

Dear Parents/Carers

12<sup>th</sup> July 2024**New Statutory Attendance Guidance Information**

As we come to the end of this academic year, on behalf of all our academies, I thank you for working with us and continuing to support us in maximising your child's attendance to help their learning and future success.

You may already be aware that the Department for Education (DfE) released new statutory guidance in February 2024, '**Working Together to Improve School Attendance**' which applies from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024. The new legislation behind this guidance is *The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024*. All schools/academies in England will be required to follow the guidance, therefore I wanted to ensure that you are aware of what this means.

Once a child is enrolled at a school, parents/carers are by law responsible for ensuring they attend school regularly. The new statutory guidance has created a legal obligation for all schools/academies to promote attendance positively, take early action to prevent absence occurring and offer support to families when exploring absence from school to secure the child's right to access their education. It also emphasises the importance of good attendance being a key driver for learning, achievement, and personal success but whilst recognising that often, support is required to achieve good attendance.

The guidance expects us to form positive, strong relationships with families and work together along with external services to support children. As a trust, we wholeheartedly believe in this ethos, and we aim to ensure our academies offer welcoming, nurturing, and supportive environments to enable all students to want to come to school to learn and enjoy success.

There are always many positives to celebrate with you, but we are also aware that sometimes things can be less easy, and by collaborating with you, we want to ensure supportive, early action can be taken if concerns arise, as this prevents unnecessary legal actions later. As stated in the guidance, we have robust monitoring/analysis of data to identify trends and patterns of absence to enable us to have conversations with you as early as possible. It is also important that you are aware the guidance stipulates that you must request all absence in advance, or in the case of illness/emergency, you notify of the absence at the earliest opportunity, as after 5 days, we are unable to retrospectively authorise absence that has occurred so it would be recorded as unauthorised absence and must remain so.

To convey the above information and clarify the key changes to you, please find attached our **Attendance Roadmap** to give you a visual summary of the above to demonstrate our proactive, early action process. Our attendance policy will be updated and in place for September 2024 to reflect the changes. However, please accept this information as prior notice of the changes which will apply from 19th August 2024 and will be effective from the start of the 2024/2025 academic year.

I hope this information is helpful and would lastly reiterate, we welcome you to take the lead on starting conversations at any point to work with us on supporting your child as we want what is best for them too.

Yours faithfully



Sharon Templeman  
Meridian Trust Attendance Welfare Leader

# Attendance Roadmap

In line with the DfE Statutory Guidance (in force from 19th August 2024) we offer a supportive attendance process based on a relational, needs-led, stepped approach. Our academies will offer a welcoming ethos with high expectations for all. We will assess data to identify absence trends & use preventative discussion/meetings with families to listen, understand & support to remove barriers. Where needed, we will formalise support to nurture improvement with Attendance Contracts & as a last resort we will consider intensifying support &/or enforce legal sanctions.



Did you know, arriving after the register has closed (30 mins from school starting) = an absence?

## STEP 1 – Identify, Assess & Prevent

Our daily actions & processes aim to promote relationship building with children & families to prevent absence. This involves monitoring data trends & absence patterns to inform our conversations with you (& your child where age allows). The trigger for conversations is where absence is at risk of reaching the new National Threshold (**10 sessions (10 half days/5 days) within a 10 week rolling period**). Other daily actions involve promoting attendance positively, using praise & incentives, swift absence follow up, email &/or letter communication to raise your awareness of emerging concerns, processing requested or unrequested 'Term Time Absence' & doing Home Visits to meet our safeguarding duties as required.



Did you know, 90% attendance = approx. 95 missed lessons/hours of learning?

## STEP 2 – Early Absence Support

We move to this step if the National Threshold for absence is met (authorised or unauthorised) to prevent further absence occurring. Discussions & meetings will be offered to identify if early support or reasonable adjustments are needed. This will be done using Student Success Discussions (student &/or parent) & Student Support Plans Meetings. An Early Help Assessment (EHA) may be required for some support to be accessed along with a Team Around the Family (TAF) Meeting Process

Please talk to us about how we can support you &/or your child at any time.



Did you know, 90% attendance = 4 weeks of absence over a year?

## STEP 3 – Formalised Support

Where absence continues & initial support needs to be increased an Attendance Contract (AC) will be offered to formalise support. This is a 3-6 month nurturing plan of improvement to prevent further escalation. Achievable & individual targets will be set & reviewed regularly. Medical information will be sought at this point to work collaboratively & an AC can run alongside other meetings e.g., TAF meeting.

## STEP 4 – Warnings – Concerns Remain

Where STEP 2 or STEP 3 support has been unsuccessful &/or declined, a 'Formal Warning' or a 'Notice to Improve' Letter will be issued to reinforce the need for immediate improvement. A Family Court Order such as an Education Supervision Order will also be considered as an alternative to prosecution.



Did you know, good attendance increases academic success?



## STEP 5 – Legal Action – No Improvement

Legal action (Penalty Notice or Prosecution) MAY be requested from the Local Authority (LA) if Unauthorised Term Time Absence is taken, or your child's overall absence continues to occur & reaches or exceeds the National Threshold for absence, despite STEPS 1-4 being attempted. Statutory Guidance States a Referral to Children's Social Care for children with 'Severe Absence' (less than 50%) should be considered to obtain 'Intense Support'.

### PENALTY NOTICES & LEGAL ACTION

**NB.** If you have had a previous offence in the last 3 years, it may be taken into account, meaning the LA may not offer you the 1st or 2nd offence options below.

**1st Offence** of Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance (10 sessions of Unauthorised Absence or more) = Fine of £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. If paid within 21 days fine is reduced to £80 per parent, per child.

**2nd Offence** within 3 years = Fine of £160 per parent, per child payable within 28 days, no reduction available.

**3rd Offence** within 3 years NO PENALTY NOTICE considered. The case will be presented to **Magistrates' Court** under s444(1) or (1a) of the Education Act. If found guilty, a fine of up to £2500 per parent, per child can be issued. Convictions for s444(1a) offences will show on DBS record.