

# Morven Park Primary School



## Attendance Policy

January 2025

Next Review: January 2026

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## **1. Rationale**

At Morven Park Primary School, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, parents and carers receiving services from the school, irrespective of race, gender, disability, faith or religion or socio-economic background. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in school life.

Children only attend school for 185 days out of 365 across the whole year. We need them to come every day in order for them to make the best progress possible.

- Pupils need to attend school every day so that they can take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.
- Poor attendance rates and persistent lateness undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage.
- Children who attend school every day make better progress and have better life chances.

## **2. Aims**

Therefore, we aim to:

- Take all reasonable steps to maximise attendance rates.
- Actively discourage late arrival.
- Be consistent in the application of the school's registration and attendance procedures.

## **3. Legal Framework**

It is recognised that parents/carers, schools and Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities with regard to school attendance.

It is important for parents/carers to understand that there is a statutory obligation for children to attend school. Section 444a and Section 4441a of the Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their child(ren) attend school on every day the school requires them to do so. Failure to do so is a criminal offence which leads to a prosecution or a Penalty Notice fine. Morven Park Primary School and the Local Authority also have a legal obligation to ensure your child(ren) attend school.

## **4. Parental Responsibility**

The definition of parent for the purpose of this Policy is any person who has day-to-day care of the child at the time school attendance is required. This can include other family members (such as grandparents) or in families where partners are not natural parents. In cases where

parents have separated, both parents are still liable for ensuring regular school attendance under legislation, even though one of the parents may not live with the child.

- Parents/carers are required to ensure that their children receive full time education and are therefore primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school every day.
- Thus, parents are responsible for ensuring that their children:
  - Attend school regularly.
  - Arrive at school on time, in uniform and ready to learn.
  - Are absent only for reasons that can be authorised.

Parents are required to inform the school by 9am of the reason for any absences and the likely return date. There is an answerphone for this purpose.

## 5. Registration

The school keeps an attendance register for each class in which pupils are marked present or absent at the beginning of each school session. Registers are taken promptly at 9am (8.50am for children in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils). Arrival after this time is classed as 'Late' which will affect the percentage attendance and can lead to prosecution/legal proceedings. Registers are regularly monitored by the school. Letters are sent home and where attendance and/or lateness are of significant concern parents/carers will be invited to an Attendance Panel meeting. The Attendance Panel will consist of the Head Teacher, Chair of Governors, Pastoral Manager and Safeguarding Lead Deputy and the Attendance Administrator.

## 6. Reporting Absence

- Parents are asked to make contact on the first day of absence by 9am by telephone or personal contact – informing the school of the reason for the absence and/or nature of the illness. They are also asked to inform the school of a likely return date.
- Absences are recorded as either Authorised Absence or Unauthorised Absence.
- Telephone messages and personal contacts made to the school office are noted and subsequently logged as either Authorised Absence or Unauthorised Absence.
- Teachers advise the office of absence notifications received directly from parents/carers.

## 7. Authorising Absence

- **The law states that only the school can approve absences, not parents.** If doubts remain about the explanation offered, or where no explanation is forthcoming at all, the absence will be treated as unauthorised.
  - Amendments to the 2006 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 make it clear that a Head Teacher may not grant any leave of

absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Should your child be absent from school during term time, they will be marked with the Family Holiday Not Agreed Code (G) and this will be treated as an 'Unauthorised Absence'. Parents wishing to request leave of absence should complete a Leave of Absence form explaining the exceptional circumstances. In each case school will send a reply to parents explaining whether the absence will be recorded as an Authorised Absence (H) or Unauthorised Absence (G).

- Where a pupil's attendance and/or lateness is of significant concern parents/carers will be sent a letter advising them that future absences will not be authorised (O) unless medical evidence is provided.
- We work closely with the Local Authority's Family Service to ensure that we maintain excellent attendance as lost learning time impacts negatively on each child and often means it is very difficult for them to keep up with their work and achieve their best.

## 8. Persistent Absence (PA)

Once a child has accrued 3 days (6 sessions) of **unauthorised absence** over a 6 week rolling period, whether the unauthorised absence related to a family holiday or is more general in nature, the Head Teacher can request the Local Authority issue an Education Penalty Notice to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies (see Section 12: Penalty Notice). The school can also request that the Local Authority issue an Education Penalty Notice when a child is persistently late and where they are signified as a 'U' in the attendance register (see Section 12: Penalty Notice).

## 9. Lateness

- We recognize that persistent lateness is:
  - Detrimental to a child's education.
  - Administratively disruptive.
  - A poor preparation for future schooling and adult life.
- Morning registration is at 9am (8.50 am for children in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1). Children arriving after this time must sign in at the school office using the InVentry sign in system.
- Children arriving after 9.10am (9.00am for children in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1) will be recorded with a 'U' which is classed as an unauthorised absence and may lead to enforcement action by the Local Authority where the child is of legal school age (see Section 8 and Section 12).
- Afternoon registration is at 12.40pm for children in F1, F2 and KS1 and 1.10pm for children in KS2.
- Children arriving after 12.40pm (F1, F2 and KS1) and 1.10pm (KS2) must sign in late at the office and receive a mark which denotes 'Late after register is closed' (U).

- Parents whose children regularly arrive late will receive a warning letter from school. Extreme cases may be referred to the Early Help Unit for enforcement/Local Authority.

## **10. Mid-Session Arrival/Departures**

- It is recognised that children may arrive or depart mid-session for a variety of reasons which may be authorised:
  - Illness or accident in school resulting in a child going home.
  - Medical or dental appointments.
  - Unavoidable delays or reasons to leave early.
- Pupils present for registration who leave early, or for part of a session, should be signed out using the school InVentry system at the school office. Evidence of a medical or dental appointment is requested. Absence for any other purpose should be made in writing to the Head Teacher.
- Pupils not present for registration who return later from an appointment should be signed in using the InVentry sign in system. Evidence of a medical or dental appointment is requested.

## **11. Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality**

- Individual pupil attendance is monitored regularly for:
  - Patterns of unexplained absences.
  - Any persistent absences, any persistent lateness.
  - Any patterns of authorised absence.
- Response to the above absences is undertaken in the form of letters and meetings with parents/carers. If necessary this is escalated to the Local Authority for further support/action. This is led by the Head Teacher.
- Attendance audits are carried out each half term with specific focus on pupils with less than 90% attendance (persistent absentees). Audits are carried out for all pupils in school including nursery. Separate audits are carried out for punctuality.
- Where a pupil's attendance fails to improve then parents/carers are requested to come to an Attendance Panel meeting. Attendance Panel members consist of the Head Teacher, Chair of Governors, Pastoral Care Manager and Safeguarding Lead and Attendance Administrator.
- Individual pupil attendance is shared with parents via end of year pupil reports.
- Summaries of attendance rates are prepared weekly for each class in years Reception to Year 6 and are shared with pupils at assembly and published on the school website.
- Whole school and individual class attendance is reported to the Governors termly.

## 12. Penalty Notice

From January 2019, Morven Park Primary School introduced Penalty Notices in accordance with the Code of Practice and the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 to parents/carers whose child(ren) is/are truanting from school or absent from school due to a holiday of 6 sessions/3 days over a 6 week rolling period. Any request for a Penalty Notice to be issued will be made through the Local Authority and any money received through the issuing of the Penalty Notice will go to the Local Authority and not Morven Park Primary School. Morven Park Primary School has put a range of interventions and support in place and works closely with parents and carers to improve low school attendance. However, if attendance does not improve after these procedures have been followed or if parents/carers fail to engage with the school, then a referral will be made to the Local Authority who will implement their own procedures which may lead to an issuing of a Penalty Notice.

The penalty is £160 per child per parent if paid within 28 days, this reduces to £80 per child per parent if paid within the first 21 days. There is no right of appeal by parents/carers against a Penalty Notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the Local Authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice. This could lead to a fine of up to £ per parent per child.

It is important to note that no more than two Penalty Notices will be issued in a rolling 12 month period. Where further absences occur or where the local authority deem it appropriate, enforcement may be dealt with directly by the court.

## 13. Attendance Letters

See attached appendices for examples of letters which may be sent to parents/carers.

Appendix A	Advisory Letter	Notification that pupil has been identified as having a low level of attendance.
Appendix B	Persistent Absentee Letter	Notification that pupil is classed as a persistent absentee (ie, attendance below 90%).
Appendix C	Attendance not improving	Notification that medical evidence is required to support any further absences.
Appendix D	Attendance not improving	Parent/carer requested to come to Attendance Panel meeting.
Appendix E	6 sessions/3 days Unauthorised Holiday 6 sessions/3 days Unauthorised Absence	Notification that a request has been made to the Local Authority for an Education Penalty Notice

**Appendix A. Advisory Letter**

Dear .....

RE: ....., Class .....

During a recent register audit it has been brought to my attention that X has had a number of absences this academic year which has resulted in an attendance level of X%.

In order to benefit from the full national curriculum children need to attend school consistently. I have enclosed a copy of X's registration certificate so that you can monitor his/her attendance over the coming weeks.

If you would like support from the school regarding X's attendance please do not hesitate to contact us.

I hope to see an improvement in X's attendance, however, please do not hesitate to contact school if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

M Watson  
Head Teacher

Enc: Registration certificate

Copy: Class teacher  
Pupil file

## Appendix B. Persistent Absentee Letter

Dear Parent

Following a recent register audit it has been brought to my attention that your child has had a number of absences this academic year which has resulted in an attendance below 90%.

The Department for Education deem that Persistent Absenteeism is where a pupil has an attendance level of below 90%. You will see from the enclosed registration certificate that your child's attendance is below this level and they are therefore classed as a persistent absentee.

In order to benefit from the full national curriculum children need to attend school consistently. There is clear evidence that high attendance rates are directly linked to high pupil achievement.

If you would like support from the school regarding your child's attendance please do not hesitate to contact us.

I will continue to monitor your child's attendance over the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely

M Watson  
Head Teacher

Enc: Registration certificate

Copy: Class teacher  
Pupil file

## Appendix C. Medical Evidence Required to Support Further Absences

Dear .....

RE: ....., Class .....

I am writing in relation to the recent letter I sent to you regarding X's attendance.

It has again been brought to my attention that X's attendance continues to be poor despite my recent letter to you. His/Her current attendance level is just X%.

Achievement is linked to good attendance and here at Morven Park we encourage all of our pupils to achieve 100% attendance and punctuality. We hope that by working together we can help your child to achieve their potential.

I would like to inform you that further spells of absence for X will be recorded as unauthorised unless school is provided with medical evidence (this may be a doctor's note, a copy of a dated prescription etc). Persistent unauthorised absences may lead to a referral to the school's attendance panel or the early intervention team. Furthermore, an unauthorised absence of 3 days/6 sessions over a 6 week period can lead to you being issued with a penalty notice fine of £120 for each child who is absent (this is reduced to £60 for payment within 21 days). The fines can be issued to both parents for each child.

I will continue to monitor X's attendance closely. A copy of his/her attendance record is attached for your information.

Yours sincerely

M Watson  
Head Teacher

Enc: Registration certificate

Copy: Class teacher  
Pupil file

## Appendix D. Invitation to Attendance Panel Meeting

Dear .....

RE: ....., Class .....

As you know from the letters we have sent you, we have been monitoring X's attendance over the past weeks. His/Her current attendance level is X% which means that he/she is classed as a persistent absentee.

As a parent, you have a legal responsibility under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996, for ensuring that your child attends school regularly. As such, unless your child's attendance improves you may be referred to the local authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure the regular attendance of your child.

You are required to attend a governor's attendance panel in school on X at X to discuss your child's attendance. Mrs Dowsing (Chair of Governors), Mrs Murphy (Pastoral Care Manager and Safeguarding Lead Deputy), Mrs Hamilton (Administration Assistant) and I will be at the meeting where we can discuss the reasons why your child's attendance is so low and what you can do to improve it.

It is important that you come to this panel meeting with any evidence you may have regarding medical appointments to prove that you are working closely with school to get X's attendance to over 95%.

I would also inform you that further spells of absence for X will be recorded as unauthorised unless school is provided with medical evidence (this may be a doctor's note, a copy of a dated prescription etc). An unauthorised absence of 3 days/6 sessions (over a 6 week rolling period) can lead to you being issued with a penalty notice fine of £120 for each child who is absent (this is reduced to £60 for payment within 21 days). The fines can be issued to both parents for each child.

Yours sincerely

M Watson  
Head Teacher

Copy: Class teacher  
Pupil file

## **Appendix E. Educational Penalty Notice Letter for Unauthorised Absence**

Dear

### **Penalty Notice Warning, X, Date of Birth X**

The registers at Morven Park Primary School show that X has missed X days (X sessions) of school due to unauthorised absences over the last X weeks.

You, as a parent/carer, have legal responsibility under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996, for ensuring that your child attends school regularly.

As X has had in excess of 3 days (6 sessions) absence over a 6 week rolling period we will request that the local authority issue a penalty notice fine which is £120 (this is reduced to £60 for payment within 21 days). Where a fine remains unpaid the matter may be enforced at the Magistrates Court. The maximum fine for this offence is £1000 per parent, per child.

The local authority will not issue more than two penalty notices per calendar year to any person taking more than two periods of unauthorised absence. Where further absences occur or where the local authority deem it appropriate, enforcement may be dealt with directly by the court.

Please take immediate steps to ensure X attends school on time every day and obtain medical evidence if he/she is too ill to attend. Any other reason for absence should be discussed with school and it is the school's decision whether to authorise any absence that is not covered by medical evidence.

Yours sincerely

M Watson  
Head teacher

Enc: Registration certificate

Copy: Class teacher  
Pupil file