



## **Moat Farm Junior School Trust**

### **Attendance Policy 2022-2023**

Reviewed and updated September 2022.

These guidelines have been written in response to the  
DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (2022).

## Moat Farm Junior School

### Attendance Policy

## Expectations and Daily Procedures

### What is good attendance and why is it important to us?

At Moat Farm Junior School, we expect all of our pupils to attend school every day that they possibly can. Ensuring a pupil's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of all parents/carers. We believe good and regular attendance is when a pupil reaches at least 96% attendance. This means missing no more than 8 school days during an academic year.

Research findings show there is a strong correlation between good attendance and high achievement. We believe that good attendance levels maximise opportunities for each pupil to realise their full potential.

If a pupil has 90% attendance through their primary and secondary education; it means that they have missed the equivalent of a whole year off school.

100%	Excellent attendance	Full attendance and no days missed from school – the best chance of success
96%	Good attendance	8 days missed from school
95%	Below the expected level of attendance	9 days missed – less chance of success and makes it harder for your child to make progress
91%	Below the expected level of attendance and needs to improve	18 days missed
90%	Worrying and attendance needs to improve	18 days missed (persistent absence threshold). Your child will find it very hard to make progress.
85%	Poor attendance and must improve	28 days missed
80%	Poor attendance and must improve	38 days missed

We strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels valued and secure.

We believe in working in partnership with parents and carers, pupils and governors and strive for high expectations of all of our pupils, and that includes good attendance at school.

### What are our daily attendance routines?

#### Meet and Greet

We offer a flexible arrival time for pupils between 8.30am and 8.45am when the bell goes for the start of the school day. Members of staff are always available on each of the playgrounds to welcome pupils and their families. A breakfast club is also available at our school to support children's arrival at school.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. It is seriously detrimental to a child's learning and positive start to the school day. If your child arrives after 8.45am, they miss a short class registration period where useful information is given relating to the rest of the day and the vital introduction to an English or Maths lesson. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons for teachers and other pupils, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

Minutes late per day	Learning time lost in a year
5 minutes	3½ days
10 minutes	7 days
15 minutes	10 ½ days
20 minutes	14 days
30 minutes	21 days

## Registration procedures

At Moat Farm we take a register twice a day – once at the start of the morning at 8.45am and once at the start of the afternoon session.

The register is opened at 8.45am and closed at 9.15am. In exceptional circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, we may keep the register open for a longer period.

The start time of the afternoon session differs by year group due to lunch time arrangements.

It is the responsibility of the register marker, (class teacher or their cover), to record the pupil as present (/) or absent (N).

We keep our register electronically using the MIS system 'SIMS'.

The data is captured by calling out names from the class register. The information is then entered onto the system as the class teacher, or their cover calls out names.

At 9.15am the registers will be officially closed. In accordance with regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark, and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. Persistent late arrival is not acceptable and could mean parents/carers face the possibility of a legal sanction if the problem persists.

## Register check and follow up

The registers are returned electronically to the school office where absences are reviewed, and late arriving pupils are added to the register. The office staff will enter a pupil onto the system, using the appropriate code in relation to the reason for absence.

Where pupils arrive late to school, the appropriate code is entered on to the register identifying where a pupil has arrived after the register has closed.

Contact is then made with parents and carers regarding any unexplained absences.

## Types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required on a daily basis.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, or other unavoidable causes which have been agreed by the Head Teacher. We ask that routine dental, optical and medical appointments are made after school, at weekends or in school holidays, to avoid missed learning. Where a religious festival is being celebrated and falls within the school term, one day of leave will be authorised by the Head Teacher. If religious festivals fall during school holidays or weekends, pupils are expected to attend school both before and after the celebration and absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no agreement has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Absences which are not agreed by the Head Teacher
- Absences which have never been properly explained or when school do not receive a message for the absence.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after the close of register).
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Leave of absence that has not been agreed by the school (including term time holidays).
- Absences for which medical evidence has not been provided but has been requested by the school.

This list is not exhaustive, and the authorisation of absence is judged on circumstances at the time. We will always try to contact parents to inform you if your child's absence has not been authorised or if additional information is required regarding the absences.

## First day calling and home visits

If your child is absent, parents should:

Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and every day after this that your child is absent from school. This may be done via a telephone call to our number 0121 552 1215. A message can be left on the school's answerphone if a parent needs to make an early morning call before the start of the day.

If your child is absent, we will:

Record your child's absence on their class register.

Telephone you if we have not heard from you. This should not be necessary as it is the parent's responsibility to inform school regarding a pupil absence. It is important to keep the school updated of any changes to contact details and provide the school with a telephone number on which they can be contacted in case of emergency. (NB: if a parent does not supply this information and the school has concerns, they may contact Children's Social Care or the Police).

Enquire about the reason for absence and provide advice and suggestions.

Make contact to discuss your child's attendance if we are concerned about a child's absence.

Please note we monitor whole school attendance below 95% on a weekly basis, with a particular focus on pupils with less than 90% attendance.

If we have not been notified of a reason for absence and have been unable to contact a parent, we will telephone alternative contacts listed for the child and ask if they are able to help and support in contacting parents.

Home visits may be carried out at any point during a pupil's absence as an additional method of contacting families.

For safeguarding purposes, where required, contact may be made with other educational providers where siblings are attending, to assist in contacting families.

If a child is absent for 3 consecutive days and all attempts of making contact have failed, the school may contact the Police to discuss the matter, and request that a 'safe and well' visit be carried out.

Parents must be aware that if the school is not informed of where a child is in school time, the child may be referred to relevant agencies for safeguarding purposes. If a child is absent for 20 school days or more and cannot be located after diligent enquiries have been made, they will be removed from the school's roll and recorded as a 'missing child.' The child will then lose their school place at Moat Farm Junior School.

## Promotion and Celebration of Excellent Attendance

Our aim is for every pupil to achieve good attendance or better than this, because we know that good attendance is the key to your child reaching their full academic potential.

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The target level of attendance for our school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress and how your child's attendance compares with this.

We monitor whole school attendance and punctuality on a regular basis, to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives the school undertakes is provided in our newsletters and displays around schools.

We celebrate good attendance and punctuality at our weekly Congratulation Assemblies.

We celebrate good and improving attendance at every opportunity recognising the relationship this has with pupils' academic success.

### Incentives for attendance for 2022/2023 will include:

Weekly class rewards – treats for any class with 100% attendance.

Half termly rewards– a variety of treats will be awarded to the 'most improved' class for the half term. A class in both lower and upper school will be rewarded.

Individual termly attendance badges – bronze, silver and gold to all pupils who reach 100% attendance.

Termly badges for pupils who reach the school target of 96%.

Half termly rewards and special initiatives based upon data analysis, are set up throughout the year, where pupils, groups of pupils or classes are rewarded. This may include 5 minutes extra play, to a visit from the animal man, participating in an attendance breakfast and being in a prize draw to win family days out and vouchers.

## Data and Monitoring

### How we track and report the attendance of children and measure impact.

We monitor all absence thoroughly and closely track any student with attendance of 95% or below on a weekly basis. Any pupil that is on track to becoming a persistent absentee (90%) or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and parents will be informed of this.

All pupils with 95% attendance or below are monitored weekly; the school's Education Welfare Officer will make contact with parents where required and will support these students and their families to improve attendance. Pupils who have attendance of less than 95% are reviewed in a weekly meeting, which is attended by the Attendance team and is chaired by the Deputy Head Teacher. At this meeting, actions are agreed for each pupil.

We follow a fast-track approach to managing pupil absence through quick and early intervention.

We aim to work with families to tackle problems as soon as they become apparent. This may include telephone calls, letters home, invitations to attend school meetings, announced and unannounced home visits, group work and individual student mentoring. Impact of interventions is reviewed in meetings between the Education Welfare Officer and the Senior Leadership Team.

Patterns of attendance are analysed each half term and are benchmarked with the learning community and national trends. Intervention and support is identified from this set of data.

Attendance data is shared with parents and carers at every opportunity including Parents' Evenings, reports, text messages, letters and academic meetings.

Attendance data is shared with staff and pupils on a weekly basis where leaders celebrate and promote attendance within their year group.

We celebrate efforts relating to individual and class attendance/punctuality at the end of each half term.

Fortnightly meetings are held between the Education Welfare Officer and Senior Leadership Team member who has strategic management for the oversight of attendance.

The Education Welfare Officer provides termly reports for the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team, analysing patterns of absence, impact of support and future interventions.

Attendance data is reported to the Trust on a weekly basis and to governors half termly.

### Thresholds and Referrals

A pupil is classed as on track to being 'severely absent' (SA) when they have missed 50% or more of their time in school at any given time.

A pupil is on track to becoming a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling (i.e., has attendance below 90%) at any given time during the school year for whatever reason.

Absence at these levels is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Whilst it is rare for our pupils to have attendance levels below 50%, both SA and PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance and pastoral system, and we also combine this with academic mentoring (Parent Pledge) where necessary.

Parents are encouraged to contact school at an early stage to resolve any problems relating to attendance and punctuality. This usually has a successful conclusion.

Support from external agencies and the local authority will be sought where additional resources and expertise is required.

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution may be necessary. If there are ongoing concerns regarding a pupil's attendance, the school may refer a child's irregular attendance to the Attendance and Prosecution Service within the Local Authority. A variety of legal interventions are possible ranging from parenting contracts, Education Supervision Orders, penalty notice fines and legal action being instituted against parents in Magistrates Court.

### Leave of Absence and Holidays in Term Time

All requests for leave of absence should be requested by completing the school's leave of absence form, which is available from the school office. Any requests for leave should be made in writing to the Head teacher 4 weeks before the leave is required. If however, the leave request is due to an emergency, contact should still be made with the Head Teacher or Education Welfare Officer to discuss the leave request.

Please be aware, leave can only be authorised on the content of the request. A request for leave of absence form must be completed fully and must include details of all people who have care of the child. Incomplete requests will be declined and will not be considered, which will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. Parents will normally be informed of the decision in writing. All letters will be kept on file. If the child takes time off when leave has not been granted, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. All leave of absence needs to be requested and agreed before any firm bookings are made, this will allow time for the request to be considered and discussion to be held as required. Meetings with families are routinely held to discuss leave of absence requests to ensure the safeguarding of our children. Supporting information should also be provided with the request, to explain the circumstances and the need for leave to be taken in term time. Requests for leave of absence in term time for holidays, visiting relatives and weddings are not normally agreed by the Head Teacher. Where the school receives requests for extended leave of absence and where information has raised concerns that a child is at immediate risk of forced marriage or Female Genital Mutilation, a referral will be made to Sandwell Children's Social Care Trust and the Police.

If the reason for leave is due to an emergency, parents should contact the school without delay to discuss this with a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Education Welfare Officer.

### Term time holidays

If a parent chooses to take their child out of school for a holiday in term time, a leave of absence form must still be completed. Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's academic progress

as much as any other absence, and we expect parents to help us by not taking pupils away in school time.

We do not permit holidays in term time and will not authorise requests for leave of absence for this reason. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time, are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

Holidays should be taken in school holiday time of which we have plenty of weeks available. Unauthorised holidays taken in term time are referred to Sandwell's Attendance and Prosecution Service, who may then contact parents regarding the leave taken. Parents taking unauthorised leave in term time may be subject to a penalty notice fine being issued by the Local Authority. This is a £60 fine (per child, per parent), if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 (per child, per parent) if not paid within 21 days but paid within 28 days. If fines are not paid, the Attendance and Prosecution Service can refer the matter to Magistrates Court.

## Escalation of procedures

### How we ensure children are safe and how we will tackle absence together. Roles, responsibilities, intervention and tailored support.

All teaching and support staff are trained and refreshed frequently throughout the school year in their roles in promoting attendance.

First day absence calls are made by The Senior Office Administrator and Education Welfare Officer.

Follow up absence telephone calls are made by the Education Welfare Officer.

School meetings and home visits to discuss attendance concerns are attended by the Education Welfare Officer, Designated Safeguarding Lead, teaching staff and members of the Senior Leadership Team.

Preventative and responsive attendance and academic mentoring is carried out by the pastoral team.

Referrals to external agencies for support and consideration of legal intervention are made by the pastoral team and Education Welfare Officer.

Regular attendance analysis and reporting is shared with the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body, including the governor responsible for attendance.

#### Staff responsible for attendance matters in our school are:

Mrs E Shaw	Senior Leadership Team member
Mrs N Stewart	Education Welfare Officer
Mrs J Moulder	Inclusion Manager/Designated Safeguarding Lead
Mrs A Breen	Senior School Administrator
Mrs J Barnett	Pastoral Worker
Ms H Massey	Chair of Governors / Attendance Governor

## Tailored support

Excellent attendance underpins every aspect of our curriculum and maximises opportunities for every pupil to reach their true potential. We will listen, understand, and empathise, providing tailored support and challenge, working together to create excellent attendance patterns.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents, and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. Help and support is always available at school should parents require this.

Individual intervention plans are created in collaboration with families. These are reviewed and monitored regularly with impact shared and further intervention agreed, examples of this include multi-agency meetings, tailored start of the day activities, mentoring and pastoral work.

## Formalising support

Referrals are made to the Attendance and Prosecution Service where there are ongoing concerns regarding unauthorised absence from school, this also includes unauthorised leave of absence. Penalty notices are issued by the Attendance and Prosecution Service upon referral by Head teachers, in accordance with the Sandwell Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in Sandwell Council instituting legal action against parents/carers in accordance with section 444 of the 1996 Education Act. A variety of legal options are available for the consideration of Magistrates which may include Parenting Orders, Education Supervision Orders, and prosecution of parents resulting in fines.

Moat Farm Junior is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils. Only by attending school regularly and punctually, will pupils be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Regular school attendance is a major factor in ensuring that children are safe, achieve well and develop socially, emotionally and behaviourally. Partnership will allow us all to promote good or better school attendance, which will prepare children well for their future, preparing them for high school, further education, employment and training, and plays a crucial role in enabling them to become happy, healthy and successful adults.