

## **Attendance & Punctuality Policy 2023/2024** **(in conjunction with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023)**

### **1. Aims & Introduction**

Morden Primary School recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on children's progress, attainment, enjoyment of learning and relationships within school. Good attendance helps a child to realise their potential and ensure they are motivated, confident and enjoy a diverse range of curricular opportunities and experiences.

### **2. Legislation and Guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE). Legislation sets out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that "The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".
- Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that "if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his parent is guilty of an offence".

**Therefore, regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement.**

Additionally, regular attendance is essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainment, social development, future opportunities and further development.

- Under Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, for the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a 'parent' and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:
  - all biological parents, whether they are married or not - any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative - any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

**Appendix 1** details the roles & responsibilities of the following stakeholders:

- The governing board
- The Headteacher
- The Senior Teacher responsible for attendance
- The attendance Officer
- Class teachers
- School Admin Team
- Parents/Carers
- Pupils

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

We keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. Registers provide the daily record of attendance of all pupils. They are legal documents and the register may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance in school.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. **The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.20am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.20pm and will be kept open until 1.30pm.**

It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

The school will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system as a priority and returned to the school office in a timely manner. This is used to download data to the School Census.
- Consider early identification, assessment, intervention and support processes that may need to be implemented.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

**Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day.**

The register is marked using the codes as advised by the Department for Education (DfE) 'School Attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities'. **(See Appendix 2 for the DfE attendance codes)**

### **4.2 Absence Monitoring**

#### **a. Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office. An answer machine facility is available to leave a message. Please

ensure that you speak clearly, stating your child's name and class and providing the reason for your child's absence avoiding using words like "sick" or "unwell." Please be specific with the reason for the absence to ensure that we can complete our registers accurately.

- We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.
- If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.
- Where a child's absence falls below 90%, medical evidence will be requested.
- If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

#### **b. Planned absence**

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Evidence of appointments (e.g. letter/appointment card) may be requested.

Other types of term-time absences should be requested as far in advance as possible by the pupil's parent/carer. Section 5 details which term-time absences the school can authorise.

#### **c. Lateness and punctuality**

School officially begins at 8.50am (although we operate a 'rolling' start from 8.40am). **Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day** for registration at that time.

- **Register taken at 8.50am**
- **Registers close 9.20am**

Any child who arrives after the gates are closed at 8.50am must enter the school by the main gate entrance and report to the school office for parents to sign in. If pupils are not in class when the register is taken, they will be coded as 'L'. Any late arrivals after 9.20am will be coded as 'U' which is an unauthorised absence for that session.

In accordance with the 'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006', if your child arrives after the registers close, they will receive a mark, code U, that shows them to be on site, but this will **not count** as a present mark and it **will mean they have an unauthorised absence**. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice or other legal action if the problem persists.

**Children who are consistently late for school are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of other children.** Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, you will be invited to a meeting to resolve the issues. If there is no improvement following this meeting, further action will be taken which may include referral to external agencies.

You may approach the school at any time for support and advice if you are having difficulty getting your child to school on time or maintaining regular attendance.

**d. Late Collection of children after school**

- **School ends at 3.10pm for Reception-Year 6 children.**
- As per Local Authority guidelines for schools where no after school child care provision is offered - after 1 hour if it has not been possible to contact a parent /carer/emergency contact, then we will contact our Safer Neighbourhood Police Officer, or Mitcham Police Station.
- If a child is not collected from school promptly and contact has not been made by the parent/guardian with a valid reason, we will charge the child's Parentpay account for childcare. When a child is collected late from school, it is distressing for them and unfair on the staff member who have their own personal or professional commitments. 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).

**e. Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may make a referral to support services or social care to ensure the child is safe.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it in the register as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer, early help, the school nurse, social services or to other agencies.

**4.3 Reporting to parents/carers formally**

The school will inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels in the end of year reports and verbally in parents' meetings each term.

**5.Authorised and unauthorised absence**

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

- no reason for absence has been given
- the reason given for absence by the parent is not acceptable and the school do not agree that the child should be absent.
- medical evidence is not received when requested
- a request for a leave of absence has been unauthorised
- a pupil arrives at school after registration has closed at 9.20am

Parents/carers should be aware that Morden Primary School may contact the Local Authority if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences in the current term with a view to issuing a Penalty Notice or other legal action. The Penalty Notice is issued individually to each parent/carer who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. The Penalty is £60 per parent/carer per child. Non-payment of the Penalty Notice may result in prosecution in the Magistrates court.

### **5.1 Approval for term-time absence – Application for Exceptional Circumstances (See Appendix 3)**

In September 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, made it clear that Head Teachers may not grant any Leave of Absence (holiday) during term time unless there are “**exceptional circumstances**”. The Head Teacher and the Governing Body will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request Exceptional Leave of Absence, they must complete an 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form available from the school office. It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of a consecutive 5 or more unauthorised days, or 10 sessions, then school may apply to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carer.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Parent/carer's working commitments
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member
- Study leave for grammar school exams
- Birthday treat.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see section 4.2)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away but are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid.

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with school policy.

## **5.2 Legal sanctions**

The Local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

Where a pupil is suspended or excluded and is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## **6. Working in partnership with Parents/ Carers**

Building respectful relationships with families and working in collaboration is essential to ensuring the best outcomes for children. We require all parents to actively support the work of the school, including promoting attendance and engagement. The school is committed to ensuring that systems and processes are in place with regards to promoting attendance and would encourage parents to make contact if they have concerns about their child.

It is pertinent that school and parents / carers work together with a shared plan and outcomes when supporting a child's attendance and wellbeing. If despite persistent attempts to work with parents, there continues to be a lack of engagement, then legal procedures may be followed to secure engagement and school attendance.

### **6.1 Parenting Contracts**

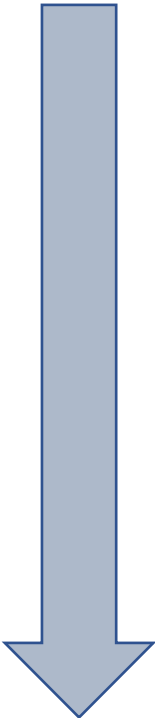
A parenting contract is a formal written agreement with the School, Parent(s), Pupil(s), and School's Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Parenting Contracts should be in place for a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 12 months.

The aim is to offer support by listening to the reasons for absence and difficulties that prevent regular school attendance during a meeting with the Parents, Child, School staff and EWO.

The purpose of the meeting is to set out an action plan to address the poor school attendance of the pupil with realistic achievable targets to be made within a reasonable time scale. (See Appendix 5 for a sample parent contract)

The table below sets out the attendance targets and at what stage parents/carers will be contacted about their child's attendance.



<b>100%</b>	<b>Outstanding achievement is recognised once a term through a system of rewards.</b>
<b>96%+</b>	<b>Over 96% is recognised as good attendance and rewarded.</b>
<b>Less than 96%</b>	<b>Less than 96% requires improvement and the school will seek to provide support through a stage one letter.</b>
<b>Less than 90%</b>	<b>Less than 90% attendance is seen as a more serious cause for concern and a letter will initiate a meeting with senior staff at school.</b>
<b>Less than 85%</b>	<b>At less than 85% a meeting with the school and EWO will be convened with a view to discussing a parenting contract to improve attendance.</b>

**See Appendix 4 for further breakdown of missed sessions.**

## **6.1 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

## **6.2 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

**See Appendix 1: Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders**

**See Appendix 2: DfE attendance codes**

**See Appendix 3: Application for Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances**

**See Appendix 4: What does "percentage attendance" mean?**

**See Appendix 5: Sample Parent Contract**



## Appendix 1: Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:	The headteacher is responsible for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos</li> <li>➤ Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties</li> <li>➤ Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data</li> <li>➤ Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school</li> <li>➤ Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance</li> <li>➤ Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy</li> </ul> <p><b>The Committee responsible for reviewing the Attendance and Punctuality policy and monitoring attendance is the Children, Families and Community Committee (CFC)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Leading attendance across the school</li> <li>➤ Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement</li> <li>➤ Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes</li> <li>➤ Having an oversight of data analysis</li> <li>➤ Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data</li> <li>➤ Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues</li> <li>➤ Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families</li> <li>➤ Implementation of this policy at the school</li> <li>➤ Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors</li> <li>➤ Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils</li> <li>➤ Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies</li> <li>➤ Referral to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) for issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary</li> </ul> <p><b>Mrs Blow, Headteacher, is the senior leader responsible for attendance.</b></p>
The attendance officer is responsible for:	Class teachers are responsible for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Taking calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system</li> <li>➤ Monitoring and analysing attendance data</li> <li>➤ Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement</li> <li>➤ Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher</li> <li>➤ Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence</li> <li>➤ Advising the headteacher when to refer to the EWO to issue fixed-penalty notices</li> </ul> <p><b>The attendance officer is Ms Hayley Cockett and can be contacted via 0208 648 4168 <a href="mailto:info@morden.merton.sch.uk">info@morden.merton.sch.uk</a></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office</li> <li>➤ 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.</li> </ul>



<b>Parents/carers are responsible for:</b>	<b>Pupils are expected to:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Make sure their child attends every day on time</li> <li>➤ Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return</li> <li>➤ Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child</li> <li>➤ Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Attend school every day on time</li> </ul>

## **Appendix 2**

### **DfE Attendance Codes**

DfE guidance states the following codes are to be used on the register.

Code I	Illness	Schools can request medical evidence from parents/carers if they feel the authenticity of an illness is in doubt.
Code M	Medical or dental appointments	Parents/Carers are encouraged to arrange appointments out of school hours but the school will authorise if confirmation of the appointment is provided.
Code C	Other circumstances	This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, i.e. — family funeral.
Code D	Dual Registered	This code will be used if a pupil is registered at two schools.
Code J	Interview	This code will be used when it has been agreed that the pupil can miss school to attend an interview or entrance exam
Code P	Approved sporting activity	This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, i.e. — training sessions, trials and sporting events.
Code R	Religious Observation	This code is used to cover major religious festivals during term-time. The school will only authorise one day absence for religious events.
Code V	Educational visits and trips	
Code W	Work Experience	
Code G	Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period	
Code U	Arrived late to school after 9.30am	
Code N	Reason for absence not yet provided	
Code O	Absent from school without authorisation	
Code X	Not required to be in school (not compulsory school age)	

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **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>	

## **Appendix 4**

### **What does percentage attendance mean?**

Parents/carers should be advised that from September 2015 the Government have categorised those pupils who have attendance of 90% and below as 'Persistent Absence' pupils (P.A.).

Morden Primary will be specifically targeting this cohort of pupils, in an effort to improve their attendance in the future. The table below shows the learning time lost against percentage attendance figures.

Attendance during one school year	Equivalent days	Equivalent sessions	Equivalent Weeks	Equivalent lessons missed
95%	9 days	18 sessions	1.4 weeks	45 lessons
90%	19 days	38 sessions	3.4 weeks	95 lessons
85%	29 days	58 sessions	5.4 weeks	145 lessons
80%	36 days	72 sessions	7.1 weeks	180 lessons
75%	48 days	96 sessions	9.3 weeks	240 lessons

**Morden Primary School**  
**Parenting Contract**



<b>Student's Name</b>		<b>DOB / Year group</b>		<b>Student's school</b>	
<b>Parent/carer 1 full name</b>		<b>Parent/Carer 2 full name</b>		<b>Address</b>	
<b>Contact number</b>		<b>Contact number</b>			
<b>Child's ethnicity</b>		<b>Any SEND</b>		<b>Date</b>	
				<b>Time (start/end)</b>	
<b>Attendance during last 12 weeks</b>		<b>Sessions of unauthorised absence</b>		<b>Number of late marks</b>	
<b>What are we worried about?</b>		<b>What's working well?</b>		<b>What needs to happen? What will it look like to not be worried anymore?</b>	
<b>0</b> .....10					
On a scale of 1 to 10 , where 10 means (pupils name) is attending school regularly on every day the school is open and only absent in exceptional circumstances and when authorised and 0 means that (pupil's name)'s attendance is not improving, where do we rate the situation?					

Targets for pupil, parent, school and agencies	Date to be achieved by	Review of targets	Date to be achieved by

**Date of review:**

**This is a voluntary agreement where all parties agree to work together to follow the agreed plan to support the pupil attend school regularly and punctually.**

**I agree to work together with school and the local authority to follow the agreed plan**

Signed: ..... Date: ..... Student's score .....  
[child]

Signed: ..... Date: ..... Parent's score .....  
[parent]

Signed: ..... Date: ..... Parent's score .....  
[parent]

**I agree to provide the above support to the parent(s) for the purpose of complying with the plan.**

Signed: ..... Date: ..... School score .....  
School

**I agree to provide the above support to the parent(s) for the purpose of complying with the plan.**

Signed: ..... Date: ..... EWO's score .....  
Lead professional/ EWO

Signed: ..... Date: ..... Professionals score .....

Other professional List job title/role