



**MURDISHAW WEST COMMUNITY
PRIMARY SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE
POLICY**

AUTUMN 2023

Policy Title	ATTENDANCE AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE
School/HBC	School
This policy complies with Halton LA guidance	Yes
Written by	V Edwards
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Signed by Chair of Governors	R Houghton
Date	
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Introduction

The Governors and staff at *Murdishaw West Community Primary School* are united in their belief that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Helping them to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Murdishaw West Community Primary School values all children. As set out in this policy we will work with families to identify the barriers to achieving and maintaining excellent attendance, and offer the right service at the right time to try to resolve any difficulties.

The Attendance Leader and Attendance Officer will monitor attendance and use attendance data to identify any patterns of concern, whilst also celebrating success! Attendance concerns will be raised with

parents if reasons are not known by the school, e.g. a long period of illness, this information may be shared with the Local Authority following concerns. Where we have concerns, or lack of engagement from families to improve attendance, we will follow the schools escalated approach to improving attendance. The schools escalated approach is child-centred and prioritises support and developing strong working relationships with families. We will use the Education Welfare Service to offer support to families prior to escalation, and consider how we can work with families to enable your child to access their right to education.

Our aim is to always to work in partnership with parents and any referral for consideration of a penalty notice is deemed to be a last resort. Attendance figures for each child will be reported to parents as part of the annual report, we will also share a child's attendance profile if we have concerns regarding a child's attendance. Throughout the school year, the Attendance Team will report on the overall attendance figures for children groups, this will be closely monitored for support and reported to the Governing Body.

To support good attendance and safeguarding at *Murdishaw West Community Primary School*, we will:

- Ensure the school is welcoming and every child feels a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Ensure the school site is open at the stated times.
- Ensure the regular, efficient, and accurate recording of attendance is complete by every class teacher each day. This further supports our approach to safeguarding within the school.
- Take safeguarding seriously and make contact with you on the first day that your child is absent from school, this includes before and after-school club, unless you have already notified us of a reason for their absence. If your child arrives late after the close of registration, we will record their arrival at reception and transition your child to class.
- Consider any requests for leave in term time individually. This will be aligned to the Local Authority code of conduct.
- Notify the Local Authority within 5 days if a new child is joining the school roll.
- Inform the Local Authority of children whose parents have notified the school in writing and have opted for Elective Home Education.
- Work closely with the Education Welfare Service.
- Notify the Local Authority of Children Missing in Education – aligned to the DfE 2022 Attendance paper.

A whole school approach to supporting attendance at Murdishaw West Primary School

Securing good attendance at *Murdishaw West Community Primary School* cannot be achieved in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve working closely with other Leaders within the school. The Attendance Leader will work alongside the relevant school staff to facilitate a whole school approach.

Murdishaw West Community Primary School will always work in partnership with our parents. We recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life and their lived experience. This may be related to problems at home or in school. Parents should inform the school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school to identify any additional early help that may be required. Safeguarding is a priority, concerns for any child at any time will be reported to the Designated Senior Lead for Child Protection. We will always follow the latest Guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education and our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Some children are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. For example, children who are vulnerable, have a medical need or EHCP plan will be monitored and supported further in school. We will proactively identify and follow up on a child's non-attendance and gather information about the child. This will result in taking early action to prevent non-attendance developing and monitoring the impact of targeted support.

The Attendance Officer will initially:

- Check records, including any from other schools which the child has attended previously.
- Discuss with staff how the child is coping with the curriculum
- Speak to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator to establish whether the child is on the Special Educational needs register.
- Take into account the voice of the child and understand any difficulties, e.g. curriculum or bullying and their views on how the issue could be addressed.

Children whose attendance falls below 90% are Persistently Absent from school. Where a child falls under 50% attendance, the child will be classified as a Severely Absent child. Ultimately, this will indicate that all intervention, and support, offered by Murdishaw West Community Primary School has not made the expected impact to improve overall attendance. Where attendance remains a concern, and all other interventions and support have not made a significant impact, we will escalate with the Education Welfare Service.

First Day Contact

At Murdishaw West Community Primary School, we expect our parents to make contact at the earliest opportunity on the first day of any absence. We will always contact you via text message or by calling you, if we have not received notification of your child's absence. Where we have on-going concerns regarding your child's attendance, we will visit your home address and we may also write to you. We may even invite you to meet with a member of staff to discuss any on-going concerns regarding attendance. It is important that you talk to us first; you are legally responsible under Education Act 1996 for ensuring that your child is in school every day and on time. If we cannot make contact with you, we will continue to make announced and unannounced home visits, regarding any concerns we may have surrounding attendance at *Murdishaw*

West Community Primary School. If your child has a Social worker or your child is a Persistent absentee pupil, we may visit the home to ensure the welfare of the child. See Appendix 1

Parents are responsible for securing full-time education

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children receive a full-time education. Each situation will be dealt with on an individual basis, fairly and equitably, always remembering the welfare and safety of the child is the paramount concern.

The term 'parent' includes those who are not a natural parent but have parental responsibility for the child as defined by the Children's Act 1989 or have care of the child as defined by the Education Act 1996.

- Absence can only be authorised by the school; parents do not have this authority. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless satisfactory evidence for the child's absence has been received. In the first instance contact from the parent will be accepted as evidence. However, if a child's attendance continues to cause concern, parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where absences occur repeatedly due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescriptions etc. We advise parents to register with " Care of the Chemist" . Absence may be coded as unauthorised without this medical evidence.
- Parents should, wherever possible, make all medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, children should attend school for part of the day. Appointment cards should always be provided as evidence of medical/dental appointments.
- Unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation, and it has been accepted by the school , absence will not be authorised.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A child's/family member's birthday.
- Shopping for uniform.
- Having their hair cut.
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes.
- "Couldn't get up".
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school without medical authority and in the absence of a communicable disease.
- Leave during term time taken without authorisation of the school
- Head lice (Let the school know and letters will then be sent to all parents in a confidential manner).

Punctuality

Doors open for children at 8.50am and close at 9am. Children arriving after the close of registration will be recorded as an L code. Children arriving after the register has closed, U codes will be entered onto your child's registration certificate- they will not be authorised and will count as an absence for the school AM session. If a child arrives late after registration for more than 10 sessions in each half term, then consideration will be given to the issue of Penalty Notice Warning Letter. This will be issued by the Local Authority.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if a child has arrived late without justifiable cause. A justifiable cause does not include, they woke up late, were waiting for their uniform to dry or they would not get dressed for school.

Transition following long term absence or illness

Absence can significantly interrupt the continuity of children's learning.

During any long-term absence, *Murdishaw West Community Primary School* will:

- Maintain contact with the child.
- Carefully plan the transition back to school, ensuring your child feels welcome and gains a sense of belonging.
- Ensure the child once again feels safe in school and if they experience any concerns, they will have an appointed member of staff to work with.
- The Class Teacher and Teaching Assistant will support a child when returning to class and help them with any work they may have missed.

Leave during Term Time

From 1st September 2013, the Government amended the England (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Head teachers may only grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances' only. Murdishaw West Community Primary School observes Halton Borough Council 'Leave in Term Time Guidance for schools and Academies'. Parents wishing to apply for leave during term time must send a written request for the attention of the Headteacher and include any evidence to support the application before making any arrangements. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each leave during term time request will be considered on an individual basis.

If a child fails to return to school, and contact with the parent has not been successful, school will contact the Education Welfare Service in the first instance and follow the CME protocol.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the child is still absent from school, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may consider legal action.

Only in **exceptional circumstances** will absence be agreed. In such cases, consideration will be given to the cultural needs and the family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases, granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parents will be required to justify why the leave needs to be taken during term time.

Using attendance data

Children's attendance will be monitored and shared with other agencies and the DfE.

Regular attendance meetings will be held between the Attendance Leader and the Attendance Team. Meetings will focus on agreed actions for those children of concern. The purpose of each meeting will be to understand the progress the school is making when supporting identified individuals or groups of children.

Attendance data will be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

It is the responsibility of school Governors to challenge and support the school regarding overall attendance, regular reports will be presented to this body. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided for them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as can be.

Persistent Absence

At Murdishaw West Community Primary School, we aim to communicate the importance of attendance with parents and children. We have a particular focus on reducing Persistent Absenteeism at the school. The Persistent Absence threshold for children is currently 10% and Ofsted will use this threshold in its inspection of schools.

The threshold means that any child will be classed as Persistently Absent when they have missed 38 or more sessions. This equates to 19, or more, missed days during the academic year - which is as little as 6 days over each of the three Terms. This also equates to the equivalent of 1 day of absence, or more, a fortnight across a full school year

Once a child has reached 38 sessions, or 19 days absence, they will be classified as Persistently Absent from school and we will report this to the Local Authority and follow external legal proceedings.

Statutory Duty

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

In accordance with the regulations regarding pupils' attendance at school, Murdishaw West Community Primary School keeps an attendance register on which at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session children are marked present or absent. The marks are electronically processed and stored on the school's central administrative system SIMS. This information is shared with the Department for Education.

Legal Sanctions

There are several sanctions that school can take to address the issue of non-attendance. To try and identify the reason for absence, we will always talk to you first to identify the reason for absence. Murdishaw West Community Primary School will always ensure the escalated process map is followed, focusing on the support a child needs at each stage. However, for lack of engagement in attendance support there are sanctions that will be followed:

Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A child is absent from school for the purpose of a Leave of Absence in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A child has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further absence has occurred following written warning to improve.

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Halton Borough Council Code of Conduct.

Prosecution

Where intervention through the school's process fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the local authority will be notified and legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444/4441 (a) of the Education Act 1996 school will refer to the Education Welfare Service for consideration of legal action . This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring their child's attendance at school.

Section 4441(a) of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

Schools, trusts and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions, rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family. These are:

- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

Please refer to section 6 of the DFE Working together to improve school attendance 2022 for more information.

Children at risk of Missing in Education (CME)

Children Missing Education (CME) are a vulnerable group of children. All agencies who work with children have a duty to support the Local Authority in ensuring all children are safe and looked after appropriately.

CME includes those children who are missing (family whereabouts unknown), and are children who are registered on a school roll / alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address and either

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 5 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown

It is our responsibility as a school to work with the LA Education Welfare Service by making referrals.

Celebrating Success

At Murdishaw West Community Primary School, we feel it is important to reward children who have achieved good or improved attendance. We provide regular incentives and rewards to all children who attend school and we display attendance success in school. We remind parents of our whole school attendance targets in our newsletter and on our school website. The weekly Attendance challenge allows classes to celebrate their collective attendance successes. When a class achieves a week of excellent attendance, they receive an own clothes day or similar reward of the class' choice. Further rewards are given to children with excellent attendance. Murdishaw West Community Primary School will always challenge falling attendance and reward improvements. We are committed to the future of all children that attend school, and by working in partnership with the school community we believe that together we can achieve more!

We can only achieve this by working in partnership with you, if you have any concerns or anything that prevents your child from attending school, please contact Mrs Iddon in the school office.

Other Policies supporting attendance.

Behaviour Policy

Teaching and Learning Policy.

SEND Offer

Pupil Premium Statement.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy .

Roles and Responsibilities

Murdishaw West Community Primary School expectations – Parents:

- i Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and may risk prosecution if they fail in this responsibility.
- ii Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, with the correct equipment and in full school uniform.
- iii Parents should support the school by avoiding, if possible, non-emergency medical/dental appointments for their child during School time.
- iv Parents should be aware that they do not have the automatic right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time.
- v It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence on the first day of absence and in line with the Schools procedures for informing of absence.
- vi All unexplained attendances will be monitored and parents will be kept informed about any attendance concerns relating to their own child. Parents are expected to attend meetings when requested and support the school in responding to ongoing attendance concerns.

Murdishaw West Community Primary School expectations – Children:

- i. All children should aim to have an excellent attendance and punctuality record for which there will be appropriate rewards.
- ii. All children are expected to be on the school site on time and ready to learn. Children are expected to be punctual to all lessons and registration.
- iii. Children who arrive at school late must follow the correct procedures for recording their lateness and entering the school.
- iv. Children who need to leave school for a medical appointment must be signed out by a responsible adult.
- v. Children must not leave the School without permission, 'truant'; this will be seen by the school as a safeguarding concern as well as a Health and Safety concern.

Murdishaw West Community Primary School expectations - Class Teacher

The Class Teacher is the key staff members in promoting regular punctual attendance. The Class Teacher will:

- i. provide a good example by always being punctual to registration and meeting children at the door – providing a welcoming environment;
- ii. keep an accurate and up-to-date register of attendance;
- iii. follow the Attendance Policy procedures when dealing with absences and punctuality;
- iv. maintain swift action and effective communication with the School Business Manager, Headteacher and/or School Attendance Leaders on all attendance matters concerning the class.
- v. ensure that children and young people are aware of the importance of the school attendance target and their own individual attendance targets - where appropriate, assist them in monitoring their own attendance rates;
- vi. ensure children receive rewards in relation to attendance and punctuality success – aligned to the Attendance Policy;
- vii. build a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom and provide support as necessary when children return after an absence.

Murdishaw West Community Primary School expectations – Attendance Team

The Attendance Team will take responsibility for monitoring the attendance of children and regularly promote the importance of attendance and punctuality. They will:

- i. ensure that their team is aware of their responsibilities with respect to promoting attendance and punctuality and adherence to the attendance policy and procedures;
- ii. ensure that rewards and sanctions for attendance and punctuality follow agreed procedures and align to the School Behaviour and Attendance Policy;
- iii. monitor and track the attendance of vulnerable groups;
- iv. monitor the attendance of individual tutor groups and class groups, following up with irregular patterns of absenteeism that are not being effectively addressed;
- v. liaise effectively with Senior Leaders and work together on ensuring that appropriate action is taken in the management of absenteeism and poor punctuality;
- vi. ensure contact is made with parents of poor attendees – always placing support before sanction.

Murdishaw West Community Primary School expectations - Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer is responsible for regularly checking attendance data and ensuring data is accurate and up to date. The Attendance Officer will:

- i. ensure that data is input daily into the attendance management system;
- ii. ensure that parents of absent children are contacted where notification of absence has not been received;
- iii. respond to any parent seeking support on attendance concerns;
- iv. provide regular attendance and punctuality data for relevant staff and external agencies in line with the agreed procedures and timescales;
- v. be responsible for disseminating important attendance information including informing the Attendance Leader of which children are of concern; in-line with the agreed procedures and timescales;
- vi. be responsible for keeping a record of the interventions in place to encourage attendance and for generating all documentation including letters to parents;
- vii. be responsible for liaising closely with the Local Authority's Attendance Team to ensure appropriate levels of intervention take place; referrals are made, and attendance meetings are set up;
- viii. be responsible for managing and maintaining attendance records and systems.

Murdishaw West Community Primary School expectations – Attendance Leader

The Senior Leader responsible for Attendance will promote good attendance and punctuality. They will:

- i. reporting on progress and next steps planning;
- ii. provide training and support to staff;
- iii. participate in pre-legal meetings;
- iv. use attendance data to make links with attendance and academic performance;
- v. lead attendance reward assemblies;
- vi. ensure that reference to attendance is included in all school documentation e.g. School newsletters, letters to parents, school prospectus, information for booklets;

Relevant legislation

The Education Act 1996

The Children Act 1989

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Sentencing Act 2020 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Relevant government guidance

Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour

Children missing education

Keeping children safe in education

Working together to safeguard children

Elective home education

Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities

Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions

Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges

Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying

First Day Contact Letter

Dear Parents /Carers

FIRST DAY CONTACT

It is part of our school policy that we ask all parents/carers to let us know the reasons for a child's absence. At Murdishaw West Primary School we use a system called First Day Contact.

The school office is open from 8.00am for you to telephone when your child is absent. We would appreciate these calls before 9.15am. This ensures that we know children are safe and also reduced administration time.

If your child is absent and you have not telephoned us, we will follow the procedure below:

1. We will attempt to phone you directly and/or send an absence text.
2. We will attempt to phone alternative contacts that you have provided. (Please provide the school with at least 2 alternative contacts).
3. If we still do not have a reason for your child's absence, we may make a home visit.
4. If a home visit is made and there is no response, we may, if there are reasons for concern, make the decision to inform the police.

Please let us know if there are any reasons why we may have difficulty contacting you.

If you change address or telephone number, can you please let school know so that we can keep our records up to date and can get in touch with you should an emergency arise.

Yours sincerely

Mrs V Edwards

Headteacher