 Pupils who are no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional should discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school. Parents should inform the school of any particular measures that need to be in place to ensure their child can return to school safely.

2.3 The school understands that there will be occasions where some pupils may not be able to attend school due to coronavirus, including for the following reasons:

- They are self-isolating and have symptoms of coronavirus or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus.
- Rates of coronavirus in the local area have risen and certain individuals are asked to temporarily shield.

2.4 Absences relating to pupils following clinical and/or public health advice will not be penalised.

2.5 Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, they will be immediately offered access to remote learning, in line with the Pupil Remote Learning Policy.

### 3. Reluctance to return to school

3.1 Parents will be advised to contact the school if they have concerns about their child returning to school.

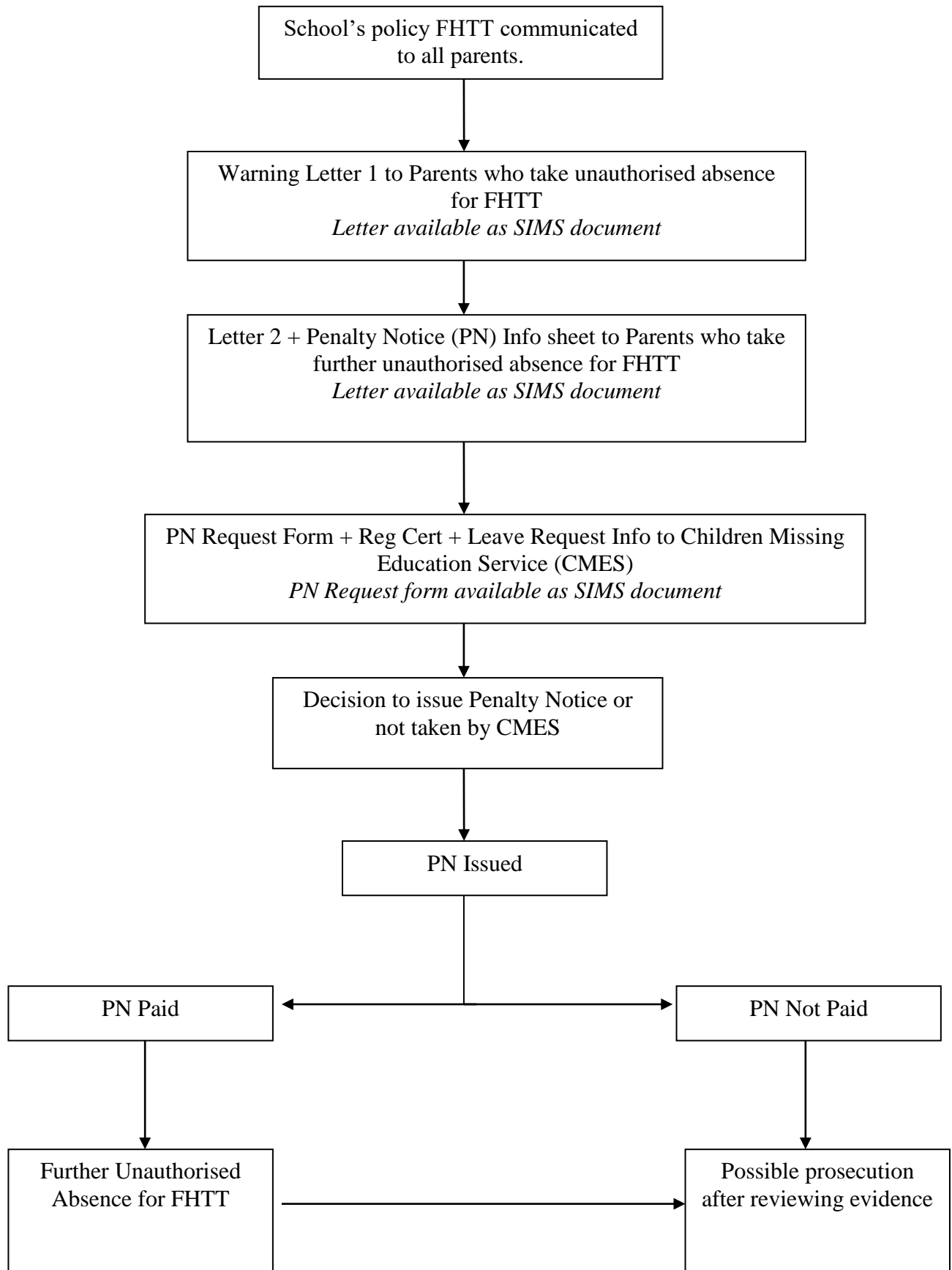
3.2 If a parent raises a concern, a relevant staff member will hold a discussion with the parent to discuss their concerns and provide reassurance on the measures that are in place to reduce risk in the school.

### 4. Monitoring attendance

4.1 The attendance officer will monitor the school's attendance rates once the school is open to all pupils in September.

4.2 Any trends in non-attendance will be identified (e.g. due to anxiety) and measures will be put in place to reengage affected pupils with the school.

**Planned absence from school  
(family holiday in term time or FHTT)  
FLOWCHART for use in case of UNAUTHORISED absence**



## Appendix ii

Dear

Re: Child's Name      dob:                      School:  
Attendance: %

I am writing to all parents whose child's attendance has fallen since September.

A close link has been established between good school attendance and academic success. Missed lessons leave pupils trying to catch up and may cause anxiety when they return to find the class has moved on. Continuity of education is very important. It is worth considering that a 10% absence rate is equivalent to a half year of a child's time in secondary school.

I want to take this opportunity to inform you that under the Education Act 1996, you have a duty to ensure the regular attendance of your child at (name of school). This means that (child's name) must be in attendance every time the school is open, unless s/he is prevented from doing so by reason of illness or any unavoidable cause.

We are aware of the variety of reasons why children do not attend regularly at school. Where there is a valid reason (for example a diagnosed health or medical issue) a plan will be agreed between you and the school; this plan will offer appropriate support and will be regularly reviewed. It is therefore important that information is shared with school staff. We will continue to need a note to explain any absence.

Please take immediate action to improve (child's name) school attendance.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact (name and school) on (telephone number).

I look forward to your cooperation in this important matter.

Yours sincerely

Enclosed: School attendance record



## Appendix iii

Dear

Re:    dob:    School:

NAME OF SCHOOL

Following the letter dated DATE I have continued to monitor NAME's attendance.

This academic year, NAME has attended on only NUMBER out of a possible NUMBER half-day sessions, giving an attendance rate of NUMBER % - the equivalent to missing NUMBER days school each week. The school register shows that NUMBER of NAME's absences have not been authorised and that his/her last week of full attendance was in the week starting Monday DATE.

Under the Education Act 1996, it is your duty as NAME's parent/carer to ensure his/her regular attendance at school. This means that NAME must be in attendance every time the school is open, unless he/she is prevented from doing so by reason of illness or any unavoidable cause.

I would like to offer an opportunity for you to discuss your child's school attendance with me and therefore invite you to a XXX School Attendance Meeting on:

Date:    Time:    Place:

This meeting will discuss the reasons why NAME is not attending school regularly and how this is impacting on his/her educational attainment. We will plan together how this matter will be resolved, what the next steps are and agree a date to review progress.

If you are unable to attend the meeting on the above date please let me know as soon as possible to enable another date to be arranged.

Yours sincerely

## Appendix iv

Dear Parents Name,

Re:

DOB:

Year Group:

We had arranged an attendance meeting at XXX School on DATE. At this meeting I had hoped to address the fact that CHILD'S NAME attendance is of real concern. I was therefore very disappointed that you didn't attend or inform us that you were not able to attend.

CHILD'S NAME overall attendance for this academic year is XX.XX% which falls below of what we would expect.

I will take this opportunity to remind you that Under the Education Act 1996, it is your duty as CHILD'S NAME parent to ensure his/her regular attendance at school. This means that CHILD'S NAME must be in attendance every time the school is open, unless she is prevented from doing so by reason of illness or any unavoidable cause.

I shall continue to monitor CHILD'S NAME attendance until DATE at which point, I will review. If CHILD'S NAME accrues any further unauthorised absences during this period we will refer your child to the Children Missing Education Officer at the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely,