



Muskhams Primary School

Attendance Policy

Signed

A. Crossland

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September 2024

Next Review date: September 2026

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1. Aims of the policy

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

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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:

Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)

Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

[School census guidance](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. School procedures

3.1 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

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

The school gates open at 8:45 am; children go directly to their classrooms where a 'warm up' task will be waiting for them. Pupils must arrive at school by 8:55 am. The register will be taken at 9:00 am.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:00am and will be kept open until 9:15 am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1:15pm.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents or Carers must notify the school via email or telephone on the first day of an unplanned absence, for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health. This should be undertaken by 9:00 am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 4).

If the absence extends into a subsequent school day then the parent/carer must make renewed contact with the school to confirm continued illness or to advise the school of the expected date that the pupil will return to 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/carers 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.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

We encourage parents and carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the school should be notified in advance and the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice by email or telephone is required for authorising these absences.

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 sections 4 and 6.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

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

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation. Registers closed at 9:30 am.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any unexplained absences on the first day to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary and identify whether the absence is authorised or not.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The Department for Education instructs schools to consider authorising leave of absence in term time only in exceptional circumstances and therefore leave of absence during term time is to be discouraged. Family holidays cannot be authorised, even in circumstances where the parents' or carers' employers refuse to grant leave outside of the school term.

Parents/carers who wish to claim **exceptional circumstances** as a reason for taking leave of absence in term time should apply to the Headteacher, using the schools application form, outlining the individual circumstances of the case. Application forms are available upon request from the school reception.

Applications should:

- be made well in advance of the proposed leave of absence
- be received by the school at least four weeks before the leave commences.
- be completed by a parent/carer with parental responsibility for the child, intending to take them out of school.

The school will aim to process all requests for leave of absence within 14 days of receipt. Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively. In such cases it will be regarded as unauthorised absence.

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** may include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 5.2 and 5.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' or carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Bereavement of a close family member.

Unauthorised absence:

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are **not** permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting for a delivery at home
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Going for a family day out
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Regular illness where no medical evidence is forthcoming
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory.

5. Strategies for encouraging attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers, that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education.

Parents and carers are asked to arrange dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks wherever possible.

The school will make every effort to encourage children and their parents/carers towards good attendance. This will be done by:

- first day contact with parents/carers
- assemblies on attendance
- half termly attendance trophy for the class with the highest attendance.
- reporting to parents/carers on their child's attendance
- newsletter items on attendance
- regular contact, and support, for parents/carers of children with attendance below acceptable levels
- monitoring of attendance by the Head teacher
- certificates and awards for full attendance at the end of the school year

6. Attendance monitoring

The school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents and carers are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 1.2).

If a pupil is absent and the school has not heard from the parent or carer by the end of the registration session, then the school will try to contact the parent or carer by telephone. This is to determine the reason for the absence, to combat any possible truancy and ensure safeguarding of pupils.

Parents will be informed of their child's attendance at three points in the year (October Parents' Evening, February parents' Evening and the End of Year report).

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. Parents will be informed by letter if their child is classified as a persistent absentee and invited into school to discuss the issue. Interventions will be put into place and moving forward, parents would be required to provide medical evidence for their child's absence to try to reduce the number of unauthorised absences.

If a child is at risk of becoming 'Persistently Absent', school will contact parents and carers to discuss any early interventions/ support that can be put into place.

In an attendance meeting, the school and parents can work together to identify and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, the school will signpost and support parents in accessing any required services in the first instance.

Pupil-level absence data will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

The guidance flowchart for headteachers and business managers in relation to children being at risk of missing education is prominently displayed in the main school office and stored in the headteacher's office.

7. Response to attendance not meeting the DfE's expectations:

7.1 Penalty Notice

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

Headteachers will issue penalty notices to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends school. These will usually only be issued to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence. They will be issued in line with Local Codes of Conduct which are drawn up and maintained by Nottinghamshire local authority.

The Headteacher will consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice and support will always be provided before legal intervention. In line with the DfE updated guidance, our academies do not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and will make judgements on each individual case.

The threshold for penalty notices is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not.

The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years. When monitoring demonstrates that the threshold has been met, we will refer to the guidance as set out in Working Together to Improve School Attendance, and consult with the Notts Education Improvement Officers, to decide whether to issue a penalty notice in each individual case. Fines will follow the amount set out in the guidance which are set out below:

The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution.

7.2 Notice to Improve

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but has not been engaged with or have not worked, a Notice to Improve, issued in line with processes set out in the Local Code of Conduct by the local authority, give parents a final chance to engage.

The Notice to Improve should include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences.
- The benefits of regular attendance and parents' duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- Details of the support provided so far.
- Opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with.
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period.
- A clear timeframe for the improvement period of between 3 and 6 weeks.
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like.
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

What sufficient improvement looks like is decided on a case by case basis by the academy and will be made clear in the Notice to Improve. Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to issue a penalty notice before the improvement period has ended. The parent should be informed before a penalty notice is issued if it is before the end of the improvement period.

7.3 Attendance Contracts.

When necessary, Muskhams Primary will consider using an attendance contract. An Attendance Contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and school to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. Although not legally binding it allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate. Aspire academies will use attendance contracts as a tool to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. We recognise that parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and we will not agree to proceed with one in a parent's absence.

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most

- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

8.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

8.3 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

They may also monitor attendance at an individual pupil level and report concerns to the headteacher.

They will work with parents or carers and the headteacher to tackle persistent absence.

8.4 Office staff

Office staff collate and record attendance information on the school system and are expected to take calls from parents/carers about absence, informing the class teacher as appropriate. They also contact parents and carers on the first, and subsequent days, of absence if the school has not been informed of the absence.

The office staff support the headteacher in monitoring specific pupils' attendance during intervention programmes.

8.5 Parents/carers

Parents/carers should ensure that:

- their child attends every day on time. They should call the school to report their child's absence before 9:00 am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise the school of when they are expected to return
- They provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child and ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance.

9. Reviewing arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum, every three years. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

11. Appendix 1

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
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency

Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

11. Appendix 2



Absence Notification Form

The school is unable to authorise leave of absence for pupils during term time, unless it is an exceptional circumstance and agreed with the Headteacher. Please note, holidays in term time cannot be authorised.

The school must report children who are missing school without explanation to the Nottinghamshire County Council Safeguarding Hub.

You are therefore asked to notify the school of any planned absence, authorised or not, by completing this 'Absence Notification Form'.

Name of child	
Class	
Dates of planned absence	
Reason for absence	

- I accept that this absence will show as "unauthorised" on my child's permanent educational record. I understand that 5 unauthorised days of absence in a 10 week period prompts a penalty notice.

OR

- I believe that this absence is an exceptional circumstance. I request that the Head Teacher considers the details above and informs me of the final decision.

Signed (Parent or Carer)..... Date