



Attendance & Punctuality Policy – Primary Schools

Approved: 29/06/22 Trust Board Meeting
Review Date: June 2023
Responsible Officer: Director of Schools

Trust Mission Statement

Our mission is to create high quality educational opportunities for all children and young people across the partnership by developing a strong collaborative and co-operative model through which we encourage autonomy, share best practice, enhance the professional aspirations of our staff and ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils and staff.

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

This policy sets out how we at The Merton Primary School will work towards our aim of achieving excellent rates of attendance for our pupils. It should be considered alongside the government guidance document '*Working together to improve school attendance (2022)*'.

The Merton Primary School seeks to ensure that all our students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each student to realise his/her full potential. For students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually. Any absence causes disruption to learning and should be avoided if at all possible. Improving attendance at The Merton Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in our community – students, parents, governors and staff.

For academies who have children on roll who are below statutory school age, it is the view of BEP that these children fall under the ethos of this policy, as it is important to encourage excellent attendance at school for all our pupils.

Links with other policies

- Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School
- Equality
- SEND
- Child Protection
- Data Protection

AIMS

- To encourage and assist all students in BEP Schools to achieve excellent levels of attendance of above 97% with the aim of 100%
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the academy including students, parents, staff and governors.

- To maximise attendance across the school population and reduce persistent absenteeism (below 90%).

Department for Education Definition of Persistent Absence:

Persistent absence threshold is 10%

*If a pupil's overall absence rate is **10% or higher**, he/she is classified as a persistent absentee.*

*Pupils are classed as persistently absent based upon their **individual** absence level, not by a comparison to a national threshold.*

See the Department for Education's (DfE) [guidance on pupil absence statistics](#), paragraph 3.2.2.

- To work together with parents/carers in both a supportive and challenging role to achieve high levels of attendance.

STUDENTS

All students are expected to:

- Attend school regularly and to arrive on time. Morning registration will be taken at 8:50am and afternoon registration at 1:05pm. Pupils arriving after registration will receive a late mark. Arrival more than 30 minutes after registers close will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- Come to school properly equipped and prepared to learn.
- Attend all lessons on time
- Not leave school site without permission from staff and signing out at reception.
- Talk to a member of staff if there is a problem causing them to miss school.

PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance at school in accordance with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. They are expected to ensure that:

- Their child attends regularly and is punctual, properly dressed, equipped and in a fit condition to learn
- They inform the school of the reason for any absence by telephone/email/text call on each morning of absence. The school will then make the decision to either authorise or unauthorise the absence. If no reason is given the absence will be automatically unauthorised
- They know that they will not have holidays authorised during term time
- They make medical and dental appointments outside school time
- They give the school up to date information regarding diagnosed medical conditions which may affect attendance
- They provide the school with up to date contact details

THE ACADEMY

The Academy will:

- Strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.
- We incentivise our pupils and families/carers to have above 97% attendance, it is important to safeguard our children and maximise potential. We have a series of actions outlined in the 'Attendance guidance' at different stages and rates of attendance.
- Recognise all young people who fall below the Department for Education (DfE) threshold of 90% attendance as Persistent Absentees are therefore a vulnerable group.
- We will contact and support our pupils, families/carers at various rates of times if their attendance become of concern. This includes attendance of any pupil below 95% and particularly at, or approaching 90% which is the threshold for **Persistent Absence**. For all cases at or below 90% attendance the school's HT, or a member of the SLT, will meet with families/carers to look at improving a pupil's attendance. We will support pupils with medical needs and request medical evidence to enable us to put in place the most effective support plan.
- At The Merton Primary School we have clear day to day processes for managing attendance, for example first day calling and processes to follow up on unexplained absence. See Attendance guidance (appendix 1) updated June 22

Contacts:

Trust Attendance & Welfare Lead – Di Cresswell – diane@bepschools.org, 0116 478 3426 or 07423 628850

School HT – office@merton.bepschools.org 0116 2608150

Attendance lead – Matthew Lee office@merton.bepschools.org 0116 2608150

Person responsible for first contact – Jane Calow office@merton.bepschools.org 0116 2608150

Contacting the school – school office - office@merton.bepschools.org 0116 2608150

Registration

Registration is a legal requirement and creates an orderly start to the school day. Registers will be called promptly at 8:50am and 1:05 pm. Students arriving after the registers are taken will receive a late mark. Any student arriving more than 30 minutes after registers close will in the register be marked absent.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

The Academy's registers will be coded in accordance with the Department of Education mandatory codes – see appendix A.

All absences must be explained by a parent or carer on a daily basis. The school will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence. The view of the Department for Education attendance expert is that

“some think they’re being a good parent by keeping their child off school, if in doubt send them to school. There is a difference between minor ailments and the sort of illness that warrants a day off.”

Some examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting on a delivery
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- A family day out
- A child’s birthday
- Sleeping in after a late night

Any unexplained absence will be unauthorised.

Absence may be authorised due to:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances

If a student’s attendance becomes a cause for concern the school may ask parents to provide medical, or other suitable, evidence to substantiate their reasons before the absence can be authorised.

Holidays

The Bradgate Education Partnership Trust policy is that **holidays in term time will not be authorised**. Unauthorised absence **may** be referred to Leicestershire County Council, at the discretion of the Head Teacher. A referral may result in Leicestershire County Council issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Exceptional Leave

The school recognise that there may be times when a student requires exceptional leave during term time for short periods of time. In these circumstances parents are asked to complete the ‘Exceptional Leave Form’ to request the absence. These requests will be considered by the Headteacher on an individual basis. Please ensure that the Headteacher is provided with all evidence and context to support your application for exceptional leave at the point of the initial application as further information provided at a later date will not be considered.

Exceptional leave will not be authorised during examination periods.

Appeal – Exceptional Leave

The decision of the Headteacher is final. However, if you feel that your application for exceptional leave has been unfairly reviewed or that the policy outlined has not been followed you may appeal in writing to the Director of Schools outlining your case. Please note the Director of Schools will not re-hear or re-

consider the original application for exceptional leave but will, if required, ensure the Headteacher has reviewed the application according to policy and in a fair and unbiased manner.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

If a student is absent and no reason has been provided the school will contact parents and/or nominated emergency contacts, as part of the safeguarding procedure. This will be done within the first hour of any absence following the closure of registers.

Where a student is absent and the school cannot contact parents and/or nominated contacts the school will carry out a home welfare check: this will take place by the 3rd day of absence or sooner.

When a student is persistently late or absent without good reason and the School's efforts to effect change have been unsuccessful a referral may be made to our Attendance & Welfare Officer for further action. This may also involve a home welfare check.

Persistent Absence

The law requires parents and carers to make sure that their children receive a full time education suitable to their needs. Parents and pupils are supported at school to overcome barriers to regular attendance.

As a last resort, schools may request the local authority, through the Pupils Services Court Team, to use its statutory legal powers if parents/carers fail to ensure their child receives an education.

The following sections of the Education Act 1996 apply:

- Section 444(1): if "a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil fails to attend regularly" at the school. This leads to a fine of up to £1000 per parent.
- Section 444(1A): if "the parent knows that his child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails to cause him to do so" without reasonable justification. This 'aggravated offence' leads to a fine of up to £2500 per parent and/or up to 3 months' imprisonment.

A penalty notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence. It would be considered appropriate to serve a notice in the following circumstances:

- overt truancy
- parentally condoned absences
- unauthorised leave of absence / holidays in term-time
- excessive delay in returning from extended holidays without agreement
- persistent late arrival at school i.e. after the register has closed.

Children Missing Education (CME)

The Head Teacher will notify the Local Authority when a pupil is likely to be away from the academy for a significant period of time due to their health needs. Academies (working with the Trust Attendance & Welfare Lead) will complete a Children Missing Education (CME) referral to the relevant Local Authority when a child's attendance cannot be confirmed after 10 days.

Supporting families

We will always seek to improve a child's attendance in a positive manner. We will seek to work with families and help provide support necessary, or where required to provide signposting and/or liaise with any external agencies and early help. Typically, we will set in place an *Attendance Improvement Plan* with each student/family.

Penalty (fixed) Notices & further actions

The school will consider a penalty notice as a last resort. We will always seek to find supportive ways to work with students and families. However, as set out in the appendix, there are regular points where we will consider this option (please note the receipt of any fines are NOT received by the school).

We will also consider working with families and local agencies in a student's best interests and reserve the right to consider all of the following actions where necessary:

- **Parenting Contract**
- **Education Supervision Orders**
- **Attendance Prosecution**
- **Parenting Order**
- **Fixed Penalty Notice**

Appendices

Attendance Guidance



BRADGATE
Education Partnership

Good attendance is vital to ensure that children learn and reach their full potential

Children should be in school and ready to learn.

We value the support of parents in making sure that children are in school and arrive and leave on time.

The Head Teacher of a school is no longer allowed to authorise holidays of any kind except in exceptional circumstances.

We welcome your children into our schools and do not advise elective home education (EHE) although we will always support families in their decisions.

Registers are taken twice daily; morning and afternoon.

The start of the school day 8:45am

The start of the afternoon session 1pm

Any pupil arriving late will be marked late 'L'

However, children arriving more than 30 minutes late will receive a 'U' code this is an unauthorised absent mark

The attendance target for our school is **97%**

Attendance Codes, Descriptions & Meanings

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e., pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc., appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
\$	Involved in other activity in school	Present

Codes in red are negative marks

Key Attendance Benchmarks at BEP and at The Merton Primary School

Attendance (Over a rolling 6 month period)	Actions /support
100%	Letter home and personal praise!
99% - 97%	Courtesy letter (informing parents) Letter '1' Attendance is 'good'.
95-96%	This is below target. Monitor and review. Consider moving to Tier 1 concern?
91% - 95%	Tier 1 Concern Attendance letter – Letter '2' Conversation and/or meeting with parents/carers and HT or DHT Recorded on Arbor/CPOMS
90% and below	Tier 2 Concern PA – Letter '3' Formal meeting with HT/ Attendance Lead and Trust representative & parents/carers to set out plan to improve attendance. Legal position considered. Support plan in place + Recorded on Arbor/CPOMS
85% and below	Tier 3 Concern Letter '4' Inviting parents in for a meeting with Trust Welfare and Attendance Lead Reviewing support plan; look at any early help & support. Review legal / medical position
Medical Absence	Letter 'Medical needs letter '5'
Legal EWO	Referring to LA Attendance Team by DC

Our Attendance pledge at The Merton Primary School:



We will:

Always support good attendance, recognising this and praising students. We will recognise termly those students attending 100% over a term.

Act immediately on any absence and contact families within the first hour on the first morning of any absence.

Be persistent in following up any unexplained absences.

Carry out home visits and welfare checks where we have concerns. These will be carried out in all cases where there are 2 days of continuous unexplained absence.

Monitor rigorously our attendance data. All attendance will be reviewed weekly by our HT/ Attendance Designated Senior Lead. Any pupils with attendance below 90%, or who have a historic concern, will be monitored daily with any absence reported immediately to the HT/ Designated Senior Lead.

Seek the support of the Trust Attendance team where a child's attendance is dropping towards 90% and/or where there are emerging concerns regarding a pupil's attendance over time.

Regularly review our patterns of attendance and lateness: benchmarking our data against local and national comparators.

New guidelines (2022) for attendance and use of penalty notices in schools

Circumstances under which The Merton Primary School will consider the use of a penalty notice:

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (including lateness)
- Any incidence of unauthorised holiday in term time
- Any pattern or repeated absences without suitable evidence/justification
- Any unauthorised absence immediately following a leave of absence in term time.
- Any incidence of an excluded pupil being in a public place without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of exclusion
- Any child with 2 fines in a school year, should be considered for prosecution.

All absence must be suitably explained and evidenced (where appropriate).

The use of a penalty notice is at the discretion of the HT, or DHT in the absence of the HT.

At all points the consideration, evidence and any mitigations should be recorded in Arbor.

The Bradgate Education Partnership, recognise the need for 100% attendance, for our pupils to reach their full potential, academically and socially.

We recognise the importance of the new guidelines, but we will remain supportive of difficulties our families may encounter and will always aim to be supportive and compassionate.

Exceptional Leave Request Form

Child/rens' names and Tutor Group/s/Class	First date of absence
	Last date of absence
	Total number of school days

Reason for Exceptional Leave Request

(Please indicate the reason why this leave needs to be taken in term time - **all** evidence and context to support your application for exceptional leave **must be** provided with this request, as further information provided at a later date will not be considered.)

Please tick if your child has sibling(s) at another school or schools ☐

Name of School(s).....

Name of Parent/Carer Signed.....

Date of request

Academy Use Only

Our records show that to date your child has been absentdays during the current academic year giving them an attendance of%. Last year their attendance was.....%

Having considered your request along with your child's attendance data it has been agreed that this request does/doesn't meet Bradgate Educational Partnership's criteria for Exceptional Leave. Therefore:

- ☐ Your request for Exceptional Leave is granted and your child's absence will be authorised.
- ☐ Your request for Exceptional Leave is not granted. If your child is absent on this occasion their absence will be unauthorised.
- ☐ Your request for Exceptional Leave is not granted. If your child is absent on this occasion their absence will be referred to the Leicestershire County Council for a Fixed Penalty Notice in relation to an unauthorised family holiday during term time.

School Comment

Code

Signed

