

Attendance Policy

Mossley Hollins High School

Part of the Tames River Educational Trust

Document Created	Document Owner	Classification
		Confidential (only senior management or only Governors have access)
		Restricted (most employees have access)
		Internal (all employees have access)
June 2025	Emma Milburn Deputy Headteacher	Public Information (everyone has access)

Review cycle	Next Review Date	Approving Body
Annually	September 2026	Governing Body

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1. Introduction

It is vital that students attend the school every day, unless their absence is authorised by the school, in order to learn and progress. Any absence has a negative impact on a child's learning; regular absence has a significant impact on achievement and opportunity.

1.1. Whole School Approach

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some students find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, where students thrive and belong.

Our whole school approach is aimed at securing good attendance for all students, despite their barriers, which may include but are not exclusive to SEND, FSM, Pupil Premium, CLA status and those students and families who receive support from outside agencies such as Children's Social Care or Early Help. It also recognises the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, pastoral support - can have on improving student attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our students
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance
- Working with primary partnerships and other external agencies
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996,
- which states that the parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and students

This policy operates in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Home Visit Policy

- Alternative Provision Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Ideally, all students would have an attendance rate of 100%, though of course there are occasions when there are genuine reasons for absence (when a doctor deems a child to be too ill to attend school for example or when parents can reasonably determine that their child is too unwell to participate in learning).

If attendance is above 96% then students have a far greater chance of success. Students with attendance above 96% have a significantly greater likelihood of academic success. However, attendance of below 90% is classified as Persistent Absence, which may trigger intervention from the local authority and could result in legal action. Attendance below 50% is designated as Severe Absence and is highly likely to lead to prosecution.

2. Legal Framework

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for ensuring that a child, of compulsory school age, attends school regularly and punctually. A parent is described by the DfE as both natural parents, whether married or not, any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person, or any person who cares for a child or young person.

The Education Act 1996 also places a statutory responsibility on the Local Authority to ensure that parents secure education for children of school age and allows for the Authority to use legal enforcement as necessary.

The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 requires schools to take the attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. Register must be marked in accordance with DfE regulations using the designated attendance codes.

3. Daily Attendance Procedures

Our daily attendance procedures are led by the Attendance Leader who is supported by the Attendance team.

3.1. Reporting a student absence

Reporting

We expect that all parents/carers will encourage students to attend on time each day school is open. If a child is unable to attend school, for whatever reason, parents should contact the school by 8.30am to explain the reason for absence. Clearly, students should only be absent where unavoidable.

Contacting school

Parents are required to contact the school on each day of their child's absence to provide an explanation. Absences due to minor ailments will be authorised initially; however, if a student has experienced three or more broken weeks of absence (where at least one session has been missed in a week) or if there are historical concerns regarding attendance, parents will be informed that medical evidence will be required for all future absences to be authorised.

Parents will be contacted if we do not receive any notification of a student absence, as detailed in sections 3.3 and 3.4.

Students who are absent

Where a student is absent, the school will decide whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason given and any other circumstances as appropriate. Please be advised that it is the parents duty to contact the school each day of absence but note this does not mean the absence will be recorded as authorised.

The school recognises that some pupils may have medical conditions that affect their attendance. We are committed to ensuring these pupils receive appropriate support to access education and maintain their wellbeing.

Where a pupil's medical needs impact their ability to attend school regularly, the school will work in partnership with parents/carers, healthcare professionals, and the local authority to agree suitable arrangements. This may include:

- Adjustments to the timetable or learning environment.
- Provision for home or hospital education where necessary.
- Individual healthcare plans to manage ongoing medical needs.

For full details on how the school supports pupils with medical conditions, please refer to our **Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy**, available here.

3.2. The start of the day

Start time

School starts promptly at 8:45am, and students are expected to be in their lesson by this time. To ensure a smooth start, we recommend that students arrive at school no later than 8:40am.

If the attendance team receives a phone call or message regarding a student's absence, the appropriate attendance code will be entered into the register in line with DfE guidance.

Before contacting home about an unexplained absence, the attendance team will complete the following checks:

- Verify whether the student is present in any lesson or has signed in late.
- Check for any authorised absence notifications (e.g., medical appointments, prior parental communication).
- Confirm with staff on duty (e.g., pastoral team or reception) if the student has been seen on site.
- Review any safeguarding alerts or notes that may explain the absence.

Only after these checks are completed will the attendance team attempt to contact parents/carers to clarify the reason for absence.

Arriving late

Students arriving late, between 8.46am and 9am, enter the building through the 3rd floor entrance and will sign in with a member of the attendance team. A signed note will be in the student's planner to show to their classroom teacher. A 30-minute detention will be issued. The school will determine if a reason for lateness is valid, not the parent.

U or L marks

Registers close at 9.15am. Students arriving before 9.15am receive a late mark in the register and students arriving after 9.15am receive a “U” mark.

Any student in receipt of an “L” or “U” mark in the register receives a 30-minute detention that evening. Students would also only ever receive a U code after 9.15am (1 session absence mark)

Register checks

The Attendance Team check that all registers have been completed and saved during period 1 and promptly follow up on any that are missing.

3.3. Absent students

Notifying parents/carers

The Attendance Team check all registers at 9.15am. If a student is absent and we have received no notification from parents, a text home or push notification will be sent before 10.00am wherever possible.

If the Attendance Team or Head of Year can contact parents and ascertain the reason for absence, then the appropriate code is entered on the register. The entry in the register is flagged and initialled to indicate that we have spoken with parents/carers about the absence.

If there is no response to the text, then the attendance mark will remain as an “N” in the register. The entry will, however, be flagged to indicate that a text or push notification has been sent.

The **Attendance Team** or **Head of Year** will contact the parents/carers of all absent students each day. This will be done either:

- **During the morning calls** if no reason for absence has been provided, or
- **Later in the day** if further clarification is required.

If we are unable to establish a reason for absence, or if there are safeguarding concerns, the school may need to inform and work with additional agencies. These could include:

- **Social Workers** (where a child is known to social care or there are welfare concerns)
- **Youth Justice Workers** (where a student is involved with youth offending services)

- **The Police** (if a child's whereabouts cannot be confirmed and there is a potential risk to their safety)

All actions will be taken in line with statutory safeguarding guidance (*Keeping Children Safe in Education*) and local authority protocols.

Authorised absences

An authorised absence is when the school has accepted a valid reason for a student not attending. Examples include illness, medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside school hours, religious observance, and exceptional circumstances such as bereavement or family emergencies. Parents/carers must notify the school as soon as possible, providing any required evidence (e.g., appointment card or letter). The decision to authorise an absence rests with the school, in line with Department for Education guidance. Absences for holidays during term time will not be authorised except in very exceptional circumstances.

3.4. Follow up calls and home visits

Follow up calls

If there is no response to both text and phone calls by 10.45am, then the mark in the register will be changed to an O. If there has been no contact for three consecutive school days, or if there are any safeguarding concerns around a particular student, then a home visit will be made. The home visit will be made by the Attendance Team or Head of Year Team (Home visits may also be conducted by PCSO's The School's designated Policing Team or by a member of staff from an external organisation working with the family).

Home visits

Home visits may also be made to vulnerable students, persistently absent students, severely absent students or other students who we are concerned about, even if we have received a message or contacted parents/carers. This is at the discretion of the Attendance Manager, Attendance Team and Head of Year. Again, the home visit will be flagged on the register.

Home visits may be made to all students who are absent irrespective of whether there has been communication with home or not.

If all these procedures are followed correctly, all absence marks should be flagged and initialled, and annotated where appropriate, to indicate whether

contact has been made with parents/carers or not and whether a home visit has been made.

4. Monitoring, managing and encouraging good attendance

4.1. Monitoring and managing attendance

Monitoring

The Attendance Manager maintains an attendance spreadsheet detailing all those students with attendance concerns. Attendance data, absences and actions are recorded for each student. A student will remain on the spreadsheet until their attendance is no longer deemed a cause for concern. Similarly, a student will be added to the spreadsheet if their attendance drops. This will be discussed with Year Teams and SLT links each week.

Attendance meetings

The standing agenda for attendance meetings includes the following items:

- An overview of the attendance data for the year group and the school
- Students whose attendance is a cause for concern
- Persistently absent students (those whose attendance is below 90% regardless of the reason)

Severely absent students (those whose attendance is below 50% regardless of the reason)

- Other students who may be causing concern
- Other attendance issues/actions over the last week

The Attendance or Year Teams will contact parents, meet with students and initiate Interventions as appropriate, if there are concerns around attendance. Any conversations and interventions will be discussed at the weekly attendance meetings. This information is shared with Form Tutors, Year Teams and the SLT.

Formal proceedings

The use of any formal proceedings will be initiated and processed by the Attendance Manager. Formal proceedings may include:

- Attendance concern letters to parents and carers
- The use of Attendance Panels
- The use of Notice to Improve Letters, Penalty Notice Fines; and prosecution

Additional meetings are arranged with Form Mentors, and/or Heads of Year as necessary.

4.2. Encouraging good attendance

Opening times

The school is open to students from 8.15am for breakfast.

The school runs a number of Reward Schemes to encourage good attendance; these include raffles, reward passes such as skip the queue or a free lunch.

Rewards are offered to those with 100% attendance and those with improving attendance.

Attendance passports

The use of attendance passports is designed to encourage good and improved attendance. They also serve as a tool for facilitating regular conversations between form mentors and students, helping to foster positive relationships. Heads of Year will typically operate some form of reward or acknowledgement linked to the use of the attendance passport.

Sharing attendance issues

The attendance of students is shared with parents and carers, along with guidance and information on attendance and related issues.

Additional support to encourage or facilitate good attendance can also be provided for parents and students as detailed in section 5.

Notice to improve process

Where a student's attendance falls significantly below expectations and previous interventions have not led to improvement, the Local Authority may issue a Notice to Improve, which may result in a penalty notice being issued if attendance does not improve within the monitoring period.

5. Support for parents and students

The school understands that all students and families are unique and may have their own challenges and barriers to attendance to deal with. As such, support and advice on a range of issues is available through Heads of Year and the Attendance Manager. We are also able to signpost or refer parents/carers or families to external agencies who may be able to offer additional support. These may include:

- Antony Seddon Centre
- TOG MIND
- Early Help
- School Nursing Team
- Kooth
- Change Grow Live
- Talk Listen Change
- LGBT Foundation
- Children's Social care
- Family Hub
- Youth Services
- Young Carers
- Bridges
- Tameside Housing Advice

6. Missing in Education

The school has a duty of care for all our students, should we deem your child as missing in education in line with local guidance - The national definition of a child missing from education is:

“All children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time - usually agreed as 15 school days or more”

We will inform the Local Authority who will carry out checks with relevant agencies and make the ultimate decision as to whether the child remains on our roll.

For further information please refer to Tameside MBC's Children Missing from Education Guidance March 2023: Tameside Children Missing from Education Guidance

7. Formal proceedings

7.1. Communication with home

Form Mentors and Heads of Year will typically speak with students if they have concerns around a student's attendance, unless there are known and genuine reasons for absence. A phone call will be made to parents/carers to express concern, offer support where appropriate, and inform them that the child's attendance will be monitored in the coming weeks. Additionally, a Stage 1 letter will be sent to formally communicate these concerns.

7.2. Monitoring

If the Attendance Team or Head of Year Team continue to have concerns about a student's attendance they will be formally monitored on a weekly basis and parent/carers will be informed that their child's attendance is a concern and offering any necessary support. If there is no improvement, the school may need to consider issuing a notice to improve or pursue other legal action.

7.3. Failure to improve

Should attendance fail to improve, parents/carers will be invited to an Attendance Meeting with a member of the attendance team and/ or Head of Year to discuss concerns and develop an Attendance Improvement Plan. If a parent/carer does not attend the meeting, the plan will be formulated in their absence and minutes of this meeting will be sent to them. Attendance will continue to be monitored, and additional meetings will be arranged if further improvements are not made.

7.4. Unauthorised absences

If a student accrues 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks, the school may decide to issue a Penalty Notice.

A school week is defined as any week in which at least one school session takes place. These 10 sessions of unauthorised absence may consist of any combination of reasons, such as four sessions of term-time holiday and six sessions of arriving late after the register has closed, provided they occur within the 10-week period. The sessions may be consecutive (e.g., 10 sessions of holiday taken in a single week) or non-consecutive (e.g., six sessions of unauthorised absence in one week followed by one per week over the next four weeks).

Additionally, the 10-week period may span different school terms or school years. For example, two sessions of unauthorised absence in the summer term followed by an additional eight sessions in the autumn term would still meet the threshold for a Penalty Notice.

For further guidance, please refer to the DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (2024).

7.5. Attendance below 90%

If a child's attendance drops below 90% their attendance will be classed as a Persistent Absence (PA) as detailed in guidance from the DfE.

If absences are unauthorised and parents/carers are condoning absence from school and failing to work with us to bring about any sustained improvement, then parents/carers will be invited to attend a further Attendance Meeting. If attendance is significantly below the PA threshold of 90%, then we will initiate a case for prosecution.

Children with an attendance of 50% or below are considered severely absent and are at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). The Attendance Leader will initiate a case for prosecution if, having attended Attendance Meetings, parents/carers fail to support the Attendance Agreement put in place and there is no improvement in the child's attendance or when a parent/carer fails to engage with school despite support being offered.

7.6. Unauthorised holiday

If a persistent absence is due to an unauthorised holiday in term time, then parents/carers will be issued with a Penalty Fine, as detailed below, rather than initiating a case for prosecution.

8. Leave of absence in term time

8.1. Legislation

Following changes in legislation in 2013, parents are no longer entitled to take leave of absence during term time. Leave of absence during term time will only be granted under exceptional circumstances; this does not include family holidays or weddings.

8.2. Process

Requests for leave of absence in term time should be put in writing to the Headteacher by completing the absence request form which can be downloaded from the school website.

The Headteacher's decision is final and cannot be appealed. If parents take their children out of school without making a request, or if parents still take their child out of school after a request has been denied, the absence will be marked as unauthorised, and they will be issued with a Penalty Notice fine by Tameside MBC.

8.3. DfE guidance

In August 2024, the DfE updated its statutory guidance, "Working together to improve school attendance," to further emphasise the importance of regular attendance and outline the roles and responsibilities of parents, schools, and local authorities in maintaining high levels of attendance. In line with this guidance, the fine for school absences across the country will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days, this is paid directly to the Local Authority. This rate is in line with inflation and is the first increase since 2012.

9. Roles and responsibilities

9.1. The Governing body will:

Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures

- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it
- DfE Regions Group considers multi academy trusts' efforts on attendance as part of decision making. Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections

9.2. The Headteacher will:

- Set targets for whole school attendance, persistent and severe absence as well as vulnerable groups in agreement with the Governing Body
- Support this policy and ensure it is implemented consistently across the Academy
- Monitor attendance data on a daily, weekly and half termly basis
- Consider requests for leave of absence in term-time
- Sign off the appropriate documentation in the event of any legal proceedings

9.3. The Assistant Headteachers will:

- Work with and support the Attendance Manager in monitoring and managing attendance and in initiating our formal procedures
- Review and develop our Attendance Policy and procedures as appropriate
- Working with the Attendance Manager, provide attendance data and the appropriate reports as requested by SLT and Governing Body.

9.4. The Attendance Manager will:

- Ensure registers are completed accurately and on time and follow up, as appropriate, if there are concerns or issues
- Check register marks at the end of each day to ensure that there are no missing or unexplained (N) absence codes
- Carry out all those actions as detailed in section 3 of the policy on daily attendance procedures and carry out home visits

- Carry out all those actions as detailed in section 4 of the policy on monitoring and managing attendance
- Organise and administer the necessary meetings and documentation in line with our staged approach to attendance and any formal proceedings, including Notice to Improve letters, Penalty Notices and prosecutions, as appropriate
- Provide attendance data as requested for Heads of Year and SLT
- Monitor attendance data on a daily basis and meet with the Head of Years (weekly) to agree and review actions
- Promote excellent attendance in all Year Groups and provide opportunities for students to celebrate good attendance
- Monitor and manage attendance of students effectively as detailed in section 4 of this policy
- Attend Attendance Panel Meetings for students in all year groups
- Offer support and signposting to other services for parents who request it

9.5. Heads of Year will:

- Promote excellent attendance within their year group
- Working with the Attendance Manager, monitor attendance data on a weekly basis and agree and review actions
- Working with the Attendance Manager, conduct attendance visit for students in their year group
- Working with the Attendance Manager, attend attendance panel meetings for students in their year group
- Offer support and signposting to other services for parents who request it

9.6. Form Mentors will:

- Monitor attendance data and share this information with students
- Promote excellent attendance within their form group
- Discuss concerns about attendance and punctuality with individual students below 96% and encourage them to improve
- Contact parents regarding attendance concerns as directed by the Head of Year
- Pass any medical evidence or letters relating to attendance to the school Attendance Manager
Place students on Attendance Passports to encourage good attendance for key students as directed by the Attendance Manager.

9.7. Parents/Carers will:

Parents/Carers will support this policy and encourage their child to attend school regularly and punctually. In particular, we ask that Parents/Carers:

- Contact school on every day of their child's absence
- Provide medical evidence for any absence if requested
- Arrange medical appointments out of school time or, if this is not possible, collect students from school and/or drop them back off after the appointment rather than keep their child off for the whole session
- Do not book holidays in term time
- Put requests for leave of absence during term time, in writing, to the Headteacher
- Are aware of their legal responsibility regarding school attendance, and understand that the school will use legal sanctions such as Notice to Improve Letters, Penalty Notices and prosecution where necessary

9.8. Students will:

We expect students:

- To attend school regularly (this means each day school is open to students) and punctually
- Not to leave school during the school day without prior permission from a member of staff, and without signing out
- To discuss any barriers to attendance with their Head of Year or the Attendance Team

10. Monitoring and evaluation Summary

Whole school attendance data, and attendance data by year group and student group, is monitored on a daily and weekly basis. The attendance of identified students is also monitored on a daily basis. In addition, a termly report is prepared for SLT and the Governing Body by the Attendance manager.

The effectiveness of our policy and procedures are evaluated throughout the year, through discussions with the Attendance Team, Heads of Year and SLT and against our attendance data. The Policy is ratified on an annual basis by the Governing Body to ensure compliance with DFE guidance and best practice.

The Policy is formally reviewed by the Governing Body annually.