



Merton Abbey Primary School Attendance & Punctuality policy

This policy will be reviewed in full on a two-yearly basis.

This policy was reviewed and updated in May 2025

Next review date: May 2027

This policy is reviewed by the Children, Families and Community Committee

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

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:

- [The Education Acts 1996 and 2002](#)
- [The Children Act 1989](#)
- [The Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Sentencing Act 2020](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)

- [The Education \(Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#) [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The Education \(Information about Individual Pupils\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Children and Young Persons Acts 1933 and 1963](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- 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 penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Michael Bradley and can be contacted via 020 8542 7129.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Diane Sutton and can be contacted via 020 8542 7129.

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis and submitting this information to the school office via SIMS.

3.6 School admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.55am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return)
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

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

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.55am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8.55am and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:30pm in Nursery; at 1:00pm in Reception and at 1:30pm for classes from Year 1 to Year 6.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer should notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.55am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school admin staff (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as 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 the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a print out from their child's records between the specific dates, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence (the School Office can advise what else may constitute appropriate medical evidence). We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Requests for leave of absence should be recorded on our relevant form which can be obtained from the school office.

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

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Please refer to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (8.55-9.25am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed (9.25am) will be marked as an **unauthorised absence**, using the appropriate code (U)

Persistent lateness: We believe that a pupil arriving late will not receive the best outcomes. Arriving late can be unsettling for the pupil and may cause classroom disruption. Parents who

bring children to school persistently late will be invited to attend a School Attendance meeting. See *Concern about punctuality* letters.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may make a home visit. If contact cannot be made by the end of the first day, the police may be called
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained - this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer following the EWS Missing Child Procedure

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels every year.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The School Attendance (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2024 state 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.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form. The form can be collected from the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. A response to the application for Leave of Absence in Term Time will be sent to the parent/carer within 7 days.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling - the headteacher will use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Religious observance - where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- 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
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence

- Wedding of an immediate family member
- Attendance at secondary school tests, open days and induction days.

5.2 Legal sanctions

Any leave of absence that is not authorised may result in a Penalty Notice being issued and/or prosecution under s4441 Education Act 1996, by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £160.

5.3 Suspension from school

Any pupil who has been suspended from school, and provision arranged, if the student does not attend the provision this shall be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may result in further action taken by the school, please see also the penalty notice section.

5.4 Part-time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. ([Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)).

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision.

There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised and code in the register as a C, which is an authorised absence.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

- An end of year summary is sent home at the end of the summer term.
- The headteacher will remind the children (in assemblies etc.) about the importance of good attendance and will also regularly remind parents in letters and newsletters.
- It is made clear that if children are genuinely unwell then they should not attend school but feeling a bit 'under the weather' or 'wanting a day at home' are not acceptable.
- A weekly Attendance trophy is awarded to the class with the highest attendance during the Friday celebration assembly.

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data daily, monthly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

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.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data monthly (from mid-October) to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.
- The headteacher and the Education Welfare Officer meet regularly to review the attendance of all pupils. The reasons for the absence are investigated.
- If a child's attendance has fallen below 96% and there is no clear, **valid** explanation for the low attendance (e.g. single illness) we will write a letter to the parents & carers explaining that attendance has fallen below the school's expected threshold of 96%, offer support and inform parents that attendance will be monitored more closely over the next month. See Attendance letters 1 & 2. This is recorded on the Attendance Follow up log.
- If the child's attendance does not improve & falls below 93%, then parents & carers will be written to to make them aware that their child's attendance has fallen below 93%. They will be alerted to the fact that if attendance falls below 90%, the Local Authority will be alerted. Parents/carers may be asked to meet with the headteacher to discuss the support that can be offered and what the next steps are in ensuring the attendance improves. An attendance contract meeting will be offered. See Attendance letter 3. Key questions will include:
 - *What are the barriers to good attendance?
 - *What actions will be put in place to improve attendance?
 - *Set a two week targetThis is recorded on the Attendance Follow up log.
- If this is unsuccessful in addressing attendance issues, we will make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer for additional support.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services (Early Help) to remove the barriers to attendance

8. Ten days' unauthorised absence and fifteen days attributed to illness

- We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing education (CME). The Education Welfare Officer will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Parents are asked to help us by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Sickness returns: providing the local authority with the full name and address of all pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness.

9. Children Missing from Education (CME)

If a pupil moves too far from Merton Abbey Primary to attend the school/moves out of the area/abroad the parents must complete a school leavers form, available from the school office. This will provide us with the pupil's new home address, potentially their new school name and contact details and contact information for their parents/carers. If no/insufficient detail is provided to the school, the pupil will be referred to the Local Authority as a Child Missing from Education and the Local Authority will need to make appropriate checks.

10. Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

The school attendance officer will work together with the local authority and other relevant professionals to ensure any child who is going to be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons either consecutively or cumulatively, will have access to relevant and appropriate education. This includes Public Exam provision and the education of siblings where the family have had to travel and stay away from the home for medical reasons. Please see Supporting Children with Medical Needs policy for further information.

11. Monitoring arrangements

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

12. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is attending any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J1	Interview	Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion
C1		Pupil has been granted a leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2		Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable.

E	Suspended or permanently excluded	Pupil has been suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness (not medical or dental)
K	Provision arranged by Local Authority	Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil attended a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
T	Parent travelling for work	Parent travelling for occupational purposes, and the pupil has attended for at least 200 sessions in preceding 12 months.
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised absence	Pupil is absent- not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	Pupil is absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Meaning	Type
The Y code: Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause, is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Not expected to attend
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Not expected to attend
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed. For example, this may be due to damage or teacher strikes.	Not expected to attend
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed. For example, extreme weather, damage, no hot water, or heating.	Not expected to attend
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention. For example, in police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention.	Not expected to attend
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law. contrary to or prohibited by any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease.	Not expected to attend
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. For example, an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not just the parent.	Not expected to attend

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

Appendix 2: Attendance contract

Name of Pupil			Class	
Parent's names				
Attendance this academic year			Attendance in the last four weeks	
AREAS OF CONCERN				
Please tick as appropriate	Y	N	Please tick as appropriate	N
Alleged bullying			Peer/staff relationships	
Medical			Academic	
Home issues			Behaviour/Attitude	
Transport			Community/others	
Other agency involvement			Please detail	
DETAIL OF AREAS OF CONCERN & ANY RELEVANT INFORMATION				
Early Help offered ? (If so, give details)				

AGREED ACTIONS			
Attendance Target start date:		Minimum of 90% over two weeks	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical evidence to authorise absences (appointment cards / hospital letters etc) 			
Review Date		School	
Parent's signature		Other agency	
Headteacher signature		Date	