



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy relates only to children of compulsory school age unless otherwise indicated

Principles

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority.

Many children are sometimes ill or unhappy about attending school. Families can be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. It is never better to cover up children's absences or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised Absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away for the morning/afternoon/day, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence. This may be illness, medical appointments (usually hospital) that could not be made outside of school hours, religious days or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the staff at school do not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These are an offence by the parent and include:

- keeping children off school without a good reason
- truancy before the register has been marked
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- taking holidays that have not been approved by the school in advance

Parents are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may offer parents a formal Parenting Contract or refer the child to the (Education Welfare Officer) from the Local Authority.

He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement wherever possible but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use legal proceedings if required, including Penalty Notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the (EWO) themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Term time holidays

In line with the Government's amendments to the Education Regulations 2006, the Headteacher **will not grant leave of absence for family holidays** in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. **This applies to all children of compulsory school age.** In order to enforce this decision in the school, in partnership with National Government guidelines and Local Governing Bodies, **school has agreed to the issuing of Penalty Notices for parents taking their children out of school during term time for holidays without permission.** Parents are required to write to the Headteacher giving a reason and requesting permission for leave of absence for their child. Parents/carers will be notified in writing of the Headteacher's decision and of the intention to issue a Penalty Notice should the unauthorised term time holiday go ahead. Children who are absent from school during term time because of a holiday will be marked with a 'G' code (family holiday not authorised) on the school registration system.

Irregular attendance

Our drive to improve attendance will mean that from 1st September 2019, as well as fining for term time holidays **we will also be issuing penalty notices for irregular attendance.** This will bring us in line with government guidance.

See Appendix

Sickness

Sometimes a child may be sick after coughing or it may be linked to anxiety. If your child has been sick we recommend a clear 24 hours at home from the time the child was last sick. If your child has contracted a sickness/ vomiting bug they may need to stay off for 48 hours or longer.

[See Appendix 3 Covid19 attendance guidance.](#)

Persistent Absentees

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. These are called "persistent absentees" by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence.

Our school works with the Education Welfare Officer to ensure all pupil attendance data is monitored regularly and action taken to reduce persistent absence. Where a child's absence is due to known illness or exceptional circumstances it will be monitored closely. If absence is not for one of these reasons a written warning will be issued. Parents/carers will be required to show improvement within the next four school weeks.

If there is no improvement then a second letter will be issued requesting the parent/carer make an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss the reasons for the persistent absence. At this stage support will be offered and targets for improvement set.

If there is still no improvement within the next two school weeks, parents/ carers will be notified that the matter has been referred to the Education Welfare Officer who will then follow up the case; this leaves parents/carers at risk of legal action and/or a Penalty Notice.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

The doors open between 8.30am and 8.55am due to staggered starts during the Covid19 pandemic. See Appendix 3.

Morning registration takes place ten minutes after the class door opens.

If children arrive after their door has closed, they must come into the main entrance and parents need to sign them in. Our office staff will greet these families and reasons will be recorded on the electronic signing in screen. They will be marked as late (L) if they arrive after the register has been taken.

Registers will be officially closed by the office at 9:15am.

If they arrive after 9.15am they will be marked as a (U)

Any absence should be reported to the office.

Thirty minutes after close of Registration – School Response. Children's non-attendance at school, when no reason has been reported by parents, is a safeguarding matter. School (Learning Mentor/Admin assistant) will follow up all unexplained absences by contacting parents (First Day Response). Parents will be asked to provide clarification for the absence. If concerns arise, then the Headteacher or other designated safeguarding professional in school may make a home visit, refer matters to the Education Welfare Officer, Social Care Direct or the Police.

The school register is a legal document and as such is checked regularly by the Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer. Checks ensure registers are being maintained accurately and assess the reasons and incidence of any absence.

Children with an absence greater than 10% will not have authorised absence without further evidence of their illness.

Absence will be tracked on a half-termly basis and anyone with absence initially at 10% or above will receive a letter stating their child's attendance figures and the need for an improvement. As school attendance improves we will move towards addressing those with absence between 5% and 10% as well. Parents of those with absence above 10% will be requested to attend a meeting and it will be explained that their absence will no longer be authorised (unless there is further evidence, letter from doctor etc). Where they do not attend the meeting, we may do the meeting at their home. These children will be tracked closely as they are classed as persistently absent (PA)

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) works with the school to address attendance issues for children and young people. In order to achieve improved school attendance, the Service needs to be clearly focussed in its efforts and work with schools and families.

Fixed Penalty Notices are an effective way to address low level attendance issues and can be issued for unauthorised absence which may include Term Time Holidays, truancy and poor punctuality. Failure to pay a FPN can lead to a Parental Prosecution. Fines are currently £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days, doubling to £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days.

Parental prosecutions are brought under the 1996 Education Act, Section 444 as a last resort when all attempts to encourage and support improvements have failed; when the parent has not engaged, or when a FPN remains unpaid. The EWS may bring a case to the Magistrates' Court for any school or Academy providing there is sufficient weight of evidence and it is in the public interest to do so.

It is not possible for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, minding the house, birthdays, day trips etc. Leave may however, be granted on compassionate grounds in an emergency (e.g. after the death of close relative).

Please note that **a request for a term-time holiday is NOT a parental right**. Leave *may* be granted in exceptional circumstances but arrangements should not be made without the school's agreement in advance. Taking leave without permission is "unauthorised" absence and can be subject to a Penalty Notice fine or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed in advance if at all possible. A "present" mark may still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives and strategies

The school has adopted the following attendance targets and special projects:

Our school is aiming for the highest possible percentage of attendance. In an effort to encourage the children and parents to attend regularly, we have the following initiatives in place:-

- A weekly class attendance check in Monday's assembly with the winning class receiving a treat.
- Weekly credits for those with full attendance to spend in the attendance shop at the end of term.
- 100% stickers/certificates awarded half termly and termly.
- Termly treats for the class with the best attendance.
- End of year treat for the winning class
- End of year treats for 100% pupils.

Mrs Deborah Birdsall - Head teacher
Mrs Janet Hardy - Learning Mentor

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Please work with us.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MOORTHORPE PRIMARY SCHOOL:

- Set high expectations for pupil attendance, and monitor individual and whole school attendance on a weekly basis.
- Complete 'First day response' phone calls if a pupil is absent without parents/ carers informing school.

- Make home visits when contact has not been made.
- Identify causes of concern with regard to pupil attendance.
- Make initial contact with parents where there is unexplained absence.
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss where there is no improvement.
- Work in partnership with the LA, and with EWO particularly.
- Maintain electronic registration data systems effectively and deploy them robustly to facilitate presentation of reports.
- Provide attendance data for parents.
- Promote attendance at all levels – within our schools, our community, regionally and nationally.
- Celebrate excellent and improved attendance.

PARENTS/CARERS

- Ensure pupils arrive at school on time every day and that routines are in place at home to support this.
- Contact the school as soon as possible if absence is unavoidable.
- Provide appointment cards to support medical absence.
- Avoid term time holidays, and minimise school time appointments.

THE EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER

- The EWO will work in partnership with the school to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level, either through a referral system or using the Fast Track to Attendance Programme; and at whole school level using proactive strategies and Action Plans.
- The EWO will work with children and families to ensure their school attendance and safeguarding is maintained.
- EWO will provide advice and guidance with regards to Children Missing Education, Child Employment and Licensing.
- EWO will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
- EWO will undertake legal action on behalf of the School.
- EWO will support the school with networking and training events and with School Audits and Action Plans.

A POLICY ON TERM-TIME LEAVE

Dear Parents,

As you know your children should be in school every day. Absence is disruptive for them and for the school. But we recognise that some absences, like illness, may be reasonable and unavoidable and leave can be authorised in certain circumstances. If you wish to request leave for some reason other than your child's illness, you **MUST** discuss it with the school **BEFORE** you take the leave.

Leave should only be requested for the shortest time possible. Trips etc. of more than a few days should normally include times when the school is closed, or only part of the absence may be authorised. Any leave may be refused at certain times of the school year, such as SATs or exams weeks etc.

The headteacher has the power to grant leave in 'exceptional' circumstances only. These might include:

- Sudden unexpected incidents, such as when a family member dies or is very ill, or on other compassionate grounds;
- Special 'one-off' family events such as weddings, funerals, (but **NOT** just because it is the child's birthday);
- Family holidays which have to be taken at certain times because of parents' work shifts and rotas or because their job requires them to work when the school is closed, (e.g. farming, the tourism industry or the emergency services);
- Opportunities to travel overseas for special events which cannot be held in school holidays;
- When your child has an extremely good record of attendance and there has been no other leave taken in the previous two years.

These are only examples. If you think the reason you need leave is 'exceptional', you **MUST** discuss it with the headteacher (or other nominated member of staff) in person beforehand. Do not assume that because permission was given for someone else, you will be given permission as well. Every request will be treated on its merits and the full circumstances will not always be made public.

The school can impose reasonable sanctions for unauthorised absences including extra work to catch up or the loss of attendance awards for your child. **In the most serious cases,**

unauthorised absence can be classed as an offence by the parents and you could be subject to a Penalty fine by the Local Authority. If you choose not to pay the fine, you may face prosecution if the absence meets the criteria set out in the LA's Code of Conduct. (You can ask to see a copy if you wish).

If you think the headteacher's decision not to authorise the absence is unreasonable, you have the right to make representations to the Chair of Governors, but the final decision over any action to be taken lies with the headteacher and the LA.

If you child's attendance goes below 90% you may be called in for a fast track meeting with our EWO. After the meeting you will then have 4 weeks to show improvement or we may issue a penalty notice (special circumstances will be taken into account). We may not then authorise any illness unless we have medical proof.

Friday 12th July 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

Penalty notices for irregular attendance

I am writing to inform you of our new Attendance Policy, which has been agreed by the governing body on 11th July 2019.

The 1996 Education Act states, 'If a child is registered at school, parents have the legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly'.

At Moorthorpe Primary School, we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our children. Irregular attendance undermines the learning process and can lead to educational and social disadvantage. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial.

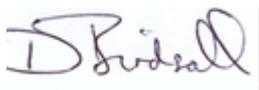
While some absences are inevitable, we are committed to reducing absence down to the lowest possible levels. This can be achieved through a balance of rewarding good attendance and supporting families where attendance and punctuality are problematic.

This drive to improve attendance will mean that from 1st September 2019, as well as fining for term time holidays we will also be issuing penalty notices for irregular attendance. This will bring us in line with government guidance.

Our reasons for promoting this policy are in a response to our Ofsted report which stated 'Leaders and Governors should take effective action to dissuade parents from taking children out of school during term time and reduce the high levels of absence.' It is also based on the evidence that good attendance, good progress and improved life opportunities are irrefutably linked. We do not receive any financial benefit from this policy. Penalties are processed by Wakefield Council through the courts and any monies paid are retained by the council.

Thank you for your understanding and support on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Deborah Birdsall
Headteacher

Covid19 Attendance Guidance Sept 2020

From the start of the autumn term 2020 pupil attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19) and they will be marked as X in the register.

Pupils showing symptoms

Pupils who have symptoms should self-isolate and get a test as soon as possible. (School will be sent 10 test kits for those who are not able to get to a test centre).

If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should stay at home.

If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone.

The pupils and staff in the bubble might have to be sent home to isolate. This will depend on the level of contact between the infected person and the other pupils in the bubble. Health protection teams to advise.

Family members showing symptoms

If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test.

If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school.

If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms.

Pupils in close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Pupils may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19).

The NHS test and trace guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 14 days if they have had recent close contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in the school community, the local health protection team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with the person that has tested positive when they were infectious.

Pupils returning from holiday

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine and fixed penalty notices will be issued.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>

When timetabling, bubbles should be kept apart and movement around the school site should be kept to a minimum. Therefore, we have organised a staggered day.

Start times:

- Nursery, Year 1 and Year 1/2 – 8:30am (Nursery to finish at 11.30)
- Year 4, Year 2, Reception – 8:40am
- Year 3 – 8:50am
- Year 5 and Year 6 – 8:55am

Children will have staggered end times:

- Year 1 & Year 1/2 – 2:50pm
- Year 4, Year 2, Reception – 3:00pm
- Year 3 – 3:10pm
- Year 5 & Year 6 – 3.15pm