



BRADGATE
Education Partnership

Stronger Together

The Merton Primary School



The Merton Primary School
To be the best we can be.

POLICY:

Attendance

Approved: Board of Trustees

Approved Date: 21/08/24

Review Date: June 2025

Responsible Officer: Director of Education

Ambitious
Collaborative
Ethical



BRADGATE
Education Partnership

MISSION:

Through strong collaboration between our schools, Bradgate Education Partnership is committed to providing an ambitious and inclusive education for all.

We want our children and young people to realise their full potential academically, socially and personally. We celebrate the distinctive ethos of each individual school. We ensure that all who are part of our Trust have a deep sense of belonging and a supportive opportunity to grow.



Stronger Together



VALUES:



Ambitious

We aim high and are aspirational for all.



Collaborative

We work closely together to encourage, support, challenge and share.



Ethical

We treat everyone fairly, within a culture of kindness and respect.

VISION:



PUPILS

All our pupils are equipped with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to thrive in life and make a positive difference.



SCHOOLS

All our schools provide a safe and happy space where pupils study an ambitious curriculum which unlocks their personal potential so that they achieve exceptional outcomes.



WORKFORCE

All staff have positive impact in their roles whilst feeling supported and valued both personally and professionally.



COMMUNITY

All our schools embrace the local area they serve within a deeply embedded culture of community partnership.



WIDER WORLD

All our pupils and staff understand, respect and embrace the diversity of the wider world in which they live.



SUSTAINABILITY

Across our partnership, everything we do is aligned to meet the needs of the present without compromising a sustainable future.

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1. Introduction

The Merton Primary School recognises that pupils will only benefit fully from their education if they attend school regularly and on time. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. Attendance will be maximised through an effective partnership between pupils, their parents/carers, and the school.

Bradgate Education Partnership (BEP) and our school will ensure that all associated actions are undertaken rigorously and consistently. We will constantly monitor and evaluate action and impact through regular analysis of data and review of practice.

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

2. Principles

To manage and improve attendance effectively we will:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents understand
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence
- Regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to, support and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them
- Support pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

3. Aims and Objectives

- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Promoting a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Acknowledge good attendance and punctuality
- Closely monitoring the attendance of every pupil
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, staff and the Local Advisory Board (LAB)
- To maximise attendance across the school population and reduce persistent absenteeism (below 90%)
- Setting targets for improvement to improve the attendance of the whole school

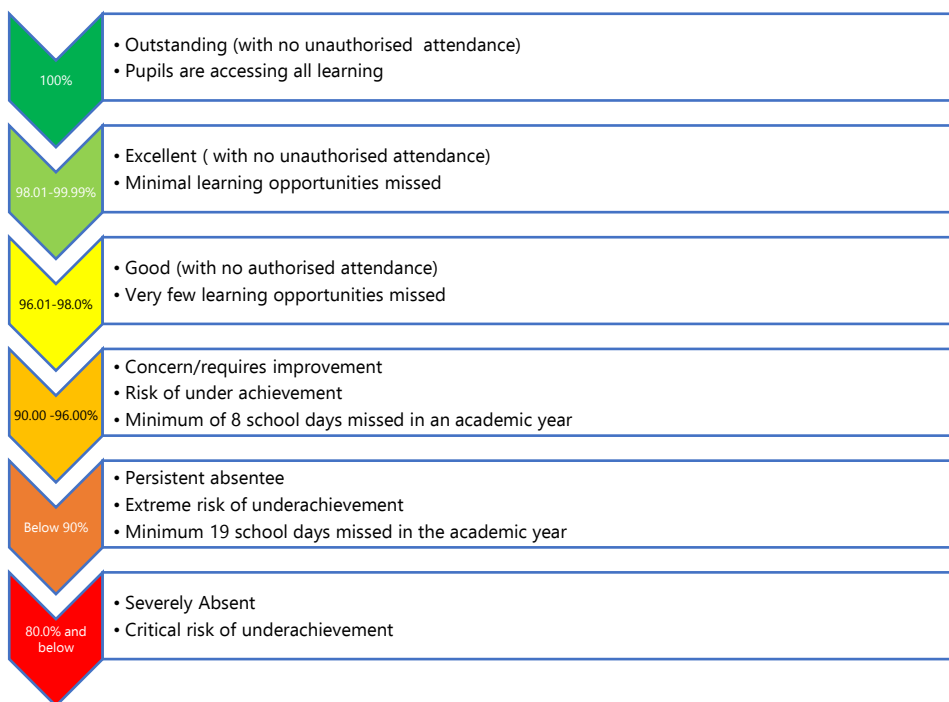


4. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE) Working together to improve school attendance and Keeping children safe in education statutory guidance.

5. Attendance Bands

At The Merton Primary School we strive for all pupils to achieve their full academic potential and aim for **100%** attendance. Our classification of the different attendance bands are as follows:



We will share the attendance bands with parents where appropriate and help older pupils to understand how attendance can affect academic outcomes.

6. Daily Routines

6.1 Daily routines for pupils

External school gates are opened at 8.40 am daily.

All pupils are expected to:



- Attend school regularly and to arrive on time. Morning registration will be taken at 8.50 am, and afternoon registration at 1 pm. Pupils arriving during 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.

6.2 Daily routines for parents

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 8.50 am 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, wherever possible.
- 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.

7. The Attendance Register

The law makes it clear that schools must take the attendance register at the start of each school day and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion the school must record whether each pupil is:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational activity; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

7.1 Present at School

Pupils are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken.

- Our pupils must arrive by 8.45 am on each school day.
- Our morning register is taken at 8.50 am and will be kept open until 8.55 am
- Our afternoon register is taken at 1 pm

8. Punctuality

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens classroom disruption. Any pupil arriving after the gates have closed miss the vital settling in period at the beginning of the day.

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late (L) – which counts as present.

A pupil who arrives late after the registers close will be marked as absent. If the pupil is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised.

If the pupil is late for no good reason, they will be marked with the unauthorised absence code 'Late after registers close' (U).

- A member of staff will meet with parents of those children who are frequently late to school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.
- Pastoral Support Plans may be put into place to outline agreed targets, actions and sources of support.
- If a pupil is habitually arriving at school just before the 9.15 am cut-off, the School have the right to amend the cut-off point for that pupil as a measure to help improve punctuality and attendance. Parents/carers will be notified of this.

9. Following up absence

Where any child we are expecting at school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use.

Where a Head Teacher has any concerns about a child's absence from school, they may authorise a home visit.

10. Following up Unexplained Absences

Where no contact has been made with the school, the school will contact parents by text, email, telephone, or letter to try and establish the reason for a child's absence.

When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence.

If we are unable to establish the reason for absence by the end of the first day of absence, we will mark the absence as unauthorised, using the O code.

If we are concerned about a pupil's absence or are unable to contact the parent/s, we will contact the pupil's emergency contacts and/or other professionals, or contacts of the family, who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the pupil's whereabouts.

If we are still unable to reach a family member, a home visit will be made by school staff, designated safeguarding leads and external agencies, as appropriate.

11. First Day of Absence Response

If the school has not been informed as to the reason for a pupil's absence, then they will contact the person allocated as priority 1 on the pupil's emergency details. The school will prioritise those pupils considered vulnerable e.g., Looked After Children; children subject to Child Protection Plans; children open to Social Care as a Child in Need; pupils with SEND, children who have previously been reported missing; primary aged pupils who make their own way to school.

Parents are expected to supply details of at least three people who can be contacted in an emergency. If the school is unable to contact any of the emergency numbers provided, or are concerned for the welfare of the pupil, we may make a home visit or request a Welfare Check from the police.

12. Authorised Absence

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away from the school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence

The School registers will be coded in accordance with the Department of Education mandatory codes

12.1 Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

The school may require medical evidence of some description to authorise medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation and discuss what constitutes medical evidence.

If a pupil is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

Where a pupil has been absent from school due to illness (I code) or it is believed they will miss 15 consecutive or cumulative days, schools are required to provide the name & address of the pupils to the Local Authority.

12.2 Medical/Dental Appointments (M Code)

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. Only the session of which the appointment is will be authorised. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult and signed out. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

12.3 Religious Observance (R Code)

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance & a day when the pupil's parents would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from their employment in order to mark the occasion. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

12.4 Traveller Absence

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller child of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place.

This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In



which case the child will be dual registered at that school and this school, which is their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

13. Contacts

Headteacher– Patrick Betts - pbetts@merton.bepschools.org

Attendance lead – Jane Calow - jcalow@merton.bepschools.org

The School Office – 0116 2608150

Contacting the school – office@merton.bepschools.org

Trust Attendance & Welfare Officers 0116 4783426

14. Safeguarding and Attendance

At The Merton Primary , it is our legal responsibility to ensure that every child is safe and receives a suitable education. In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures (see section 11 First Day of Absence Response), we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare.

Home visits will be conducted for MOST families where no reason for absence has been received within 1-2 days.

15. Children Absent from Education

No pupil should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Attendance and Welfare Officer or Director of Education, and the Local Authority Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below: -

Where a child is absent from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing either a Pupil Missing out on Education or Children Missing from Education referral for the following circumstances: -

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.



- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area, but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.
- A pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school permission for a continuous period of 10 days or 15 cumulative days

16. Penalty Notices

The Penalty Notice is designed to be an early intervention.

A Penalty Notice will only be applied if the progress being made either by the pupil or their parents/carers is deemed unsatisfactory.

All schools are required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons (including family holidays)

If your child is absent and you haven't received advance permission from the headteacher to take your child out of school, the school and local council may take action.

The fine for school absences as of the 19th August 2024 is **£80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days per parent per child.**

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of **£160**. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

If our school refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal intervention to be considered, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal intervention.

This will at least be evidenced via the sending of an Attendance Concern Letter.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil who is absent, we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

17. Persistent Absence

Persistent Absentees are defined as children with an attendance percentage below 90%. This is equivalent to having one day off every two weeks. Persistent Absentees miss significant amounts of their education and are in danger of falling behind academically, socially, and emotionally. These pupils will be closely monitored by the School & the Trust Attendance and Welfare Officers to ensure support and strategies are put into place to help improve their attendance.

The law requires parents and carers to make sure that their children receive a full time education suitable to their needs

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.

18. Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school does not give permission for the absence or is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise the absence or not. Unauthorised absence includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Confusion over school dates
- Shopping /Birthdays /Waiting at home for a repair or maintenance work, or a parcel to be delivered
- Long weekends and holidays in term time
- In the case of term time leave - if a pupil is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised.

19. Leave of Absence Requests – ‘Exceptional Circumstances’

Due to current regulations the school cannot authorise leave of absence in term-time requests (holidays), unless there are exceptional circumstances (to be decided at the discretion of the Headteacher).

If you wish to take your child out of school during term time, please complete the request form [click here](#) and return the form to school before the leave is taken. The Leave of Absence request form must be completed and returned to school as soon as an absence is anticipated.

The school office will supply a paper copy of the Leave of Absence request form upon request.

If an unauthorised leave of absence (holiday) is taken in term time the absence will be referred to the Attendance Team at Leicestershire County Council, with a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued in accordance with their Policy.

The legal reference states that schools should not authorise leave of absence unless both of the following apply:

1. The headteacher considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application AND
2. An application has been made in advance by the parent/carer.

The school will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance.

The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head Teachers discretion. The headteacher may consult with the Executive Leadership Team at the Trust.

Exceptional leave will not be authorised during examination periods.

- All requests must be considered on their own merits but there must be very particular and exceptional circumstances before the request will be granted
- Reduced cost of holidays in term time does not amount to exceptional circumstances
- Awkward flight times do not amount to exceptional circumstances
- Parental work patterns are unlikely to amount to exceptional circumstances
- Weddings, at home or abroad are unlikely to amount to exceptional circumstances
- Other family members booking holidays when ignorant of school term times does not amount to exceptional circumstances
- Rearranged holidays due to Covid and/or other unforeseen circumstances

Parents must complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least

four weeks before the absence. Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage, we will follow the necessary protocols.

19.1 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 Directors of Education at the Trust, outlining your case. Please note the Director of Education 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.

20. Holiday Absence Policy

The Bradgate Education Partnership Trust policy is that **holidays in term time will not be authorised.**

It is very unlikely that requests for holidays or extended leave will be authorised. If parents want the school to consider such a request they must complete an exceptional leave form which is available from the school. Parents will then receive a response informing them of the school's decision. If parents/carers still take their son/daughter out of school, then the absence is deemed unauthorised and may incur a Penalty Notice (see above policy relating unauthorised absence). In cases where the school is not notified but holidays are taken in term time these will also be recorded as unauthorised and are also likely to incur a Penalty Notice.

21. Holiday Request for children of service personnel

The decision on whether to authorise term-time holidays for the children of service personnel sits solely with the headteacher of the school.

To assist headteachers in making their decisions on applications for absence during term time, Unit Commanding Officers and their Welfare staff will be able to provide advice, verification and endorsement as required.

By law, headteachers are only able to grant requests for leave during term time in "exceptional" circumstances, examples include:

- Preparing for or returning from operational tours
- Shift pattern only allows leave to be taken during term-time
- Injury/bereavement

An exceptional leave request form needs to be submitted for any holiday request; we will then contact the Unit Commanding Officers to verify the request. A maximum of 1 occasion and 7 days (14 sessions) may be authorised in any academic year, any additional days will be unauthorised.

22. Alternative Provision

Where pupils attend an alternative provision setting, this policy is followed in conjunction with the Alternative Provision policy.



Appendix B School Specific arrangements

Appendix C Related Policies – add/amend as required

- DfE Statutory Guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) August 2024
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Children with Health Needs
- Medication Policy