

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2023/2024

School Commitment

At Montagu Primary Academy we are committed to the improvement and sustainability of excellent attendance, and therefore are proactive in tackling poor attendance. Our aim is to achieve and maintain a whole school target of at least 97% and to have minimal levels of persistent absence. The school will work in partnership with parents and extended services to improve attendance and therefore raising achievement for all our children.

Aims and Objectives

- To achieve and maintain a target of 97% for whole school attendance.
- To continue to reduce persistent absence and remain at/under national levels.
- To ensure excellence and enjoyment for every child by providing a safe environment and a relevant curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all our pupils.
- To offer a range of extra-curricular activities that children really want to attend.
- To tackle poor attendance rigorously with a consistent and transparent approach so being firm and fair.
- To support families where attendance is poor by removing any barriers that may attribute to poor attendance.
- To raise aspirations and expectations for our children and their families so changing cultural attitudes in the long term.
- To safeguard all our children where there are safety concerns such as children missing in education by working positively with external agencies.

Partnership with Parents/Carers

As a school, pupil attendance is a high priority for us. As a result of this, we have a dedicated team of staff who focuses on maintaining excellent attendance across the school, alongside the leadership team.

The Academy works hard to provide a relevant and enjoyable curriculum including extra-curricular activities. Despite this, children's attendance is usually dictated by their parents/carers. Therefore, our work with parents/carers is crucial in achieving outstanding attendance for all pupils. The school sends out regular information and newsletters about attendance. This includes information on holidays in term time and Fixed Penalty Notices. Where there are concerns about a child's attendance, parents/carers are involved from the very beginning in working to improve the situation. The school uses positive attendance strategies that are constantly reviewed.

First Day Absence/Home Visits

Parents/carers are asked to contact school by 9:00am if their child is not in school that day.

If a phone call has not been received by 9am, the Attendance Team will ring home and all available contacts. If they are unable to speak to a parent/carers/contact or get a satisfactory reason for the absence, they will make an unannounced home visit without delay to ensure the child is safe.

Home visits will also be made where there are general safeguarding concerns, queries about a persistently absent child or just to confirm that a child is too unwell to attend. The Police and/or Children's Social Care will be contacted to carry out a Welfare Visit if school have a safeguarding concern.

The school has the right to not authorise an absence if the reason given is not valid.

If a child is absent for more than two days, we will usually conduct a home visit on the third day to offer support to the family. We would seek support from other agencies, where we were still unable to contact families, or we were unable to see the child. Where we have immediate concerns, we may conduct a home visit on the first day of absence and we may involve other services at an earlier stage.

Unauthorised absence

Children should be brought to school unless they are seriously unwell. Note, if children have a pattern of short illnesses, it is our right to list the illness as unauthorised, as unless children are seriously unwell, they should be in school. Frequent, short-term illnesses can lead to significant periods of absence, and this has a serious impact on children's well-being, attainment and life chances. For minor illnesses that require medication, we can administer medication for you at school. Please see the office regards the appropriate form to fill out. This is important so learning is not missed unnecessarily.

Persistent Absence

Children who attend school for less than 90% of the time are known nationally as persistently absent pupils. Where a child becomes persistently absent (90% or below) then we can issue proceedings to support an improvement in attendance. This can include meetings and supportive strategies such as children attending breakfast club, or we can issue warning letters and fines.

If we feel that a child is at risk of becoming persistently absent, then the school will implement supportive strategies such as meetings to support families so they do not become persistently absent. We will implement these strategies when a child falls below 96% attendance.

Holidays in Term Time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Montagu academy does not authorise any holiday in term time, for any reason or length of time, unless it falls within the 'exceptional circumstances' criteria. The school enforces the Fixed Penalty Notice system following guidance from Doncaster Local Authority.

As of 1st September 2013, the rate per child is £60 if paid within 21 days and rising to £120 per child is paid between 22 and 28 days. If the penalty notice is not paid, parents may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each parent may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £2,500 plus costs.

There are 190 school days (380 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are 13 weeks of school holidays per year. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period of school holidays.

Process for requesting a planned absence

If a child has a planned absence, parents/carers must complete the planned absence form (Appendix A). The Head will consider whether the absence falls under exceptional circumstances or not before authorising the absence.

If no planned absence form is completed, the absence will automatically be unauthorised.

Religious Observance

The school may allow 1 day of authorised absence for religious observance per occasion. This is at the Head's discretion.

Dentist and Medical Appointments

Parents are asked not to take children out of school for dental and medical appointments, except for emergency or consultant appointments. If children are taken out for these urgent appointments the main office will need to see a letter or an appointment card. The office team will contact a member of senior leadership team (SLT) immediately if a parent asks to take their children out of school for non-urgent appointments. Non-urgent appointments made in school time will be unauthorised.

Children should not be taken out of school due to appointments for parents. If you are struggling to collect or drop children off at the normal times due to a personal appointment, school may be able to support the children to stay in school, with a later collection time. Please note that children's attendance will be marked as unauthorised in these circumstances.

Lateness

Arriving to school on time is an important life skill that all the children must adhere to. Being late means missing large, important chunks of their learning and can result in children not making the progress with their work that they deserve.

- The academy doors open at 8:30am. The registers close at 8:50am. After this time, children will be marked at late. (An L code).
- If children arrive after 9:30am, their absence will be unauthorised for the morning session and a U code will be given.
- U codes/unauthorised absences will be included within the prosecution process and will result in a fine once enough have accumulated.

The Fine and Prosecution Process

The Attendance Team will log instances of absence and lateness and discuss with the Head. Where issues persist, the following will be initiated:

- Stage 1: Verbal communication with parents outlining concerns and followed by a letter confirming attendance percentage with a timeline to improve – 'no further absence's authorised' may also be implemented at this stage, dependent on circumstances.
- Stage 2: Parents invited to a meeting in school to identify support needed and set targets to improve.
- Stage 3: If no improvement an Education Penalty Notice letter is issued. If further absence or lateness (U - late after 9:30am) during this period, a referral to the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service (APWS) will be made.
- Stage 4: If no improvement following APWS involvement, a PACE Interview (Police and Criminal Evidence Interview) will take place with the Local Authority.

Partnership with Others

To safeguard all pupils and their families the school will be proactive in liaising openly and professionally with all external agencies with the aim of protecting a child and their family and improving attendance outcomes. These agencies include Admission Team, Education Social Work Service, Children's Social Care, Police Service, Special Educational Needs team and the School Nursing Team.

Children Missing from Education

The school follows guidance from the DfE regarding Children Missing Education. Where children on roll do not arrive, and the school has made enquiries through phone calls and home visits, we will refer the case to the CME Team. The CME team will advise school when it is safe to take a child off roll.

Confidentiality

As in all aspects of school data and pupil information the school's Confidentiality Policy is adhered to.

Pupil Information

Montagu Primary Academy will aim to keep up to date and accurate information to keep children safe and provide appropriate care for them. The school requires accurate and up to date information regarding:

- Names and contact details of persons with whom the child normally lives.
- Names and addresses of all persons with parental responsibility.
- Emergency contact details.
- Details of any persons authorised to collect the child from school.
- Any relevant court orders in place, including those which affect any person's access to the child.
- A child who is or has been on a Child Protection Plan/Family Support Plan.
- Name and contact details of GP.
- Any other factors which may impact on the safety and welfare of the child.

Children not collected

The following procedure is followed when children are not collected by an appropriate adult at the end of the school day or extra-curricular activity.

- If not collected at 3.15pm children are kept safe with their Class Teacher/Learning Support Assistant until 3.30pm.
- At 3.30pm the children are safely escorted by one of the above adults to the main office and a qualified member of staff supervises the children until they are collected by an appropriate adult.
- The school office staff will be alerted and will contact parents to collect them as soon as possible. Other emergency contact numbers will be rung if parents/carers cannot be reached until an appropriate adult can collect them.
- If no contact is made, two members of staff will escort the child home, leave them with their parents or another appropriate adult and ask for up to date contact numbers.
- If there is no suitable person at home the staff will return to school with the child and Children's Social Care/Police will be contacted so that appropriate actions can be taken.
- The same procedures will be followed if a child is not collected after a school visit or extracurricular activity.
- Children who go home alone at the end of the school day must have written consent from a parent/carer. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to update this permission if they wish to do so via the school office.

Children Leaving School Premises without Permission

Every effort is made to ensure that the school site is as safe and secure as possible, and children are always supervised appropriately. If a child is reported missing, the following procedures will be followed.

- A thorough search of the school site and immediate locality is made by all available staff.
- Admin staff will ring the child's contact numbers so they are fully informed and to check whether the child is at home.
- If the child has not been located after these actions the police will be notified