



# Whole School Attendance Policy

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# Moat Farm Infant and Nursery School

## ATTENDANCE POLICY AND GUIDELINES

### **1. Introduction**

Regular school attendance for all children is essential to ensure continuity and progression in their education and for children to achieve their full potential at Moat Farm Infant School. Children with poor attendance tend to do less well compared to their peers with good attendance at school.

Moat Farm Infant School (hereafter, referred to as 'School') believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent children who are able to achieve their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Our school values all children, and we aim to provide a welcoming, nurturing and caring environment where children want to be and are keen to do well. It is school's responsibility to monitor and actively pursue the goal of excellent attendance. The law states all parents are legally responsible for ensuring that their children attend the school their child is registered at regularly and arrive on time. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. We recognise that attendance is everybody's business thus is a matter for the whole school community.

The Government's recommendation is for children to attend for at least 96% of the school year. This policy applies to **all children** at Moat Farm Infant and Nursery School; however, we do recognise that some children will be below the statutory school age of 5 years. We at Moat Farm Infant and Nursery school expect excellent attendance and believe it should be promoted from the very start of a child's schooling.

At Moat Farm Infant School, we are continuously working towards the goal of a minimum of 96% attendance for all children. Attendance below 90% is classed as Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and is a cause for concern.

The school times for Reception and Key Stage one are 8.50am – 3.10pm. School doors open early at 8.30am in the morning and are closed at 8:50am. Registers are taken at 8.50am and registers close at 9.20am.

This policy has been reviewed in line with updated guidance from the DFE for schools:

- [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- [Resources for families | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

## **2. Registration**

The Education (Child Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register **twice** a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again at the start of the afternoon session. On each occasion school should record whether ever child is:

- Present
- Absent

Electronic Registers (on SIMs) are marked in class at the start of the morning (8.50am) and afternoon (12.20pm/1pm /1.30pm) sessions and are closed morning at 9:20 am and afternoon at 1.30pm. Teachers will mark children as either:

∧ **Present** – child in school am & pm  
N **Absent**

The admin and attendance team will then update the registers with the coding dependent on the reason given to school for the child's absence.

### **Register Codings**

If a child is absent the following codes must be used to record the reason for the absence. These codes must be applied consistently throughout the school.

**I** **Illness** – parent has informed school that the child is ill. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences for illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription or doctor's note. School may record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied by the reason for the absence or until medical evidence has been seen as requested, and advise parents of this.

**C** **Other authorised circumstances** – This relates to occasions where the cause for absence is due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package. Parents may be asked to complete a leave of absence form so school can consider the specific facts and circumstances of the absence.

**O** **Unauthorised circumstances** – This code is used when no information has been received from parents or the reason provided by parents is not accepted as a justifiable reason for absence from school eg child/family members' birthday, shopping trip, haircut, closure of sibling's school for INSET day, couldn't get up, illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school.

**L** **Late before register closed** – child arrives late but before 9.20am

**U** **Late after register closed** – registers close at 9.20am and 1.30pm. Any child *arriving after these times* will be recorded an unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory reason is given for the late arrival eg medical appointment.

**M Medical/dental appointments**– Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day.

**E Excluded** – child has been excluded from school – you will be informed by the head teacher.

**V Educational visit** – e.g. trips, residential visits

**H Authorised holiday** – The appropriate form has been completed and absence has been authorised by Head Teacher (evidence of exceptional circumstances has been supplied).

**G Unauthorised holiday** – The child is on a family holiday; the appropriate form has been completed but the leave is not authorised by the Head Teacher.

**R Religious observance** – A special leave of absence on the day set apart exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.

**Y Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances** – The school site or part of it is closed due to adverse weather conditions or an unavoidable cause.

**# planned whole school or partial school closure** – teacher training days and school holidays or school used as polling station.

Please note that any absence (authorised or unauthorised) goes against a child's attendance percentage. Any concerns about a child's attendance or punctuality must be reported to the Attendance Lead, Mrs Davis. Individual attendance figures will be reviewed regularly. Parents will be informed if their child's attendance falls below 90% and it will then be monitored more closely. School will work with families to remove attendance barriers and seek support for improving attendance.

### **3. Categorising Absence**

Registers are taken twice a day in school, and every half day absent has to be recorded by school as authorised or unauthorised. Where children are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the child's absence has been received.

It is the **parent's responsibility** to inform school of the reason for a child's absence from school. The absence is authorised only when the school is satisfied with the explanation and it is a valid reason for absence. School may conduct a home visit if there are concerns regarding the reason for the absence. Parents should advise the school by telephone, before 9.30am, on each day of their child's absence and provide the school with an expected date of return.

The parent should contact the school by: -

- Telephone by 9.30 am, (this is recorded and entered onto the system by Office Staff)
- Letter/note to the office
- Email to Mrs Davis – [Jayne.davis@mfi.school](mailto:Jayne.davis@mfi.school)

Once the reason for the absence has been reviewed, the appropriate coding, will be entered on the register. It is expected that all reasonable attempts will be made to

discover the reason for any absence. It is important to note that any absence, whether authorised or unauthorised, will count against a child's overall percentage.

We also remind parents to make routine appointments (dentist, optician etc) outside the school day. Where this is not possible, children should attend school for part of the day and only be missing from school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. Parents will be asked to show the appointment card or letter to school in order for the absence to be recorded as M – medical appointment

#### **4. Unauthorised Absence**

Where no explanation is given for a child's absence or if the school does not accept the explanation given, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The class teacher, attendance lead, attendance officer and Head teacher have a duty to monitor each child's unauthorised absences.

If your child is absent and we have not had any contact from parents to report the absence, the school office will contact you on the first day of absence. If there is continuing absence without any explanation, school will conduct a home visit. This will be carried out by two members of staff. We will also call the other contacts who you have listed on your information form to ascertain the reason your child is absent from school.

#### **5. Monitoring Attendance**

It is important that the class teacher, attendance lead, attendance officer and the Head teacher monitor attendance and where necessary, involve Sandwell School's Attendance Support Service. The following monitoring arrangements will be followed:

- (i) To ensure every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- (ii) To encourage regular, punctual attendance by all children and to identify reasons and causes of persistent absence and/or lateness with individual children and their families and work to address these with a collaborative approach.
- (iii) Carry out First Day Calling (FDC) when a child is absent from school and no reason has been received from parents.
- (iv) If parents are unable to be contacted then school will try the other contacts provided to school.
- (v) A home visit will be undertaken if no reason for a child's absence has been given to school/or school are concerned about a child's attendance.
- (vi) Any member of staff concerned about a child's attendance should report their concerns to the attendance officer, who will take the appropriate action.
- (vii) The attendance team will regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils and families that require support to improve attendance
- (viii) All families will receive termly updates of their child's attendance for the year to date.
- (ix) Parents of children whose attendance falls below 90% will be sent a letter pointing out their child's attendance.
- (x) Parents of children whose attendance falls below 90% or whose attendance has not improved since previous monitoring will then be either contacted by

phone or invited by letter to discuss any attendance barriers and look at strategies for improvement.

- (xi) Where there are attendance concerns about a child, parents will be asked to provide medical evidence to support further illness absences or they will not be authorised.
- (xii) The School Attendance Support Service may become involved where there is irregular attendance which is a cause for concern.
- (xiii) In the school's newsletter school will share class and whole school attendance so parents are informed about the school's attendance record.
- (xiv) Good attendance will be encouraged in school by all staff.
- (xv) Marvellous Me badges will be sent half termly to all children with attendance between 96-100%.

## **6. Lateness**

Children are expected to arrive to school on time every day. We actively discourage lateness and the school's first step will be to speak to the parent of the child bringing them to school. All lateness must be recorded on the school's register with a reason for the lateness. The class doors are open from 8.30 until 8.50am and the register is completed at 8.50am, at the beginning of the first lesson in school.

Lateness will be monitored in the same way as attendance. If lateness persists then the parents will be invited to discuss this with a member of the Attendance Team, to look at what the barriers are and what support and advice can be put in place to improve punctuality.

If a child arrives late then they will have been initially marked absent. Parents should sign children in via the signing in screen located in the school office. The office staff will amend the register and order the child's lunch if necessary. This is very important especially in the case of an evacuation of the school building.

Lateness is detrimental to a child's positive start to the school day. It often means they have missed the morning greeting with their class, and it also is embarrassing for them as they walk into the classroom once lessons have started. This can reduce your child's self-esteem and self-confidence in school.

## **7. Family Holidays/Application for Non-Attendance in School**

Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. All requests for leave of absence should be completed on the Sandwell Leave of Absence form and this should be returned to school prior to booking and should be submitted to school at least 10 days before the absence is to begin. The Head Teacher will then decide on whether or not the leave of absence can be authorised, and they will only do so if there is an exceptional reason for a child to be absent from school during term time.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the child still goes on holiday, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school will refer the absence to the School Attendance Support Service at Sandwell Council, where a penalty notice (fine) may be issued to the parents.

The regulations do not allow school to give retrospective approval. Retrospective requests cannot be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised and will be referred to the School Attendance Support Service.

We do not authorise absences in school time for holidays, birthdays, shopping trips, seeing family etc.

In line with legislation, we will refer unauthorised leave of absence of 5 days or more to the School Attendance Support Service at Sandwell Council. Such a referral may lead to a penalty notice (fine) being issued for irregular school attendance.

Moat Farm Infant and Nursery School does not authorise holidays in term time. The Head Teacher only has the power to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances. You will be informed of the decision in writing prior to the proposed absence request.

## **8. EWO/Other Agencies**

Sandwell School Attendance Support Service work closely with the school in monitoring attendance and lateness. Children causing concern, due to their attendance, are discussed with the allocated Attendance Support Office from this service.

The school may refer children to the school nurse, social services, or any other agency, where it is deemed appropriate, to offer support and guidance regarding attendance issues. This is done in collaboration with the School Attendance Support Service and parents.

## **9. Parents**

Parents should feel supported and not threatened by the school's attendance policy. Parents should be aware that the attendance monitoring procedures are there to keep them informed so that appropriate action can be taken to improve children's attendance. Parents are welcome to discuss their attendance concerns with the class teacher; attendance lead, attendance officer or the head teacher whoever is the most appropriate person. The school's policy should be conveyed to the parents by the website, newsletters and by talking to them as and when appropriate.

### **Parents will:**

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time each day.
- Contact the school when their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with further phone calls on each day of absence.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences for example mild illnesses such as runny nose, blocked nose, head ache etc.
- Wherever possible make appointments for the dentists, opticians etc. outside of school hours.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties or refusing to attend.

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment.
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Encourage good routines at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before.
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family.
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time, where this is unavoidable, parents must complete a leave of absence request and send to school for the Head Teacher at least 10 days in advance of the holiday.

## **10. Children Missing in Education**

There are many reasons why a child may become missing in education. Although not exhaustive, the most common being:

- Childs at risk of harm/ neglect – for children who are in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made immediately to children's social care and the police, if appropriate;
  - Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families;
  - Children of Service Personnel;
  - Missing children and runaways;
  - Children who cease to attend school;
  - Children of new migrant families.
- Taken from CME 2016

**Schools' responsibility:** Schools must enter children on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the will attend the school. If a child fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. Schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their children, therefore must closely monitor child's attendance through their daily register. As part of this, it is important that children with poor attendance are referred to the local authority. (CME 2016)

## **11. Deletions from the register**

School will seek to make all reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child, jointly with the local authority. The local authority should be notified in advance of the deletion, when the school becomes aware that the deletion will be made. School must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a child's name from the school admission register under any of the grounds set out in the CME 2016 guidance.

When removing a child's name, the local authority must be notified of:

- a) The full name of the child;
- b) The full name and address of the parent with whom the child normally resides;



- c) At least one telephone number of the parent;
- d) The child's future address and destination school (if known);
- e) The reason(s) why the child name has been removed from the admission register.

Local authorities have a duty to put in place arrangements for identifying (as far as it is possible) those children of compulsory school age in their area who are not school registered or receiving education otherwise than at a school. Local authorities should trace those children and ensure that they receive full-time education.

Where a child has not returned to school for ten days following an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the child can be removed from the admission register when the school and local authority have jointly made reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child. Your child would then lose their place at Moat Farm Infant School.

### **Further links to guidance for schools**

[Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Resources for families | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

[School attendance | Sandwell Council](#)