



# **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

**2023-2024**

**Review Date: September 2024**

Mere Green Primary School is a member of the ATLP

## **1. Introduction**

At Mere Green Primary School we are committed to raising the standards of education for all our pupils and recognise that regular school attendance is fundamental in supporting all pupils to achieve. We care about the education all of our children receive and know the importance of ensuring that all children are punctual and are in school daily. Our class teachers, attendance team and senior leaders will do all they can to encourage parents and carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any difficulties that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. We share in the belief that this will support all children to begin their adult lives with equal opportunities and skill them for future lives of training and employment.

## **2. Aims and Objectives**

- Emphasise the importance of and secure pupil's attendance to be above national average. To promote the importance of being punctual to enable all children to have the same educational opportunities.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties in relation to attendance.
- Communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, pastoral, parents and careers) the legal requirements with regards to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised".
- Establish close partnerships with parents to promote working together to achieve high attendance and punctuality.
- Record and monitoring attendance, punctuality and absenteeism closely intervening immediately by applying appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism.
- Promote effective partnerships with other services and agencies. Following their standard approaches in managing attendance issues.

## **3. Statutory Duty**

All schools are responsible for recording pupil's attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session then at the start of the afternoon session. An entry must be made on the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll. The school utilises a central administrative system, Bromcom for this purpose.

## **4. Parental Responsibility and/or day to day care.**

The Education Act 1996 section 7 defines the duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.

(7) The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall ensure their child is in receipt of efficient full-time education suitable:

(A) to their age, ability and aptitude, and

(B) to any special educational needs, he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

The Education Act 1996 section 576 defines the meaning of 'parent'.

(1) In this Act, unless the context of otherwise requires, 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person;

(a) Who is not a parent of the child but has parental responsibility, or

(b) Who has care, except that in section 499(8) it only includes such a person if he is an individual.

## **5. Local Authority Responsibility**

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/carer is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at schools, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend can be prosecuted under Education Act 1996, section 444 1A (as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000).

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced new powers in relation to issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices, England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27 February 2004. Penalty notices must be issued in a manner which conforms to all requirements of the Human Rights Act and all relevant Equal Opportunities Legislation. To this aim each Local Authority has a Code of Conduct in relation to issuing Penalty Notices.

Mere Green Primary School recognises Birmingham City Council's 'FAST track to Attendance Campaign' and will implement prosecution where it is fair and equitable to do so.

## **6. School Interventions for Managing Persistent Absenteeism**

A pupil becomes a concern when their attendance falls below 95% (National being 96%). All students whose attendance has fallen to this level or are at risk of reaching this level will be closely monitored through the school's tracking procedure, regular contact made with their parents/carers. Parents/carers will be given opportunities to work with school in improving their child's attendance. 'Persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance falls below 90% (19 days). There are several sanctions that school can take to address the issue of non-attendance. In order to try and identify the reason for absence we will always talk to you first to identify the reason for absence. Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) will be considered when:

A pupil is absent from school for the purpose of a Leave of Absence in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.

A pupil has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further absence has occurred following written warning to improve penalty notices will be used in accordance with Birmingham City Council Code of Conduct.

Where intervention through the 'FAST track' process fails to bring about an improvement in attendance the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444/4441 (a) of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring their child's attendance at school.

## **7. Tiered approach to supporting attendance.**

At Mere Green we have a tiered approach to supporting parents in improving their child's attendance. Meetings will be held to identify need and support our families through Early Help wherever possible. Attendance meetings are tiered as follows:

Below 95% - Meeting with Attendance Early Help Lead (Early Help offered)

Below 92% – Meeting with Attendance Early Help Lead and Assistant Headteacher of inclusion

Below 90% - Meeting with Attendance Early Help Lead and Headteacher

We would expect to see an improvement in attendance following the first meeting, however, if there was no improvement in attendance following this tiered approach then where the threshold has been met, 'Fast Track' would be implemented.

## **8. Late Arrivals at School**

When a child arrives late at school, not only do they miss the teacher's lesson input and starter activities but often it causes the child to become embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late; in many cases making them feel overwhelmed and emotional. Frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning lost, and can seriously disadvantage the child.

School gates open at 8.30am giving children 10 minutes to make their way to their classrooms. The school day begins at 8.45am and all children are expected to be in class ready to begin learning from 8.45am. The main doors into school will close at 8.45am. All pupils who arrive from 8.45am onwards will need to sign in at the main reception. School gates will close at 8.55am giving parents 10 minutes to exit the school site. A late mark is given from 8.55am onwards unless the lateness has been authorised by the Headteacher. Extenuating circumstances will be taken into consideration.

## **9. Reporting absences/First day absence**

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school before 8.45 am, on the first day of their child's absence. If by 8.45 am, on the first day of a child's absence the school has not been notified, the school will attempt to contact the child's parent/carer. If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer or may undertake a home visit. Parents are expected to contact school every day the pupil is absent.

## **10. Authorising Absences**

There are two categories of absence: -

- (i) Authorised (approved)
- (ii) Unauthorised (not approved)

Only the Headteacher can approve absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### **(i) Authorised Absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent. For example, if the child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

### **(ii) Unauthorised Absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## **11. Medical Evidence and Supporting Evidence**

We ask that parents making medical appointments for their child, book them early or late in the day, so pupils can be in school for as much of the day as possible.

The school fully supports pupil's welfare and medical conditions and if your child has a chronic, persistent or recurrent health issue, we can arrange for a meeting with parents to discuss what additional support can be offered to help your child to access school however we cannot simply accept parental information without the appropriate medical evidence. Pupils with medical conditions should attend school daily unless the absence is supported by medical opinion.

There are of course, good reasons (especially illness), which make attendance at school sometimes difficult. Nevertheless, lessons missed cannot be repeated and "catching up" is never as good as the original learning experience

The School recognises the need to support pupils during and after long term absence of any kind and will:

- i. Endeavour to provide work for pupils to be completed off-site where appropriate and medical evidence has been received
- ii. Consider all strategies to encourage the return of pupils to school. This may include negotiated timetables and/or gradual reintegration
- iii. Ensure that there is a positive atmosphere within school in which pupils are welcomed back

## **12. Roles and Responsibilities in managing attendance and punctuality**

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school everyday
- attend school punctually (by 8.45am)
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day

We expect that all parents/carers/persons who have day to day responsibility for the children will:

- ensure daily school attendance
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually prepared for the school day
- contact the school on the first day of the child's absence and keep in regular contact with school
- contact the school promptly whenever a problem occurs that may keep the child away from school

We expect that our school staff will:

- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, twice daily, including recording pupils late
- monitor every pupil's attendance
- contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes authorising the absence
- contact those families whose child's attendance has dropped below 95% on a half termly basis
- encourage good attendance
- provide a welcoming atmosphere for children, provide a safe learning environment; provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns

- make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the LA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher
- Invite parents/carers to meet in school and discuss attendance and/or punctuality with parents/carers.
- Involve outside agencies where and when appropriate (Early Help)
- by publishing and displaying attendance statistics

## **12. Monitoring attendance**

Pupils whose percentage of attendance falls below 95% will be reviewed by our Attendance team. The attendance team will arrange a meeting to discuss attendance and punctuality and be visible daily in the main school reception area between 8.30am and 9.30am to offer support to parents and guide children who are late to lessons. Where attendance continues to cause concern, we will write a letter to parents and ask that evidence is provided to justify absences and make further attempts to meet and offer tiered intervention to support.

Failure to make an acceptable improvement or where there is an immediate concern further intervention will be considered.

If difficulties relating to absenteeism cannot be resolved through intervention at school levels then we may refer the pupil through the 'Fast track to Attendance Campaign', inviting parents / carers to discuss their attendance issues. We will notify you if we feel this intervention is needed.

## Mere Green Primary Stages to support Attendance and Punctuality.

<p>Class teacher</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>100%-96%</p>	<p>Class teachers will be provided with a weekly update of pupil's attendance and punctuality.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>Speak informally to parents at the end of the school day and promote Mere Green Policy for attendance and punctuality.</p>
<p>Attendance Early Help Lead</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>95%-92%</p>	<p>School office will complete first day calling and follow up absences, recording reasons for absence.</p> <p>Where attendance has fallen below 95% the Office Attendance Administrator will send the "Letter of Concern", notifying parents that their child's attendance is deteriorating.</p> <p>The Office Attendance Administrator will monitor attendance and highlight to the Attendance Early Help Lead and Assistant Headteacher of Inclusion.</p> <p>Early Help is offered with the Attendance Early Help Lead.</p> <p>Promote a welcoming atmosphere following pupil absence</p>
<p>Attendance Early Help Lead</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>92%-90%</p>	<p>Attendance Early Help Lead and Assistant Headteacher meet to identify patterns of absence.</p> <p>Where attendance has fallen to 92% Office Attendance Administrator writes to parents advising that further absences will require evidence is required to justify absences. Where reasons for absence are medical, medical evidence will be required for school to authorise future absences.</p> <p>Referral to appropriate agencies can be made.</p> <p>Promote a welcoming atmosphere following pupil absence.</p>
<p>Attendance Early Help Lead</p> <p>Attendance 90% and below</p>	<p>Attendance Early Help Lead and headteacher carry out an attendance review.</p> <p>Where there has been no improvement in attendance, Fast track on Attendance may be considered and may result in legal action.</p> <p>Promote a welcoming atmosphere following pupil absence.</p>

### 13. Encouraging attendance

Mere Green Primary School actively promotes and rewards good attendance and punctuality.

At Mere Green we will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance including:

- providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- responding promptly to a child or parents' concerns about the school or other pupils
- offering support for pupils who experience attendance difficulties
- recording accurately attendance and punctuality during morning and afternoon registration.
- publishing and displaying attendance statistics
- celebrating good and improved attendance

- monitoring pupils' attendance by being available each morning in and around the reception area to discuss any concerns or reasons for lateness. By informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, or when their child's attendance drops below 95%
- arranging meetings with parents/carers to discuss punctuality and attendance and offering early help.
- actively promoting and rewarding good attendance and punctuality.

Parents are encouraged to ensure their child attends regularly and on time. Children will be rewarded for good attendance. At the end of the academic year all children achieving 97% and above attendance will be rewarded with a certificate and a reward which will be decided at the start of each academic year and communicated to children and parents.

There is a termly reward for every child with 100% attendance as well as half termly attendance certificates. Attendance is also celebrated on the school newsletter.

#### **14. Requests for Leave of Absence during Term Time**

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Head teachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.

The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.

Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued in accordance Birmingham City Councils Code of Conduct Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.



## **15. Deletion from Register**

Pupils will only be deleted from the register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended in the 2016 Pupil registration regulations.

Mere Green Primary School will follow Birmingham City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **16. Responding to Non Attendance**

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, for all irregular attendees, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 10.00 am the school will endeavour to contact them that day.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If the school cannot make contact with a listed school contact for that child then a home visit will be carried out.
- Parents/carers will be invited into meet with the Attendance team if there is a concern with their child's punctuality or attendance. If parents/carers fail to meet in person a letter detailing concerns will be issued.
- Parents/carers will be notified by a stage 1 letter if following an attendance and punctuality meeting there is no immediate improvement or when attendance falls below 90% and an appointment with the headteacher will be arranged.
- If a child's attendance is below 90% they are deemed as a persistent absentee and a range of interventions maybe employed including the Local Authorities Fast Track to attendance procedures.

## **17. Penalty Notice**

The government has given LAs the power to issue fixed penalty notices where parents or carers are considered capable of but unwilling to ensure their child attends school regularly. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act introduced these additional powers in February 2004.

Penalty notices are aimed at "unauthorised absences" – times when a child misses school without a valid reason (or without permission from the school) or if a child is regularly late getting into school. Parents could also be issued with a penalty notice if they take their child on holiday in term-time or if their child stays away longer than agreed any agreed Leave of Absence for exceptional circumstances.

The aim of a penalty notice is to improve parents' efforts in getting children to attend school. Once a penalty notice has been issued a parent cannot appeal against it and must pay the fine.

## **18. Changing Schools**

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school that they inform our school staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from our school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving our school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- The new home address, if it is known

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the child will be reported missing from education.

## **19. School Organisation**

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

## **20. Responsibilities**

### **The Head Teacher, Deputy and Assistant Head Teacher and Governors**

- Adopt and review the Attendance Policy.
- Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided.
- Initiate a scheme for contacting parents of irregular attendees and to raise attendance concerns
- Ensure that key staff have time-tabled periods for liaison and follow-up work with parents and other staff in school.
- Initiate an attendance award scheme with assemblies, certificates and rewards
- Monitor and evaluate attendance and punctuality regularly
- Meet with parents to discuss attendance concerns

### **Class teachers**

- To complete attendance records accurately and punctually (twice daily)
- To follow up any unexplained non-attendance
- To record all reasons for absences in the register
- To inform the Head Teacher/Deputy Head Teacher/ Assistant Head Teacher of attendance concerns.

### **Attendance Team**

- Be present and visible daily to support and challenge parents and children who arrive after 8.45am
- Co-ordinate the scheme to contact parent/carers of non-attendees, this includes phone calls, texts and home visits
- Ensure that reasons for absence are correctly coded on the registers
- Report attendance concerns to the headteacher
- Complete safe and well checks for absent pupils
- Complete referrals to Children Missing in Education

- Provide termly attendance data reports to the headteacher

The Attendance Officers and Pastoral Lead will provide guidance on intervention and continue to monitor attendance on a case by case basis. Where necessary this may lead to legal intervention and prosecution.

## **21.Types of Absence**

### **Authorised Absence**

It is up to the Head Teacher whether to authorise an absence. Requests to authorise absence, other than illness, will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Where attendance is a serious concern the Head Teacher may not authorise any further absence due to illness without medical evidence.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their child attends school. Absence from school will not be authorised for holidays, shopping, birthdays, or other reasons.

Parents and staff should understand that just because an explanatory letter from a parent has been received by the school, this does not mean that the absence will be necessarily authorised.

Where attendance is a serious concern attendance will not be authorised due to illness unless medical evidence is provided.

Where students are taken leave of absence due to holiday, Parents can be fined by the local authority for taking their child on holidays during term time without the authorised consent of the school.

### **Illness**

Parents/ carers are asked to contact the school by 8.45am on each day of absence. The school can make a decision not to authorise prolonged or repeated absences without doctor's note. Parents will be informed if the school seeks confirmation from the child's GP or other medical Practitioner e.g. hospital consultant.

### **Sickness and/or Diarrhoea**

Children with diarrhoea or vomiting should stay away from school for 2 days after their symptoms have gone. Parents must still call each day to inform us of their child's absence.

### **Covid 19**

Please see current government guidance.

### **Lateness**

Pupils arriving after the register has been closed (8.55am) will be considered as late. Students arriving after 8.45am will need to sign in at the main office and wait until a member of staff is available to escort them to class. All school gates will be locked daily by 8.55am.

### **Persistent Absence**

The Department for Education focuses on both authorised and unauthorised absence. "Persistent absence" refers to absence of more than 10%, whether authorised or unauthorised. At Mere Green we will work with parents if they are identified as a Persistent Absentee.