

# Mercia School

## Attendance

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<i>This policy has been approved by the Local Governing Body and has been signed by the Chair of Governors</i>	
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### Equality Impact Assessment

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school.

## 1. Principles:

Mercia School is committed to ensuring that all families understand the importance of 100% attendance. Attendance in school is vital for academic success. Studies have shown that pupils who attend less than 97% of the time fail to achieve their potential and therefore are denied the chance to a successful, fulfilling life.

**For these reasons, we monitor attendance patterns with vigilance and hold parents to account where necessary. We expect all pupils to attend at all times, even if they are feeling unwell.**

## 2. Aims:

Mercia school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Maintaining exceptional high levels of attendance and punctuality across the school, significantly above local and national averages;
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- Working with parents to ensure individual pupil's attendance is as high as possible, supporting and challenging where needed.

It is our legal duty to ensure our children attend school regularly.

## 3. Legislation and guidance:

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 4. School procedures:

### 4.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry;
- The amended entry;
- The reason for the amendment;
- The date on which the amendment was made;
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment;

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by **8.23am** on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at **8.30am**. The register for the second session will be taken at **1.15pm**.

In exceptional circumstances (such as severe weather or public transport disruptions) the closing of registration may be delayed at the discretion of the Headteacher.

## **4.2 Unplanned Absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence. For example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health.

Parents must telephone the school before **8.00am** the same morning, and each subsequent morning, to inform us of the reason for absence. It is possible to leave messages on the pupil absence voicemail at any time prior to 8.00am. To report an absence please dial the main school telephone number and select the appropriate option.

Mercia School will contact parents on a daily basis if they fail to inform the school of an absence. The school must be notified of the reason for a child's absence in order to safeguard the child and protect their educational well-being.

Absence is monitored very carefully at the school. Every day missed is a learning opportunity wasted. The school will make home visits to those pupils who are not in school.

Absence due to illness will be 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 parents 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.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

Parents must comply with attendance law and will be notified by letter if the school has concerns.

### **4.3 Medical or dental appointments**

**Only emergency appointments for dentists, opticians, and doctors should be during school hours.** Routine appointments must be made out of school hours.

Pupils have 13 weeks' school holiday per year and further time off on teacher training days. We kindly ask parents to make routine doctor and dental appointments during these dates in order to avoid unnecessary absence.

When it is known in advance that an absence is to be requested for emergency appointments, parents must write a letter to the Headteacher at least 2 days in advance. In such instances the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in Section 4.

### **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

**Please refer to the Demanding Excellent Behaviour Policy for sanctions on lack of punctuality.**

### **4.5 Following up absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Unexplained absences and a lack of contact from parents may cause us concern and lead us to involve other agencies such as Children's Services.

### **4.6 Reporting to parents**

Parents will be informed of their child's attendance record 3 times a year, when academic reports are distributed. Formal letters will be issued for repeated absences and where concerns emerge/persist.

## **5. Authorised and unauthorised absence:**

### **5.1 Granting approval for term-time absence**

The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless it is considered to be exceptional circumstances.

To request leave of absence, please write to the Headteacher explaining the exceptional circumstance. Requests must be submitted 10 days before the intended date (where possible).

Please note Mercia School do not authorise any term time holidays/visits of any kind.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and emergency medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- 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

## 5.2 Legal sanctions

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

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

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the Local Authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A 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 an excluded pupil 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 may decide to prosecute the parent.

## 5.3 Absence Procedures

In order to ensure the safety and educational well-being of all pupils, we have a rigorous monitoring system and follow up policy when absence occurs.

## 5.4 Internal Stages

- On the first day of absence each academic year, the school must be notified of the reason for the absence. If we are satisfied with the reason, we will authorise the absence. If we are not satisfied, the absence will not be authorised.
- When a pupil's attendance falls below 95% (regardless of whether absences have been authorised or not), we will issue a warning letter advising the family that continued absence may result in prosecution.
- When a pupil's attendance falls below 90% (regardless of whether absences have been authorised or not), we will issue a second warning letter inviting the parents in to meet with a member of senior team. During this meeting, support strategies will be discussed and parents will be made aware of the next stages in the procedure should their child fail to improve their attendance.
- After the parent meeting, the pupil's attendance is monitored for 8 weeks. If attendance improves during this time, we close the case and monitor in the usual way.
- If attendance does not improve during this time, we invite parents in for a further meeting where the attendance plan previously put in place is evaluated and updated.

- After the second meeting, attendance is monitored for a further 3-week period. If unauthorised absences continue after this point, the school and the Local Authority will begin proceedings to issue legal penalty notices to parents.

## **6. Strategies for promoting attendance:**

The expectation at Mercia School is for pupils to attend school every day.

Pupil's will be rewarded for exceptional attendance through certification and the awarding of house points. Attendance badges are issued for 100% attendance. Such rewards are distributed at the Headteacher's discretion.

## **7. Attendance monitoring:**

The school carefully monitors attendance on a daily basis and attendance is discussed weekly by the School's Senior Leaders.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

We will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for repeated absence.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will:

- Ensure parent meetings are held to challenge and support our parents in raising attendance of their child.
- Ensure a plan is drawn up in consultation with the family and possibly, external agencies.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors.

### **Please note:**

Should a child be the subject of a Child Protection Plan, or should the school have child protection concerns, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will immediately notify Children's Services.

We will not remove any child from our roll without consulting the Local Authority, and the Education Welfare Service where appropriate. It is our policy to ensure that a place has been secured and the pupil has enrolled at a new school before removing a pupil from roll. Unless they reside in a place that it is not reasonable to expect the child that has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which one is registered.

## **8. Roles and responsibilities:**

### **8.1 The Governing body:**

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

## **8.2 The Headteacher:**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

## **8.3 The Administration Team:**

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level;
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher;
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence;
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues;
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices;
- Take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system;
- Informs teaching staff of wellbeing issues as required.

## **8.4 Mastery Tutors and Teachers:**

Are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. Mastery Tutors are the first point of contact and will contact parents/carers if concerns with attendance persist.

## **9. Links with other policies**

- Safeguarding Policy
- Demanding Excellent Behaviour Policy

## 10. Appendices:

### Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Unauthorised absence		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day