



Morpeth First School

Attendance Policy

Autumn 2024

Review Date	Reason for Review	Completed by
Summer 2024	Annual review + New guidance (Working together to improve school attendance 2024)	S Bell

Our Morning Procedures

School begins at 8.45am. It is important that children arrive at school on time wearing the appropriate uniform, calm and ready to learn in order to start the day on a positive note. Staff will greet children as they enter the building

Time	
8.35am	Main gates open. Parents and children enter site. Children to stand calmly with parents/carers until doors open
8.45am	Children begin to line up at entry doors. Entry doors open, Staff greet children as children enter school
8.50am (8.55am for Reception/Nursery)	Entry doors close. Children arriving after this time must enter via the office and will be marked L (late) on register
9am	Children arriving after 9am (15 or more minutes late) will be marked U (late after registers close). This will be classed as an unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory reason is provided.
From 9.20am	Office staff will check registers for absent pupils. They will begin to attempt to establish a reason for non-attendance of pupils not marked in by contacting main contact number.
11am	If contact with the main emergency number cannot be established by 11am, the alternative numbers provided by parents will be used to establish the whereabouts of the child

Morpeth First School Attendance Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with;

- the DfE guidance, '[Working Together to improve School Attendance](#)' (From August 2024)
- [Northumberland County Council A Guide to Non School Attendance, Statutory Responsibility and Referral to Education Welfare](#)
- [1996 Education Act](#)
- [Keeping Children safe in Education 2024](#)

For the purposes of this policy, a parent means:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
- Any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

At Morpeth First School we believe that good attendance and punctuality is essential in supporting our pupils in terms of both their academic achievement and their social and emotional mental health. We believe that good attendance and punctuality is everyone's business. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where pupils want to be and are enthusiastic and ready to learn. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient full-time education, suitable for their age, aptitude and any special educational need that they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure that their child receives that education, either by attendance at school or by education other than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at a school they have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly. This means that their child must attend every day that the school is open except in a small number of circumstances, for example being too ill to attend or being given permission by the Head Teacher for an absence in advance from the school.

At Morpeth First School we understand that some pupils may find it harder than others to attend school and we work with pupils and parents to identify the issues and remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships. We work jointly with parents to put support into place where necessary so that attendance and punctuality can be improved. This may involve work around the curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and wellbeing support and the effective use of resources including Pupil Premium payments. When pupils return to school following an unavoidable absence such as from a medical condition, long term illness or bereavement, staff where necessary will work with parents to ensure the child feels confident and supported. This may be through pastoral support or support with medical equipment or adjustments. The school sees that good attendance is a responsibility of the whole school staff, teaching and non-teaching, the governing body, the local authority and other local partners.

Good attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience including attainment, wellbeing and wider life choices. Research shows that children with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and 4 also have the highest attendance. For our most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is an important protective factor and allows the school to identify needs and provide support.

100% Attendance	is 190 Days (one school year)	with NO absence
95% Attendance	is 180 days	which is 2 weeks of absence
90% Attendance	is 171 days	which is 4 weeks of absence
85% attendance	is 161 days	which is 6 weeks of absence
80% attendance	is 152 days	which is more than half a term of absence
75% attendance	is 143 days	which is more than 9 weeks absence

As part of good attendance, Morpeth First School believes that punctuality is essential to support children's learning. Children who attend on time are ready to learn and are more confident in approaching work than those who arrive late. We have found that children who arrive at school late

are often ill-prepared for learning, struggle more with friendships and often have lower self-esteem than their peers.

Being frequently late for school adds up to lost learning:

Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to 3 lost days each year

Arriving 15 minutes late each day adds up to 2 week's absence a year

Arriving 30 minutes late every day adds up to 19 days of absence a year.

Our key levels of attendance are:

Attendance	Description
100%	Excellent
97 – 99%	Good
94 – 96%	Satisfactory
90 – 92%	Unsatisfactory
Below 90%	Persistent absence

Principles

Morpeth First School believe the following underpin our approach to managing attendance:

- Pupils and parent/carers understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality
- All school staff, including Governors, administrative and support staff understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality
- Clear procedures are in place for enabling children to come into school
- Parents/carers and pupils having the opportunity to raise concerns and share in addressing those concerns
- Allocating resources e.g. time, people, space to support the policy
- Rewarding students who have good attendance and those who strive to improve their attendance
- Identifying patterns of absence and intervening early. Patterns of attendance are established early in a school career. Children who miss significant amounts of primary school are more likely to truant later on. Morpeth First school will work with the schools in the Morpeth Partnership using data to identify students early
- Sanctions for failing to ensure regular attendance are fully understood by the whole school community and parents/carers

Roles and responsibilities

Morpeth First School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents/carers, pupils and the wider school community.

The Local Authority

The local authority, statutory safeguarding partners and other local partners have a role to play in supporting pupils to overcome barriers to attendance and ensuring that all children can access the full-time education to which they are entitled. Local authorities are facilitators of wider support needed by individual families and schools to overcome barriers in the short term. The local authority is expected to:

- Rigorously track local attendance data and devise a strategic approach to attendance
- Provide a school attendance support team providing schools with communication and advice, targeting support meetings, multi-disciplinary support for families.
- Take forward legal intervention where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with or is not appropriate (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time)

The School

The School has an ongoing responsibility to manage and improve attendance across the school community.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Have a named senior manager 'Attendance Champion' to lead on attendance
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time
- Have clear systems in school to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence

- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Senior Leaders will:

- Have a clear attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand
- Aim to secure the good attendance of all pupils as an integral part of the school's ethos and commitment to learning
- Set high expectations for every pupil, communicating these expectations clearly to parents and pupils
- Regularly analyse attendance data to identify patterns in individual pupils, particular cohorts of pupils and whole school patterns to identify pupils or cohorts that need support with attendance
- Provide training for staff to complete admission and attendance registers
- Have effective day to day follow up procedures to follow up absence on the first day that it occurs
- Contact parents if the absence is considered unduly prolonged for the reasons provided by parents
- Contact parents where it is suspected that absence is due to a reason other than that given
- Support parents who are finding it difficult to ensure that their child attends regularly.
- Sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and recognise the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children and families who might be facing difficulties rather than reaching immediately for a punitive approach.
- Work with the local authority Education Welfare Officer to identify patterns of absence and agree actions
- Regularly inform parents when attendance falls below acceptable levels
- Work with families to secure improvements in attendance and punctuality including referral to other services where necessary
- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through the Virtual School, setting aspirational targets for attendance
- Will make use of the full range of legal interventions to secure good attendance supported by the Local Authority which include parenting contracts, Education Supervision Orders, Attendance prosecution, Parenting Orders, Fixed Penalty Orders.
- Recognise that significant medical or other issues may impact on the attendance of a child but as long as these are shared with the school and are exceptional, such absences will be dealt with on a case by case basis by the Head Teacher

Parents

Parents have a duty to ensure that their child receives the education that they are legally entitled to. They should;

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly
- Make sure that their child is punctual
- Ask the school for help if their child or they are experiencing difficulties
- Endeavour to make medical and dental appointments outside school hours. If this is not possible, the school should be informed in advance of the appointment and the child should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment
- Notify the school on the first day that their child cannot attend due to illness and let the school know their expected date of return
- Plan family holidays around school breaks
- Complete a 'Leave of Absence request' form if they wish to take their child out of school. This should be completed a minimum of 2 weeks before the absence requested or the absence will not be authorised. Any supporting evidence for the application must be provided with the application. Any information provided after this time will not be considered. The Head Teacher will only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.
- Support school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education forming a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from school and home
- Talk to their child about school and take an interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have high aspirations
- Not keep children off school to go shopping, help at home or look after other members of the family
- Work with the school, Local Authority and/or other outside agencies to improve attendance where this falls below acceptable standards or is persistent.

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday until the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education act 1996, the Local Authority has statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. This responsibility is undertaken by Education Welfare. Schools are expected to take an attendance register twice a day at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

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

Categorising absences

Where pupils are recorded as being absent the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised

Absences can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation or evidence for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents/Carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. Where possible, this should be followed up in a written note or email from the parent/carer.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases, a phone call from a parent informing the child is ill will be acceptable. Where there are repeated absences due to reported illnesses parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence in the form of appointment cards, prescriptions etc.

Medical / Dental appointments: Where possible, these should be made outside school hours. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day.

Other authorised circumstances: This applies where there is a cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, eg family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from school is counted as authorised absence. The school will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Leave of absence during Term time: Amendments to the 2006 pupil regulations remove references to family holiday, extended leave and the statutory threshold of ten school days (authorised at the discretion of the Head Teacher).

The amendments make clear that:

‘Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted’.

Leave of absence during term time is entirely at the discretion of the Head Teacher and is not a parental right. It is at the Head Teacher's discretion to request the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice.

All decisions in relation to whether leave of absence is granted (authorised) or not (unauthorised) should be applied equitably and consistently.

Application process

- Parent/carer requesting leave of absence during term time should make the application in writing at least 2 weeks in advance with any necessary supporting documentation presented at the time. Forms are available on request from the school office
- School may invite the parent/carer in to discuss the reason for the application and the impact that absence may have on the child's education
- The school will reply to all applications and will be signed and dated by the Head Teacher/Acting Head
- If leave is not granted, the reason for not authorising a request will be clearly stated explaining why exceptional circumstances have not been met and the possible consequences of disregarding the refusal to grant absence, i.e. a request to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice. All replies should be signed and dated by the Head/Acting Head
- If leave is granted, the length of authorised absence will be clearly stated including the date the child is expected to return to school including possible consequences if the child fails to return on that date. All replies will be signed and dated by the Head/Acting Head
- If a parent/carer remove their child from school without requesting leave of absence or without authorisation from the Head Teacher AND the Head Teacher wish the local Authority to issue a penalty notice; the parent will be informed in writing that a request to the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice is being made.

NB. A minimum absence of 10 sessions (5 school days) which are unauthorised must be recorded against the pupil's name within a 6-12 week period. This guidance is in accordance with the Local Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices which was reviewed and revised in June 2017.

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents/carers has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) regulations 2006. This means the child will lose their school place.

Religious Observance:

Morpeth First School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British schools and recognises that some religious observances may fall outside the school holiday period or weekends and this may necessitate a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for parents/carers to request their children not attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent/carer's religious body.

Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to the school, if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absences will be categorised as unauthorised.

Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller Children in common with all other children is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act (1994), section 86, states that a Traveller Parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. This does not mean that part-time education for Traveller Children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving a suitable education when not in school.

When in or around Northumberland, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. Morpeth First School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at Morpeth First School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance. Morpeth First School can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents/carers must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Morpeth First School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return. Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

Punctuality

The school day begins at 8.45am and finishes at 3.15pm. Registration is taken twice each day. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (L). Registers will close at 9am, 15 minutes after the start of the day and at 1.10pm, 10 minutes after the beginning of the afternoon

session. Pupils arriving after that time will need to be signed in at the office and an adequate reason provided. They will be marked down as 'late after registration' in the register (U) this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session. This will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, e.g. evidence of attendance at a medical appointment. If no adequate or justifiable reason for lateness is received for example the family woke up late, the absence will be regarded as unauthorised. The proportion of 'Late' marks will be monitored by the SLT.

Unauthorised absences

Absence will only be authorised in a small number of cases (see [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 as amended](#)).

Unauthorised absence is when a pupil's absence is not one of the types of absence listed as authorised in regulation 6(2) or where the reason for a pupil's absence has not been provided and cannot be established. This may be:

- Where the school has not granted a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away longer than the period of leave granted
- Where the leave of absence request is made less than 2 weeks from the start of the intended leave
- The parent did not apply for leave of absence in advance – schools cannot grant leave of absence retrospectively
- When no reason for absence is established or the school are not satisfied that the reason given is not an authorised absence
- When a pupil has arrived late after registration has closed and the school is not satisfied that the reason given is an authorised absence

Poor, Persistent and severe absence

Parents will be informed each half term if their child's attendance is poor, falling below 94% or is persistently late. If attendance continues to fall or punctuality fails to improve, parents will be invited in to discuss how they and the school can work together to improve this in a voluntary help plan.

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), the school and Local Authority are expected to work together where necessary to put additional targeted support in place to remove barriers to persistent attendance and to re-engage the pupils. A formal written agreement between parent and the school or Local Authority may be put into place to address irregular attendance. Although not legally

binding, it allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary help plan has not worked or is inappropriate.

Where a voluntary help plan or formal parenting contract has not been successful, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) can be used to secure formal legal intervention. Where safeguarding concerns exist, the school's designated safeguarding lead and Children's Social Care Services should discuss if an ESO would be a more suitable option than an s.17 (Children in need) or s.47 (Child Protection) plan. An ESO will be made through the Family or High Court by the Local Authority.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Fixed penalty notices can be served on parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered. They can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school and the absence constitutes an offence. Fixed penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences which will usually be the parent or parents with day to day responsibility for the pupil's attendance. Fixed penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action or where it is deemed that it would not be appropriate in the circumstances of the offence e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time. (For further information see NCC guide to non-school attendance).

Using Attendance Data

Morpeth First School are required to share daily attendance data with the Department for Education and the Local Authority. This may also be shared with other agencies such as Children's Services and school health if a pupil's attendance gives cause for concern in terms of health and safeguarding. It will be used to identify emerging patterns and trends and to inform whole school/partnership strategy.

Support Systems

School recognises that poor attendance is often a sign that there are more serious issues going on in a child's life this may be linked to problems at home or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse (See Operation Encompass information on the school website). This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and pupils.

Where parents/carers fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Morpeth First School will refer to Education Welfare and the use of legal sanctions will be considered such as:

Parenting Contracts

(Used in conjunction with Fast Track to Attendance) (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school, the parent/ carer and the Local Authority (EWO). It can also be extended to include the child depending on age. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions. Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Northumberland County Council's Protocol Legal Sanctions Prosecution.

Where intervention by school and the Education Welfare Officer fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide Education Welfare / Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 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 attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence. A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are; Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered in accordance with Northumberland County Council's Protocols A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £60 fine is paid within 22 days or £120 if paid within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Named staff responsible for monitoring attendance Data

Nadine Fielding (Head Teacher)

Sandra Bell (Deputy Head Teacher)

This policy was written in consultation with parents, Governors and staff

This policy was Ratified by the governing body July 2024

This policy will be reviewed in summer 2025 or earlier if legislation dictates.

