

Attendance and Absence Policy

March 2022

Next Review March 2024

INTRODUCTION

We want all the children at William Morris to succeed and to achieve their potential. For the children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly. Your child should be here on time every day our school is open, unless the reason for their absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how we will achieve this in partnership.

WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS SO IMPORTANT?

The impact that poor attendance has upon a child's achievement is irrefutable. Poor attendance habits in a child's early stage of education follow through into secondary school and employment. Children's absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of your child and other children in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law. This may result in prosecution. At William Morris, we use 97% as a measure of good attendance.

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, children and all members of school staff.

To help us make sure that this happens, we will:

- inform you if your child's attendance or punctuality falls below the acceptable level
- notify you about your child's attendance in his/her end of year report
- encourage good attendance with reward systems
- ensure our curriculum is engaging and children are supported in school

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ATTENDANCE

School registers are completed, by law, every morning and afternoon. Each half day that your child is absent from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. For this reason, we always need information about the cause of any absence, preferably in writing, so that we make the right decision.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a very good reason. These types of absence include: illness, emergency medical/dental appointments or family-related emergencies.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no agreement in advance of the absence has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Swindon Borough Council) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

These types of absence include:

- parents/carers keeping children away from school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark in the morning/afternoon register
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays

- day trips and holidays in term time
- excessive illness without medical evidence
- illnesses which do not require children to stay at home / common illnesses which aren't contagious

If your child is reluctant to attend school, it is always best to speak to us as soon as possible so that we can support your child. Covering up their absence or to giving in to pressure to excuse them from attending gives them the impression that attendance does not matter.

PARENTAL SUPPORT

You can support your child by:

- ensuring regular and early bed times
- following a routine
- preparing uniform the night before
- sharing a healthy breakfast
- reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- communicating openly and honestly with a member of our staff team
- being positive about school
- if necessary creating a star/reward chart that helps them to make good choices

SCHOOL REWARDS

We would like all children to surpass 95% as we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe that our children can be amongst the best in Swindon.

Recognition awards for attendance:

- Children with 100% attendance each term – will be entered into a raffle for a prize in assembly
- Children with significant improvement in their attendance will receive a certificate in assembly

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance falls below 90%.

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Missing 10% of the school year is the equivalent to missing at least half a day per week.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

Designated Safeguarding Leads will be informed of children at PA.

If a child has not been at school and no contact has been made with parents, then a home visit by the EWO/or headteacher may be carried out, particularly if there are any additional safeguarding concerns.

THRESHOLD FOR PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Children who have an attendance rate of less than 90% or children who have developed a pattern of persistent lateness - defined as 12 unauthorised absences due to lateness in any 6-week period – are classed as a persistent absentee.

Children classed as persistent absentees will be tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. The children and their families will be required to attend a meeting with a member of the senior leadership team as well as the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to devise an action plan to improve the child's attendance.

The plan may include: allocation of additional support through a mentor, individual incentive programmes, support given via walking bus, participation in group activities around raising attendance.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

If your child will be absent you must always:

- contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence to notify us of the reason for your child's absence
- contact us on each subsequent day of absence

If your child is absent we will:

- email or call you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- invite you to a meeting with the Head Teacher to discuss your situation if absences persist
- refer the matter to the EWO if attendance drops below 90%

REASONS FOR ABSCENCE

Illness

- Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide the reason for the absence and to give an update on each subsequent day of absence
- In the case of gastric illnesses, parents are asked to keep their child away from school until they have been clear of sickness/ diarrhoea for a full 48 hours
- If there are significant concerns about a child's attendance through persistent illness then the school reserves the right to request medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence.
- If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

Medical Appointments

Parents have been advised to book medical appointments outside of school hours where possible. If an appointment is unavoidable, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Other Absences

Other requests for absence from school will be considered on an individual basis and a decision will be made as to whether the absence can be authorised and which absence code is appropriate. A

request for absence form should be completed as explained above. Other absences which may be authorised, in cases where the school is notified in advance by the parent/ carer, include:

- Days for religious observance
- External examinations e.g. music
- Educational events e.g. swimming in a gala
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes
- Child performers
- Visiting a new school
- Significant family events such as a funeral of a close family member

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that leave has been granted before taking a child out of school.

EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE

Exceptional leave is a national term that is used for a request to authorise your child's absence from school in cases such as a holiday for an exceptional and unavoidable reason, to attend a wedding/funeral or visit a sick relative.

There is no entitlement for the school to agree your child's absence from school per academic year and the right for your child to be granted exceptional leave cannot be earned through good attendance. The 1996 Education Act, Section 444 states that parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly and punctually.

In an academic year, the terms are planned so that there are 190 teaching days in total. This leaves 13 weeks (Monday to Friday) and 52 weekends (Saturday to Sunday) where leave can be taken with no interruption to the teaching and learning for your child.

Exceptional leave is only granted in extenuating circumstance at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Where a leave request is not authorised the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the register; each day will record two sessions of absence. Schools keep strict records of requests for exceptional leave in term time across all year groups and log the dates and reasons for each request. Patterns of absence from previous years are carefully scrutinized. Requests for exceptional leave are retained by the school and transferred if a child moves school.

If you wish to apply for a period of exceptional leave you must do so in writing to the Head Teacher explaining the reasons for your request. You will be informed of the decision in due course.

Please note a holiday taken during term time will not be authorised.

Where the leave is unauthorised the letter will explain the implications if the leave is taken anyway with the possibility of the parent/carer being issued with a Penalty Notice (PN) by the Education Welfare Service.

Where leave is authorised, the Head Teacher will notify you in writing of the decision and will confirm the number of days which have been authorised.

Details of the child and parent/carer who take unauthorised exceptional leave can be notified to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice of £60 (rising to £120) per child per parent/carer. An attendance panel may also be convened. Repeated periods of unauthorised absences will result in summonses to Swindon Magistrates Court for prosecution, which may result in a criminal record.

THE EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER (EWO)

If a child has poor attendance, parents/carers are expected to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Team.

The EWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the EWO can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation can be found in the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A):

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Education Welfare Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they will miss valuable learning opportunities and experiences. They will miss the class welcome and vital information about the day. Children who arrive late also disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage further absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8:55am when the register is taken, and we expect your child to be in class by that time.

We have a soft start with gates opening at 8:40am. This means the children can come in in their own time, put coats and bags away and settle for an early bird activity.

Entry to the school after 8:55am will be through the main school office.

Each day, at 8:55am the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after 8:55am they will receive a late mark and minutes late recorded (L). If your child arrives after 9:25am they will receive an unauthorised absence mark (U), which equates to a half day's absence .

Remember: Good Punctuality Matters!

If a child misses 10 minutes per day they will miss out on the following learning:

50 minutes per week
300 minutes per month (3 hours 20 minutes)
650 minutes per term (10 hours 50 minutes)
1950 minutes per year (32 hours and 30 minutes)

Missed minutes = Missed Learning = Missed Opportunities

REGULATIONS

Parents / carers of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act (1996) to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full time basis; children reach statutory school age the term after their fifth birthday. Children are required to attend school for

190/365 days per year. (In very exceptional circumstances, a temporary part-time timetable can be agreed to meet a pupil's individual needs.)

Term dates are published in advance by the Local Authority and can be found on www.swindon.gov.uk. The school selects an additional 5 days for training, called Teacher Development Days. The school notifies families of term dates and the training days at the end of the preceding academic year. Regular reminders of term dates, TD days and the importance of regular attendance are given via regular school newsletters.

CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

In accordance with Keeping Children Safe In Education September 2021 we understand that children missing education may be at risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation, and we work to help prevent the risks of their going missing in the future. We follow procedures set out in the DfE Attendance Guidelines September 2020 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1039223/School_attendance_guidance_for_2021_to_2022_academic_year.pdf

and the schools responsibilities set out in the DfE Children Missing Education 2016. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

We fulfil our duty to inform the Local Authority of any pupil who has been admitted to another school and is going to be deleted from our admission register, who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent for a period of 10 school days or more. If a Looked After Child or a child subject to a Child Protection Plan goes missing, we will refer them to social services within 48 hours. We also consider making a referral for any children being withdrawn from school with the intent to be electively home educated where there are safeguarding concerns. We recognise that 'Child missing from education' and 'Child missing from home or care' have been added to the list of specific safeguarding issues schools must be vigilant about.

MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE

- Attendance data will be analysed termly (six times a year) to identify patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with: unusual patterns of absence, Monday and/or Friday absences, lateness, periods of extended absence, unauthorised absences, persistent absence.
- The circumstances of all children with attendance below 95% will be considered.
- Children with absence below 90% will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) as part of our on-going partnership working.
- Persistent Absence - Senior Staff will monitor children who are PA on a daily basis.

Attendance Monitoring 3 stage process:

- **Letter 1 below 95%** - end of term letter to make parents aware that their child's attendance is below expected. School will monitor attendance over the next half term.
- **Letter 2 below 92%** – end of term letter warning parent that their child's attendance is nearing Persistent Absence and offer support to help improve this. Medical evidence maybe requested for absences.
- **Letter 3 below 90%** – to invite parents to a meeting to discuss how to improve attendance. Meeting with minutes taken and actions agreed.
- 6 weeks given to see improvement. If no improvement, referral to EWO for further intervention.

Improvements will be rewarded with a certificate in assembly.

Throughout this process, school will look at additional support we can offer eg family support, school nurse, reward charts. Ensure parents understand the impact and possible consequence of further absence.

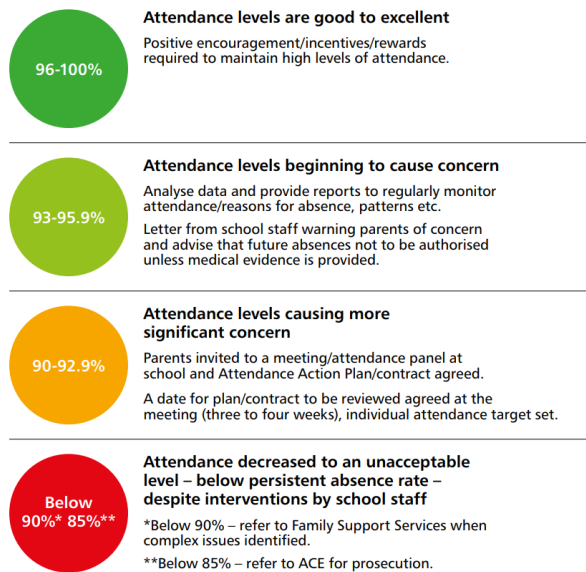
SUMMARY

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. We expect all members of William Morris School's community to be absolutely committed to working together to ensure that attendance is the best it can be.

Traffic light monitoring system

The 'traffic light system' can be used to track, monitor and plan actions to improve a pupil's attendance. The example provided suggests different actions that schools can take at different levels of attendance.

Example of a monitoring and planning system for improving school attendance



William Morris Flow Chart for Attendance Monitoring



Attendance Meeting Template

Date/time of meeting:	
Venue:	

Pupil name:	
Date of birth:	
Address:	
School:	

Present at meeting:	
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Action agreed	
<i>EXAMPLES OF ACTION AGREED:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pupil will arrive at school by 8.30 a.m. every day.</i> • <i>Parent will inform the school on the first day of a sickness absence and provide a note upon pupil's return.</i> • <i>Parent will provide medical evidence for every sickness absence pupil may incur.</i> • <i>Are any issues preventing pupil from attending regularly, school staff will be informed</i> 	

Attendance target:	95% +
Timescale for improvement:	

Date for review meeting:	
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I confirm that this Attendance Action Plan was agreed by all present.

Signed:

..... Parent/carer

..... Pupil

..... School Representative

..... Other Agency