

## **Attendance & Punctuality Policy**

### **Aims**

In conjunction with the Keeping Children Safe in Education Document (2021) we aim to:

- Encourage parents or carers to recognise their legal responsibility in ensuring regular attendance and understanding the link between attendance and attainment and to work in partnership to encourage good attendance.
- Encourage parents to ensure that their children arrive at school on time and are suitably clothed for school.
- Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued, sending out a clear message that if a pupil is absent he/she will be missed.
- Work in partnership with agencies such as the Educational Welfare Service to encourage and monitor attendance.
- Offer appropriate support to pupils who are experiencing difficulties with attendance.

### **Statutory Duty of Schools – The Law**

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, suitable to their age ability aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (Sec.7 Education Act 1996).

Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil is absent, the register must show whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

The Education Act 2002 and Sec. 446 Education Act 1996 place a legal responsibility for enforcing regular school attendance on the LA. This responsibility is delegated to the Educational Welfare Service. Legal action can be instigated against parents and carers whose children fail to sustain an acceptable level of attendance and where parents and carers are failing to fulfil their responsibility.

### **Categorisation of Absence**

**Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.**

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

#### **1. Unauthorised absence**

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. Schools are no longer permitted to grant

authorised leave for holidays in term except under exceptional circumstances. Evidence may be requested. **It is expected that parents/carers arrange holidays in the school holidays. If holidays are taken in term time, parents/carers could be liable to receive a penalty fine from the London Borough of Merton.**

## **2. Authorised absence**

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

## **3. Approved Educational Activity**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

*Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.*

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

***Parents and Carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child or children attend school.*** If the School, in consultation with the Education Welfare Officer, feels that a parent or carer is failing to ensure regular school attendance of their child then the parent or carer may be subject to legal action. In the first instance this would be by way of a Penalty Notice which carries a fine of £120. If unpaid a prosecution under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 could ensue which if convicted could result in a fine of £1000. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to prosecute under section 444(1a) of the Education Act 1996 which on conviction carries a penalty of a fine of £2500 or 3 Months Imprisonment or both. Conviction under either section will lead to a criminal record.

## **Attendance Awards**

- Weekly awards for highest attending class
- Weekly awards for the class with the best punctuality
- Half termly certificates & stickers for 100% attendance
- Annual prize draw for 100% attendance

Leave of absence is authorised at the discretion of the school governing body and headteacher. **This is not an automatic right of parents/guardians.**

## **Supporting Pupils**

We recognise that some pupils may have attendance problems that could be caused by a variety of factors which may include chronic illness; anxiety; family issues etc. We aim to support pupils in a variety of ways including:

- Interviews with parents or carers
- Pastoral Support Programmes
- Individual Support Programmes.
- Referral to a range of external agencies

**See Appendix 1 for Attendance and Punctuality Procedures**

**See Appendix 2 for Absence and Exceptional Leave Policy**

**See Appendix 3 for Roles and Responsibilities**

**See Appendix 4 for Application Form for Leave of Absence**

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **PROCEDURES FOR PUNCTUALITY AND ATTENDANCE**

#### **PUNCTUALITY**

##### **Lateness:**

- Main school **starts at 8.35am for Years 4-6 and 8.45am for Reception-Year 3.** Nursery starts at 8.30am and 12.15pm.
- After this time, a child is considered late. Parents must sign the late book in the office and give an explanation for their child's lateness. *(During protective covid measures, the office staff will take verbal reasons and record them)*
- Pupils who arrive late following an early morning appointment should bring evidence of this e.g. an appointment card
- **Lateness disrupts your child's learning AND the learning of others in the class.**
- If a child is late twice in a week, a 5 minute detention may be given at playtime. The Education Bill 2012 states that teachers have the right to conduct detentions without parental permission or notification. Subsequent lateness will be reported to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) Education Act 2002 and Sec. 446 Education Act 1996.
- Any child who is more than 30 minutes late will be recorded as having an unauthorised absence.
- **School ends at 3pm for Reception; 3.05pm for Years 4-6 and 3.15pm for Years 1-2.** Legally schools are only required to supervise a child for 30 minutes beyond the close of the school day. Therefore if a child is not collected from school promptly and contact has not been made by the parent/guardian, schools are expected to contact the police to report the child as "abandoned". Obviously, this is not an ideal situation so we gently remind parents to collect their children promptly. When a child is collected late from school, it is distressing for them and unfair on the staff member who has other commitments & meetings after school. A late book is kept in the office where the time a child is collected is recorded. **Parents will be charged £10 per half hour (or part thereof) for late collection of children.** Where necessary, this book will be submitted as evidence for the EWO (Education Welfare Officer).

#### **ATTENDANCE**

##### **Reporting Absences:**

- If a pupil is absent the parent or carer should telephone the school by 9.00am to report the absence – there is a voicemail facility to report absences. If leaving a voice mail please state clearly your child's full name, year group and the reason for their absence. **Upon the pupil's return to school, the parent or carer should send in a note explaining the reason for the absence.**

##### **Reasons for absence:**

The school has a legal duty to record all absences as either authorised or unauthorised absence. The school is not permitted to automatically grant authorisation for all absences covered with a note from the parents. It is a legal requirement to evaluate the reasons given. Leave of absence is authorised at the discretion of the school Governing Body and Headteacher. **This is not an automatic right of parents/guardians.**

##### **Absence notes:**

The school will retain notes from parents explaining absence as per current protocol/legislation.

## **Appendix 2**

# **Morden Primary School**

## **ABSENCE AND EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE POLICY**

The Governors of Morden Primary School believe that leave of absence during term time should be avoided as it can have a damaging effect on a student's education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that on occasions there may be extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify such leave.

**The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Amendment Regulations 2013** state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

With regard to the regulation outlined above the school policy is as follows:

1. Parents must request leave for exceptional circumstances as far in advance as possible.
2. The request should be made in writing using the leave of absence form. (Available from the school office)
3. This must include the reason why you feel that it is necessary to take a leave of absence. This may include any extenuating or compassionate reasons, including evidence of circumstances such as medical certificate or letter from employers.

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. A letter outlining the decision of the school will be sent to you within 7 days.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised may result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £120

## **APPENDIX 3**

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Governing Body**

- In conjunction with headteacher prepare an attendance policy in accordance with the appropriate legislation.
- Ensure the school attendance policy is kept up to date in line with any new legislation.
- Ensures the headteacher regularly appraises the governing body of the current situation in relation to attendance.

### **Headteacher**

- Maintain an overview of attendance and punctuality.
- Oversee the school attendance policy.
- Report, advise and inform governors on attendance issues.
- Meet legal responsibility by publishing attendance figures.
- Promote good and improved attendance and punctuality.
- Inform and support staff on implementation of the school attendance policy.
- Refer children who attendance is a concern to the school EWO.

### **Class Teacher**

- Take the register using SIMS every morning
- Collect transcripts of telephone call or letters from parents or carers detailing reasons for absence and pass these on to the Office on the day that they are received.
- Be aware of pupils who may have attendance issues that are linked to concerns over Child Protection and to be vigilant in reporting any unexplained absence to the Child Protection Officer.

### **Administrative Officer**

- Maintain attendance information and provide an accurate summary on a weekly basis to the Headteacher.
- Maintain, in liaison with the Headteacher "At Risk" list of pupils to be contacted on the first day of absence. The Administrative Assistant is responsible for contacting the parents/carers on the first day.
- Telephone the parents or carers of pupils on the "At risk" on the first day of absence.
- Meet on a regular basis, the Educational Welfare Officer to discuss pupils who have serious issues of attendance. Liase with Headteacher and over the outcome of these meetings.
- Update on a weekly basis the "At Risk" register and the list of pupils who have been referred to the Educational Welfare Officer.
- Receive telephone enquiries from parents or carers regarding absence; log the calls and record the information in SiMS.
- Print and send out letters to parents/carers asking for explanations of unauthorised absence.
- Produce weekly attendance reports for the Headteacher.
- Produce reports for pupils below 90% attendance for the Headteacher.
- Produce weekly reports for punctuality of pupils for the Headteacher.

### **The role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead is to:**

- Liase with the Administrative Assistant over pupils on the Child Protection register whose name(s) should be placed on the "At risk" list to be contacted in the first instance of absence.
- Inform Social Services of any pupil on the Child Protection Register (stages 4 and 5) who fails to turn up to school.

**APPENDIX 4**

**Morden Primary**  
**Leave of Absence Form**  
**LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON**

**Request for Leave of Absence for exceptional circumstances during Term Time**

It is not advisable to take your child/ren on a leave of absence during term time as this causes disruption to their education. Schools must follow the law in this regard and may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances if certain criteria are fulfilled.

**The Pupil Registration Regulations (England) 2006 and the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**

- **Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances is authorised at the discretion of the Head teacher.** (This is **not an automatic right** of parents/guardians)
- You should not normally take your child(ren) on a leave of absence during the school term.
- **Please do not book your leave of absence until authority is given.**
- Each request for leave of absence will be considered individually, taking into account: the circumstances for the request, the supporting evidence provided, the overall attendance of your child(ren), your child’s stage of education and progress and where appropriate both internal and external examinations and assessments.
- If the absence is approved by the Head Teacher you will be advised as to how many days the Head teacher has approved for your child’s absence.
- If the school does not agree the absence and you take the leave without permission or your child is absent for more than the agreed number of days the absence will be unauthorised.
- Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of the school may lead to your child(ren) being referred to the Education Welfare Service and the possibility of statutory action and a fine.

In order for your application for absence to be considered, please complete below:

Name(s) of Child(ren).....

Class (es).....

Home address: .....

.....

Dates of absence: From..... To:.....

Reason for request (additional evidence may be required) .....

.....

Signed: Parent/Guardian .....

Email address:..... Mobile phone number:.....

Date form submitted:.....

**TO BE COMPLETED BY SCHOOL:**

The above request for leave of absence in term time for .....  
has/has not been authorised. If authorised, your child/ren should return to school on:.....

Signed..... Designation: **Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher**

School Data Checklist:

**For School Office Use Only**

<b><i>Pupil's name</i></b>	
<b>% Attendance Yr to date</b>	
<b>Attainment/Progress</b>	
<b>SATs/Exam Check</b>	
<b>Previous leave of absence requested/taken (last 2 years)</b>	
<b>Nature of exceptional circumstances and evidence provided</b>	