



# Mereside

Church of England Primary Academy

Learn to Love, Love to Learn

## Attendance Policy 2025-2026



## CONTENTS

1. Aims .....	Page 2
2. Legislation and Guidance .....	
3. School Procedures	
4. Authorised and Unauthorised Attendance	
5. Strategies for Promoting Attendance	
6. Attendance Monitoring	
7. Roles and Responsibilities	
8. Links with other Policies	
9. Appendix 1- Attendance codes	
10. Appendix 2- Request for leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances	

# Policy on Attendance

## 1 Rationale and Aims

### 1.1 Rationale

As a Church of England primary academy whose ethos is rooted in Christian values we believe that our core purpose is to “...maximize the learning potential of every pupil within the love of God”. Good attendance is vital to this purpose. Research shows a high correlation between lower attendance and lower academic achievement. Late arrival and poor attendance can also impact on a child’s happiness at school with low attenders finding it harder to build relationships and develop their social skills. Promoting good attendance is also a vital tool within safeguarding acting as a protective factor for vulnerable pupils.

### Aims

We aim to ensure pupils feel happy and safe to come to school and that where attendance is an issue or pupils have been excluded to support the child and family to overcome any barriers to attendance.

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

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality to ensure children settle well at the start of each day.

(In our school regular attendance means attendance of at least 96.5%)

John 10:10 “... I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

## 2 Legislation and Guidance

2.1 This policy meets the requirements of “[Working together to improve school attendance](#)” and the guidance on responsibilities outlined in “[Summary table of responsibilities for 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 Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)

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

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

### **3 Academy 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:

1. Present
2. Attending an approved off-site educational activity
3. Absent
4. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

5. The original entry
6. The amended entry
7. The reason for the amendment
8. The date on which the amendment was made
9. The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

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

Pupils must arrive in school by the following times: Reception Pupils-8.50 am, Year 1 and 2 pupils 8.45am, KS2 pupils 8.45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken by 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.30pm for EYFS, 12.45 pm for KS1, 1.00pm for LKS2 and 1.15pm for UKS2. It will be kept open until 1.30pm.

Children arriving after 9.00am will be marked as Late before the register closes (L). Children arriving after 9.30am will be marked as Late after register closed (U). This counts as an unauthorised absence.

#### **3.2 Unplanned Absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6) either by phone or by emailing [attend@mereside.shropshire.sch.uk](mailto:attend@mereside.shropshire.sch.uk)

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 or if attendance is already a concern, the academy may ask parents 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 academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

### 3.3 **Medical or Dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. Please contact the school office at least one day before the appointment time.

Routine dental appointments and annual eye check appointments should be made for school holidays and will not generally be authorised in term time.

We encourage parents to make regular 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.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the academy can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### 3.4 **Lateness and Punctuality**

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

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Parents who arrive late with their child/ children must accompany their child/ children into the main building and provide a reason for lateness to the office staff.

**Children whose attendance is below 92% will be looked at under our persistent absence arrangements. For children who are regularly late (at least once a week) a letter will be sent to parents and if the lateness continues a meeting will be arranged.**

### 3.5 **Following up Absence**

The academy will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If the academy has not received a message regarding absence by 9.30am (close of registration) on the day of absence the academy will ring the first contact listed for the child. If this person cannot be contacted then the attendance officer will ring other listed contacts. If no contact can be made then the office will note this in the attendance notes and further action will be taken including, if necessary, contacting the EWO, ringing FPOC (First Point of Contact) for safeguarding, contacting the police and visiting the home address.

### 3.6 **Reporting to Parents**

Parents receive attendance information along with their child's annual report in the summer term.

## **4 Authorised and Unauthorised absence**

### **4.1 Granting Approval for Term time Absence**

Headteachers (called the Executive Principal and Head of School in our academy) may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Any application for leave must establish that there are "exceptional circumstances" and the Headteacher (The Executive Principal) must be satisfied that these are worthy of granting leave.

The academy 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:

1. Illness and certain medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
2. 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 academy will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
3. 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 Age Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the academy but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
4. Pupils working under license to perform (Child performers)
5. Attendance at a close relatives funeral (e.g. parent/ carer or grandparent).

**The academy considers each request on a case by case basis**

### **Unauthorised Absence**

As head teachers we are expected to uphold the law when parents request a planned absence during term time. Academies and schools are required to be proactive in discouraging absence. Pupils have 13 weeks holiday during the year and it is our belief that this provides ample opportunity to take holidays during the published holiday period.

Parents 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. Any absence has a detrimental impact on a child's education, for instance 90% attendance is the same as missing half a day of school every week. A child's absence also impacts on the education of other children in their class. Teachers try their utmost to fill in any gaps caused by non-attendance but this draws resources away from the other pupils impacting on their learning too.

**The school does not authorise absence for holidays in term time. These request will always be unauthorised and may be pursued to a Penalty Notice**

Children's attendance that falls below 92% are scrutinized by the school at its regular meetings with our EWO (Education Welfare Officer). If attendance remains low or continues to fall you will receive a phone call and then an initial letter alerting you to

concerns regarding attendance. If attendance still continues to be low a further letter will be issued and you will be invited to attend a “fast track” meeting to discuss ways to support you to meet your duty to ensure that your child attends school. **Ultimately, parents who fail to meet their legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually may be prosecuted.**

#### **Late arrival**

Late arrival, like absence of any other sort, affects children’s progress in learning. Research has shown a clear link between academic achievement and attendance/punctuality. Lateness also causes significant trauma for many children who are distressed by not arriving at school with their peers. The start of the day routines are designed to help children settle and be ready to learn. Formal lessons start at 8.50 am and therefore being later than the start of day means your child will miss the start or whole of the first lesson of the day. Missing these regularly can cause children to suffer emotional harm and can impact on their behaviour in school as well as impact their academic attainment.

### **4.2 Legal Sanctions**

Schools and academies can issue a fixed penalty notice to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher (The Executive Principal), following the guidance of the local authority’s code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

1. A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
2. One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
3. Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

N.B. No money from fines comes to schools. The academy does not benefit financially from the fines but does see it as strong deterrent to unauthorised absence.

The Local Authority also has legal powers when all other avenues of support for families fail to move to prosecute families.

## **5 Promoting Good Attendance**

5.1 The academy provides a range of support for pupils’ well-being and to promote good mental and physical health. These include:

- Providing a dedicated attendance and family support officer who works in close partnership with the Head of School and Assistant Principal to promote good attendance
- Signposting parents to services such as BEAM and “Understanding your Child” courses

- Supporting families to access Early Help services through completion of a family “Webstar” and Early Help meetings
- Referring families to the School nursing service
- Providing pastoral support within school
- Accessing counselling services for pupils
- Ensuring the academy’s Behaviour and Regulation Policy is adhered to and provides for a safe environment for all pupils that helps them develop the resilience they need for learning and life
- Ensuring the academy’s policy on supporting pupils with medical needs supports families and pupils enabling regular attendance
- Ensuring the academy’s intimate care Policy supports families and pupils to enable regular attendance for all
- Ensuring the academy’s PSHE programme supports all pupils to develop the skills they need to enjoy attending and be ready for learning everyday
- Assisting families with accessing transport where necessary

### **Rewarding Good Attendance**

The academy also promotes good attendance through recognizing this in its rewards system. The class with the highest attendance each week is celebrated in Friday celebration worship, mentioned on the newsletter, has the attendance trophy to display in their class for a week, is awarded 5 marbles toward their 100 total and gets entered in a termly prize draw to win £20 for their class to use as the class chooses.

We do not issue individual “100%” attendance awards as we feel these can discriminate against those pupils with medical conditions.

- 5.2 If you have concerns about your child’s attendance please phone the office or email to [attend@mereside.shropshire.sch.uk](mailto:attend@mereside.shropshire.sch.uk) to arrange to speak to the academy’s attendance and family support officer or to a member of the Senior Leadership team.

## **6 Attendance Monitoring**

- 6.1 The Educational Welfare Officer, Head of School and attendance and family support officer monitor pupil absence on a monthly basis. The Executive Principal also regularly meets with the Head of School to analyse patterns of attendance and plan/ review actions taken to address any concerns. The Attendance officer, Head of school and assistant principal meet fortnightly to review the attendance of all pupils who are persistent absentees and plan further action ( ECM meeting)

Parents are expected to call or email the academy in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2). Parents should contact the academy on each subsequent day of absence as well.

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. The school will include any child with attendance of less than 92% in its monitoring and will involve the Educational Welfare Officer for pupils whose absence does not show an upward trend after a month of monitoring.

The academy also includes those pupils in its attendance measures who are regularly (at least once a week) late before register closes (after 9.00am). If you are late in bringing your child to school you must come into main reception area with them (whatever their

age), provide a reason for lateness and ensure they have been registered with the office and gone through the internal doors before leaving.

Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with the LAC (Local Academy Committee)

Within the academy we store attendance data within our Schools Information System (SIMS). This data is used to produce the annual report for parents and is used to monitor and analyse attendance of individuals on a monthly basis. We also use reports generated within our schools data system "DcPro". This analysis helps identify any concerns and to evidence the efficacy of actions taken. Included in this information are notes about reasons given for absence. This information is stored securely within the electronic system.

## 7 Roles and Responsibilities

DfE guidance "Working together to Improve School Attendance (May 2022) states:

"Improving attendance is everyone's business"

### 7.1 The **Executive Principal supported by the Head of School** will ensure that:

- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Each child's attendance record will be reported to parents as part of their child's annual report
- Parents or carers are contacted when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised
- Pupils attendance and lateness are monitored regularly
- School attendance statistics are reported to the DfE
- The school's Educational Welfare Officer is provided with registers of attendance and will support the school in following up long-term absences, frequent absentees and lateness
- Pupils absent for long periods because of ill-health receive appropriate learning support
- In the case of poor attendance where there is no explanation for the absence the school will follow the LAs procedures for, 'fixed penalty notices for poor school attendance' in conjunction with the allocated Educational Welfare Officer
- If high levels of absence continue a request may be made to the Education Welfare Officer begin procedures for "fast track to prosecution"

The Assistant Principal has specific responsibility for working with the Executive Principal, Head of School, Attendance and family support officer and SENco to promote good attendance for vulnerable pupils.

## 7.2 **Class teachers**

**Class teachers play a vital role in promoting good attendance by ensuring that needs of every child in their class are being met (Teacher's standard 5) ; that their classroom is a "safe and stimulating environment rooted in mutual respect" (Teacher's standards 1 and 7)**

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

Attendance must be recorded within SIMs in the morning and afternoon and the register saved and closed by 9.00am

## 7.3 **Attendance officer and family worker**

- Check registers daily in SIMs before closing
- Ensure coding is accurately used and any notes are recorded in SIMs register
- Maintain the attendance/ appointment diary
- Print off copies of class registers by 9:30 and 1:30 to be used to check pupil numbers in the event of an evacuation of the school.
- Keep a blank registration form available for each class in the event of the school ICT system failing so that registers can still be taken and maintained.
- Ring the parent/guardian of any child who is not in school who have not already made contact with the school on the first morning of absence to ask the reason for their child's absence
- Inform teachers of the reason for a child's absence if necessary
- Highlight poor attendance figures to the head teacher and teachers
- 

## 7.4 **Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends every day the academy is open and are expected to:**

- Ensure their child/ children attend school everyday
- Ensure their child arrives on time each day
- Make routine medical/ dental appointments etc, out of school hours, wherever possible
- Inform the school on the first day of non-attendance due to illness by 9.00am
- Complete an 'absence from school in exceptional circumstances form' (see appendix) if requesting authorization for their child to be absent for exceptional reason (see permissible circumstances) and return it to the office at least two weeks in advance of the absence.

## **8 Monitoring and Review**

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Executive Principal. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Local Academy Committee.

## **9 Links to other Policies**

- 9.1 This policy links to the following Policies:  
Safeguarding Policy  
Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy  
SEND policy  
Behaviour and Regulation Policy

**10 Appendix 1**

Attendance Codes – Taken from the DfE Working together to

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

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

Policy

<p><b>Y</b></p>	<p>Enforced closure/ absence</p>	<p>School site closed due to unavoidable cause e.g. no power                      National or local emergency that means no transport is available or site must be closed                      Transport provided by LA is not available and child cannot walk safely due to age and/or distance                      Child in custody</p>
<p><b>X</b></p>	<p>For non- attendance by child not of compulsory school age</p>	<p>e.g. attending school time</p>
<p><b>Z</b></p>	<p>Prospective pupil not on register</p>	<p>Designed to aid administration of new entrants by allowing new registers to be set up in advance</p>
<p><b>#</b></p>	<p>Planned whole school closure</p>	<p>Days between terms, half terms, staggered inductions, polling station use etc</p>

Please see guidance for exact wording on usage.