

Attendance Policy

Attendance is very high on the national agenda and raising attendance levels in schools is one of the main national targets. Regular attendance at school is seen as vital if children are to make the most of their skills, talents and opportunities; without regular attendance, the learning process is fragmented and unsatisfactory and consequently children do not fulfil their potential. Put simply: absence means missed learning. This section explains what our attendance policy is, our expectations about attendance rates, how we monitor attendance, the meaning of “authorised” and “unauthorised” absence and how you can help.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

The vast majority of our pupils achieve over 95% attendance and this is what we expect from all our pupils as a minimum. OFSTED views 90% as the **absolute minimum** acceptable attendance rate. Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (ie those where the pupil is marked present on all ten sessions); pupils should **NOT** have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Frequent broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

Registration and Attendance Procedures at Moulton

a) The tutor group register is marked twice each day at the beginning of each session, that is at 8.45 am and 1.40 pm. Pupils not present to answer their names will be marked absent. Any pupil who arrives after 8.45 am without a valid reason (eg a school bus being delayed) will be marked as late; likewise any pupil who arrives after 1.40 pm. Legally, in a court of law, lates count as absences and parents have been prosecuted for failing to get their children to school regularly on time. Any pupil arriving after 9.30 in the morning or 2.05 in the afternoon, without a valid reason, will be coded as late after the register closed (which counts as unauthorised absence). Any pupil arriving after 9.05 or after 1.45 **MUST** sign in at the office. This should be a **very rare** occurrence. There is a warning bell at 8.40 and pupils must be in their registration bases by 8.45 at the latest.

b) Tutors monitor attendance daily, and record the reason for absence, provided that written explanation has been received from parents. If no written explanation is received we must try to obtain this; we start by reminding the pupil, then contact parents directly. If we do not receive a written response, we must assume that the absence was unknown to parents or was not valid, and therefore unauthorised.

c) Please will **you** make **every** effort to contact the school on the first morning of absence. We shall make efforts to contact you on the first day of absence but this may not always prove possible.

d) If we discover a pattern to absences, or are concerned about the frequency or validity of absences, we shall contact parents. If we discover a school-based difficulty, we shall seek to remedy it. If there is an out-of-school problem, we shall offer support and access to other services as appropriate. In all cases we shall help the pupil to re-establish him/herself into the usual pattern of school life.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

It is the responsibility of the school under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, to decide whether any given absence is “authorised” or “unauthorised”. So a letter from you, the parent(s) does **not** automatically authorise an absence.

Authorised Absence

Some examples of “authorised” absences are:

- i) when a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- ii) when a close family member has died;
- iii) when prior consent has been obtained from the headteacher, for example for a music examination or a very special family occasion, like a graduation ceremony.

Unauthorised Absence

It is commonly believed that “unauthorised” absence means truancy and, although there are occasions when parents are unaware of their son’s/daughter’s absence from school, there is a number of other reasons for absence which the school following the guidelines of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) will **not** authorise:

- i) staying at home to care for a sick relative (eg parent, brother or sister);
- ii) staying at home to await a tradesman or delivery;
- iii) shopping;
- iv) preparing for a holiday;
- v) keeping a hairdressing or similar appointment;
- vi) a birthday or family celebration;
- vii) missing the bus
- vii) not having school uniform;
- viii) family day visits out.

We do not wish to record unnecessarily absence as “unauthorised”. Please help us to avoid doing this by providing absence notes quickly and by encouraging your child to recognise that good attendance is important.

Holidays

The DfES (Department for Education and Skills) in its new guidance to schools is strongly opposed to parents taking pupils out of school for holidays and urges schools to take a robust line when this occurs.

We ask you, therefore, not to withdraw your child for holidays or short breaks during term time as this can significantly affect educational progress.

The Regulations give headteachers the discretion to grant leave of absence for a family’s **only** holiday if it can be taken **only** during term time.

If it is unavoidable that you take your annual holiday during term time, please write explaining the circumstances to the headteacher before the holiday is arranged and giving **at least four weeks' notice**. Holidays will only be authorised where the specific conditions outlined above apply; currently the vast majority of holiday requests do not fall into this category and, therefore, will be unauthorised.

The school's Educational Welfare Officer may be asked to investigate unexplained absences or ones which do not appear not be covered by the regulations.

How Can You Help?

i) Please let the school know by 'phone of any absence on the morning of the **FIRST** day and try to give some indication as to how long the absence might be. The school telephone number is 641600 and there is an option dedicated to messages about pupil absence. This is available from 7.45 am. Please try to telephone by 9.00 am at the latest. You can also, of course, speak to a member of staff if you wish to.

ii) Do not allow your son or daughter to stay away from school unless absolutely necessary.

iii) Please send a note of explanation when your son/daughter returns to school, even if you have telephoned: absence can only be authorised on receipt of written explanation.

iv) Please try to **ensure** your son/daughter arrives on time to school (ie in the form room by 8.45). Late arrival needs a letter of explanation

v) Please try to avoid doctors, dentists and hospital appointments during school time.

vi) Please send a letter in to your child's form tutor if s/he has to leave school during the course of a day for any reason or if you know in advance that s/he will be in late (eg for orthodontist).

vii) If your son/daughter seems reluctant to come to school, and you suspect a problem at school, please contact us sooner rather than later. Please do not "condone" an absence by providing an excuse which may be covering a problem. We are partners in your son's/daughter's education and by sharing the problem, we may solve it. We do not consider any problem to be trivial: we shall try to act to solve a problem as soon as we know about it.

viii) If your child walks to school, please try to **ensure** s/he leaves early enough. Experience shows, that the majority of late arrivals come from those who walk to school or are driven to school.

ix) Equally if you drive your child/children to school please bear in mind that Moulton village gets very busy and congested at key times. Please leave early enough to ensure your child/children get to their form base by 8.45 at the latest.

x) You may wish to discuss any attendance difficulties with the Education Welfare Officer, Mrs Pat Allan, or with the School Nurse, Riona Ambat, both of whom may be contacted through the school. The telephone number of the Education Welfare Office is 259599.

The Education Welfare Service

Our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits the school every week. The school works very closely with her over pupils who are giving us cause for concern; the EWO visits homes, sees and supports pupils in school and is a vital component in our efforts to secure high attendance. She is available to assist parents where difficulties arise and can be contacted via the school or at the Education Welfare Service (Northampton 259599).

In extreme cases the Education Welfare Service also initiates legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility of getting their child to school. Before a case goes to court, Parenting Contracts will be drawn up setting targets for attendance levels; there may also be interviews which may lead to a fixed penalty notice. The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis.

Reporting Attendance

Any parent who has reason to check on his/her son's/daughter's attendance record can do so by contacting his/her tutor or Deputy Head of House/Head of House. A pupil's attendance record is included as part of his/her school report.

The school is also obliged to report attendance to the local authority, and to the DfES so that data can be published. These records are reported as global figures and contain no individual data.

Rewarding Attendance

To emphasise the importance we attach to attendance, we present certificates on a termly basis, for all those in Years 7-9 who achieve very high attendance (98%+).

In Years 10 and 11, pupils gain on a termly basis Gold Certificates for 100% attendance, Silver for 98% attendance and Bronze for 95%. All pupils gaining certificates are listed in Moulton Matters.

Pupils showing significant improved attendance levels will also receive a certificate or postcard of congratulation.