Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE). We aim to achieve this through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, which includes:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance and School attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contentsThe Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Equality Act 2010

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/757/regulation/2/madeIt also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
- Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit

As a Trust, this policy also complies with our Funding Agreement and Articles of Association.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The local governing body

The local governing body is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of the school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
- Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authorities
- Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most, through termly attendance review meetings with school
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance, including with teachers from across the school, as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
    - The importance of good attendance
    - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
    - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
    - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across the trust and providing regular opportunities for staff from different schools to come together, learn from each other and share resources
- Holding the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy
- Board of trustees: Identifying and monitoring attendance patterns across the trust's schools to identify common issues and barriers, and share effective practice between schools

3.2 The principal

The principal is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing penalty notices, where necessary
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
    - Notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times

- Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days
- Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness

3.3 The Trust Executive Leader

The Trust Executive Leader for each school is responsible for:

- Driving attendance improvement across the trust
- Working more intensively with schools who require support to improve attendance
- Acting as a central contact point for schools with attendance queries
- Liaising with the DfE's regional teams for advice about wider support programmes

3.4 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Carly Vass and can be contacted via email on principal@mulberrybaird.org

3.5 The school attendance officer

The school attendance officer at each school is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 9)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the Principal
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Nicola Andrews and can be contacted via email on office@mulberrybaird.org

3.6 Class teachers

All class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office.

In addition, class teachers will:

- Meet and greet pupils each day in a warm and nurturing manner
- Build highly positive relationships with parents and challenge attendance directly with parents, in a supportive manner.

- Have responsibility for accurately recording pupil attendance each session, by using the available absent or present register codes. The register must be submitted with accuracy and on time to ensure attendance colleagues can address unexplained absences.
- Inform the safeguarding team of any attendance concerns.
- Engage with whole academy approaches in ensuring attendance is promoted and celebrated.
- Immediately report any incidences of suspected truancy to the Principal

3.7 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to a senior lead where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.8 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

    - All natural parents, whether they are married or not
    - All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
    - Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)
    - Parents are expected to:
- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9.00am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority

3.9 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils on this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Absent – unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The academy opens at 8.45am and closes at 3.20pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day.

The register for the morning session will be taken at 8.55am and will be kept open until 9.25am. The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1.15pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 09.00am or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office staff, who can be contacted via office@mulberrybaird.org or on 01424 425670. Parents can also log absence through Weduc – Reach More Parents.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness or where a child is on an attendance improvement agreement, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

4.3 Planned Absence

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents/carers must inform the school office by telephone or email as soon as the appointment is made and provide details of the appointment. The school may request evidence of the appointment, such as an appointment letter, text message confirmation, appointment card or screenshot of the booking.

Where possible, the pupil should:

- Be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary and attend school before and/or after their appointment.
- Wear school uniform to their appointment to enable them to return to school afterwards.

Requests for other planned absences during term time must be made in writing to the Principal as far in advance as possible. Parents/carers should complete the school's Leave of Absence Request Form and provide any supporting evidence relevant to the request.

The Principal will consider each request individually, taking into account the specific circumstances, the reason for the request and the impact on the pupil's education. Leave of absence during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Further information about authorised and unauthorised absence can be found in Section 5 of this policy.

4.4 Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late using the appropriate attendance code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent using the appropriate attendance code

The school recognises that good punctuality is essential for children's learning, wellbeing and successful participation in school life. Pupils who arrive late can miss important learning, routines and social opportunities at the start of the school day.

The school closely monitors patterns of lateness and will work with families to address punctuality concerns at an early stage.

Where a pupil's punctuality becomes a concern, the school will:

- Monitor and record incidents of lateness
- Contact parents/carers to make them aware of the concerns and the impact on their child's education
- Offer support and guidance to help improve punctuality
- Invite parents/carers to attend a meeting with school staff to discuss barriers to punctuality and agree strategies for improvement
- Implement a punctuality contract where concerns persist, setting out agreed actions, expectations and review dates
- Monitor progress and review the support in place
- Consider further intervention where there is no improvement and lateness is impacting the child's attendance or education

The school will work collaboratively with parents/carers to promote regular and punctual attendance and ensure that children are ready to learn from the start of each school day.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil’s parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If we cannot reach any of the pupil’s emergency contacts, the school may carry out a home visit, contact a social worker or the police
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil’s youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance

- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 7 below)

4.6 Reporting to Parents

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. This will be discussed at parent consultation meetings and provided as a regular update through Weduc.

In addition, the school will provide half-termly attendance updates to parents/carers. These updates will clearly communicate a child's attendance record and will highlight how attendance compares to the school's attendance target.

Where appropriate, communications will include information about the amount of learning time missed and the impact that absence may have on a child's education, wellbeing and progress. The school will work positively with families to promote excellent attendance and will provide support where attendance concerns are identified.

Where attendance falls below the school's expected target, parents/carers will be contacted by the school to discuss any barriers to attendance and to agree strategies to support improvement.

5. Authorised absence

5.1 Approval for Term-Time Absence

At Mulberry Baird Primary, we expect pupils to attend school every day that the school is open, as regular attendance is essential for children's learning, wellbeing and social development.

The Principal may only authorise an absence during term time where the request meets one of the circumstances permitted under attendance regulations. Most requests for leave during term time will therefore only be considered in **exceptional circumstances**.

A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion and the decision will take into account the individual circumstances of the request, the pupil's attendance record, the impact on their education and any supporting evidence provided.

For the purpose of this policy, **exceptional circumstances** are defined as rare, significant and unavoidable events that are outside the family's control and are unlikely to occur again. Examples may include:

- A serious medical emergency involving the child or an immediate family member
- Bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a close family member
- Court proceedings or legal obligations requiring the child's attendance
- A significant family crisis or safeguarding concern
- Other exceptional situations that the Principal considers justify absence from school

Absence requests for family holidays, birthdays, family celebrations, shopping trips or other leisure activities will not normally be considered exceptional circumstances and are therefore unlikely to be authorised.

Parents/carers must complete a Leave of Absence Request Form and submit it to the school **at least 4 weeks before the proposed absence**, wherever possible. This allows the Principal up to **30 days to consider and respond to the request**.

Where an emergency situation arises and it is not possible to provide 4 weeks' notice, parents/carers must contact the school office as soon as possible by telephone on **01424 425670** or by email at office@mulberrybaird.org and provide any relevant supporting information.

The Principal may request evidence to support an application before making a decision. Each request will be considered on its own merits and there is no automatic entitlement to leave of absence during term time.

As leave of absence is granted only in exceptional circumstances, requests for family holidays during term time will not be authorised. Leave of absence will also not be granted for pupils to take part in protest activity during school hours.

If the academy has cause for concern regarding the reason for a pupil's absence, we may seek additional information or evidence from parents/carers regarding the absence, and make an outreach visit to the family home in order to verify the reason and offer additional support. If the reason cannot be verified and the academy has cause to believe the reason given for absence may not be genuine, parents/carers may be asked to provide satisfactory proof of the reason before the academy authorises the absence. If satisfactory proof is not provided, the academy may record the absence as unauthorised.

5.2 Other reasons for authorised absence

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong (s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Pupils should attend school on the days surrounding those set apart for religious observance
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – a pupil is a mobile child if their parent is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. In these circumstances a pupil will be considered as a mobile child, provided they are of compulsory school age and have no fixed abode and whose parent is in a trade or business that requires them to travel from place to place
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

5.3 Absences from the school site (which are not classified as absences)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

At Mulberry Baird Primary, we recognise the strong link between attendance, achievement, wellbeing and positive outcomes for children. We are committed to promoting excellent attendance through a culture of encouragement,

celebration and early support. Our approach focuses on working in partnership with families to ensure that every child attends school regularly and benefits fully from their education.

To promote and celebrate good attendance, the school will:

- Celebrate attendance improvement and achievement during weekly celebration assemblies.
- Share attendance successes and key attendance messages through the school app.
- Send congratulatory letters to pupils and families where attendance is **97% or above** each term.
- Send recognition letters to pupils who achieve **100% attendance** each term.
- Acknowledge and celebrate pupils who have demonstrated significant improvements in attendance through certificates recognition.
- Promote the importance of good attendance through assemblies, classroom discussions and communications with parents and carers.
- Seek feedback from parents and carers regarding attendance and punctuality through surveys, questionnaires and feedback forms..
- Work collaboratively with parents and carers to identify and address any barriers that may affect a child's attendance.
- Provide early support and intervention where attendance begins to decline, ensuring that families receive timely advice and assistance.

The school believes that recognising and celebrating positive attendance habits helps to create a culture where attendance is valued and every child is given the best opportunity to succeed. We regularly review our attendance practices and seek feedback from pupils, parents, carers and staff to ensure our approaches remain effective, inclusive and supportive. Attendance is a shared responsibility, and we are committed to working in partnership with families to achieve the best possible outcomes for all pupils.

7. Supporting pupils with poor attendance

Our schools will make use of the full range of support and potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

The attendance team completes daily, weekly, and termly actions that focus on preventative and early interventions in the first instance.

The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex and are often specific to individual pupils and families. All academy-led interventions are bespoke to the individual needs of pupils and will incorporate a holistic and coordinated package of support to increase the chance of successful outcomes. This approach ensures that pupils and cohorts with additional vulnerabilities are effectively supported to reduce absenteeism. Interventions will always incorporate regular opportunities for pupil and parent voice.

The academy operates a tiered level of support measures for families. From a universal and preventive approach for all pupils that can escalate to early help support within the academy team and by local partners. If early-help is unsuccessful, or not engaged with, this will lead to targeted and legal intervention.

Preventative 96 -100%	Academy and Trust policies and protocols. Clear high expectations are communicated effectively to children and parents/carers. The academy operates a positive environment and engaging learning activities. We encourage a high level of parental and community engagement. Effective mentoring and pastoral support programs ensure children are happy and feel safe at academy. Team member training enables a whole-academy approach to attendance improvement.

Early Help 93 - 95.9%	Through analysis of risk factors and data trends, emerging concerns are proactively addressed. Family support is offered. Calls and informal meetings secure parent and pupil voice to identify barriers to attendance. Adjustments are considered and applied when required. Referral for multi-agency support is offered to families. Arising cases are discussed in team meetings.
Targeted Support 90 - 92.9%	The academy will create a personalised attendance improvement plan (parental contract) that addressed the causes and symptoms of declining attendance. Formal meetings and letters will include target setting. A parenting contract will be considered alongside referrals to level 3 support services. Attendance tracking is put in place and a warning notice of Fixed Penalties issued. Cases are regularity monitored in weekly safeguarding triangulation meetings.
Legal Intervention 90% and below	When previous interventions have been unsuccessful, a referral to the Local Authority education welfare service will be required. This could lead to legal intervention. The designated safeguarding lead will work with the attendance team members to assess risk of educational neglect. Case evaluations may lead to a referral into Children's Social Care.

We will work with families, the Local Authority, and other partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where this is not successful, or not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalize improvement plans. Attendance legal interventions are used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions are made on an individual case by case basis.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence.

The academy will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold for Local Authority legal action as required by local guidance and national legislation. We will not refer if there are reasonable grounds for not doing so.

When referring for legal sanctions, the academy will provide evidence that the parent/carer has been warned they are at risk of a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal sanctions. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a Fixed Penalty Notice or Prosecution.

7.1 Attendance Contracts

Where attendance concerns persist despite initial support and intervention, the school may use an **Attendance Contract** as part of its graduated approach to improving attendance.

An Attendance Contract is a voluntary written agreement between the school, parents/carers and, where appropriate, the pupil. It sets out the concerns regarding attendance, the support that will be provided by the school and any actions that parents/carers agree to take to improve attendance.

Attendance Contracts are intended to strengthen partnership working between home and school and may be used where:

- A pupil's attendance has fallen below expected levels.
- There is a pattern of persistent absence or irregular attendance.
- Previous support strategies have not secured sufficient improvement.
- The school believes that a formal agreement may help to identify and overcome barriers to attendance.

Where an Attendance Contract is considered appropriate, the school will invite parents/carers to attend a meeting with relevant school staff. The pupil may also be invited to attend where this is considered age-appropriate and beneficial.

During the meeting, the school will:

- Discuss attendance concerns and any underlying barriers.
- Consider the views of the pupil and parents/carers.
- Identify support that may be available from the school or external agencies.
- Agree clear and achievable actions for all parties.
- Set review dates and attendance targets where appropriate.

Parents/carers cannot be required to enter into an Attendance Contract, and no agreement can be made in their absence. However, the school will continue to work with families to improve attendance and ensure that children receive their full entitlement to education.

Attendance Contracts will be reviewed regularly. Where attendance improves, the contract may be concluded and positive progress acknowledged. Where attendance does not improve despite appropriate support and intervention, the school may consider alternative actions in line with statutory guidance, including referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service where appropriate.

The school's primary aim is always to work in partnership with families to identify barriers to attendance and secure sustained improvements for the benefit of the child.

7.2 Education supervision order

In cases where voluntary early help plans and attendance contracts have been unsuccessful, we may work with the local authority to issue an education supervision order. If an education supervision order is considered, the local authority will inform the parent(s) in writing and will set up a meeting.

An education supervision order is a formal intervention but **not** criminal prosecution.

An education supervision order initially lasts for 1 year, but it can be extended within the last 3 months for a period of up to 3 years at a time.

In cases where parents persistently fail to meet the directions given under the education supervision order, they may be liable to a fine of up to £1,000 upon conviction.

7.3 Notice to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

7.4 Penalty notices

The Principal (or a deputy or assistant Principal, authorised by the Principal), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, we will check with the local authority before doing so, and send the local authority a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution

- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, are not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

8. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

8.1 Pupils Absent Due to Complex Barriers to Attendance

We recognise that some children face complex barriers which can make attending school regularly more difficult. These barriers may include physical or mental health needs, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), family circumstances, housing issues, safeguarding concerns, experiences of trauma, or other factors affecting a child's wellbeing.

Where the school becomes aware of barriers relating to a pupil's needs, we will work closely with the child, their parents/carers and relevant professionals to understand the reasons for absence and identify appropriate support. Where required, the school will inform and work with the Local Authority to ensure that appropriate help is available.

The school will:

- Seek to identify barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity.
- Meet regularly with parents/carers and, where appropriate, the pupil to discuss concerns and agree support strategies.
- Listen to and consider the views of pupils and their families when planning support.
- Work closely with the SENDCo, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), pastoral staff and external professionals, where appropriate.
- Make reasonable adjustments to support pupils with SEND, medical needs or disabilities in accessing education.
- Consider whether in-school factors may be affecting attendance and take appropriate action to remove or reduce these barriers.
- Develop individual support plans where appropriate, setting out agreed actions, responsibilities and review arrangements.

- Access support from external agencies, including health services, Early Help, Children's Social Care, the Local Authority and other relevant professionals where appropriate.
- Maintain regular contact with families during periods of absence.
- Support pupils to maintain a sense of belonging and connection with school during longer periods of absence.
- Monitor attendance closely and review the effectiveness of support arrangements on a regular basis.

The school's primary approach is to work in partnership with families and other agencies to understand and address the root causes of absence. We recognise that attendance difficulties are often a symptom of wider challenges and will seek to provide a supportive, child-centred response that removes barriers and promotes successful engagement with school.

Where attendance does not improve despite appropriate support, the school will continue to work with the Local Authority and other relevant professionals to ensure that families receive the help and intervention they need.

8.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health

At Mulberry Baird Primary, we recognise that some pupils may experience periods of absence due to mental or physical ill health. We are committed to working with families and relevant professionals to support pupils in maintaining, or returning to, regular attendance wherever possible.

Parents/carers should refer to the NHS guidance *Is My Child Too Ill for School?* when deciding whether their child is well enough to attend school. The school will support families in understanding this guidance and encourage attendance whenever it is appropriate and safe to do so.

Where a pupil's attendance is affected by ill health, the school will:

- Maintain regular communication with parents/carers.
- Work with families and relevant professionals to understand and address barriers to attendance.
- Consider reasonable adjustments to support the pupil's attendance and wellbeing.
- Provide pastoral support and access to trusted adults where needed.
- Consider a phased return to school following a significant period of absence where appropriate.
- Work closely with the SENDCo, DSL and external agencies to coordinate support.
- Monitor attendance and wellbeing regularly and review support arrangements as required.

The school will take a supportive and child-centred approach, ensuring that pupils feel welcomed, included and supported when returning to school after an absence.

8.3 Pupils Absent Due to Other Barriers to Attendance

At Mulberry Baird Primary, we recognise that some pupils may face additional barriers to regular attendance. We are committed to identifying and addressing these barriers at the earliest opportunity through a supportive and inclusive approach.

Particular attention will be given to pupils who:

- Have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Are disadvantaged or in receipt of pupil premium funding.

- Are known, or have previously been known, to Children's Social Care.
- Have caring responsibilities or other significant family circumstances.
- Have experienced trauma, bereavement, housing instability or other challenges that may affect attendance.

The school will:

- Work in partnership with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies to understand and remove barriers to attendance.
- Ensure that support and interventions are timely, appropriate and tailored to the individual needs of the pupil.
- Consider reasonable adjustments where needed to support attendance and engagement in school.
- Monitor attendance carefully and review support strategies regularly.
- Involve the SENDCo, DSL, pastoral staff and other relevant professionals as appropriate.
- Provide early help and signpost families to additional services where required.

Where a pupil has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan and their attendance declines, or where the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance related to the pupil's identified needs, the school will inform the Local Authority and work collaboratively to secure appropriate support.

Our aim is to ensure that every pupil feels safe, supported and able to attend school regularly so that they can achieve their full potential.

8.4 Pupils Returning to School After a Lengthy or Unavoidable Period of Absence

Where a pupil returns to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, the school will work closely with the pupil, parents/carers and, where appropriate, external agencies to ensure a successful return.

Support may include:

- A meeting with parents/carers and the pupil prior to their return.
- A home visit where appropriate.
- A gradual or phased return to school where this is considered beneficial.
- Pastoral support from a trusted adult.
- Reasonable adjustments to routines, expectations or learning arrangements.
- Regular review meetings to monitor the pupil's wellbeing and attendance.

Our aim is to ensure that pupils feel welcomed, supported and able to re-engage with school life as quickly and successfully as possible.

8.5 Prolonged Absence for Pupils in the EYFS

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are particularly vulnerable to the impact of prolonged absence. Where a child is absent for an extended period, or is absent without notification, the school will make reasonable attempts to contact parents/carers and all emergency contacts held on record.

When considering whether a child's absence should be regarded as prolonged, the school will take into account:

- The pattern and frequency of the child's absences.
- The child's individual circumstances and level of vulnerability.

- Any known family circumstances or safeguarding concerns.

Where concerns arise regarding a child's welfare, the school will follow the procedures set out in the Mulberry Baird Primary Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, available on the school's website. This may include undertaking a home visit, making a referral to Children's Social Care and/or requesting a welfare check from the police where appropriate.

The school will work proactively with families and relevant agencies to support the child's safe return to school and ensure their welfare is safeguarded at all times.

9. Attendance Monitoring

9.1 Monitoring attendance

Mulberry Baird Primary monitors attendance, absence and punctuality closely to identify concerns at the earliest opportunity and ensure that all pupils receive appropriate support. Attendance data is reviewed on a daily, weekly, termly and annual basis by school leaders.

The school will:

- Monitor pupil attendance and punctuality daily through the school's management information system.
- Follow up unexplained absences on the first day of absence in line with safeguarding procedures.
- Review attendance data weekly to identify emerging concerns, trends and patterns.
- Maintain a particular focus on pupils who are persistently absent (attendance below 90%) and those who are at risk of becoming persistently absent.
- Track the attendance of vulnerable groups, including pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, pupils with an EHCP, children previously known to social care, young carers and other identified groups.
- Use attendance data to identify pupils requiring early intervention and targeted support.
- Hold regular attendance review meetings with relevant staff to monitor progress and evaluate interventions.
- Monitor class, year group and whole-school attendance patterns.
- Share attendance information with parents/carers where concerns are identified.
- Report weekly attendance data, including persistent absence figures and vulnerable group analysis, to the Director of Primary Education to support trust-wide monitoring and challenge.
- Compare attendance patterns across schools within the Trust and use this information to inform attendance improvement strategies.

The school systematically analyses attendance data to identify trends and barriers affecting attendance. This information is used to target support, evaluate the impact of interventions and ensure that resources are directed towards pupils and groups most at risk of poor attendance.

School leaders and governors receive regular attendance reports, including information relating to persistent absence, severe absence, punctuality and the attendance of vulnerable groups, enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities for attendance oversight and improvement.

9.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Identify attendance patterns across the school to identify common issues and barriers and share effective practice between schools

9.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 9.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the local governing body and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other trusts and schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

9.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
    - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
    - Explain the help that is available
    - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
    - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 7, above)

9.5 Children Missing Education

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

We recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse, and child sexual and criminal exploitation. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachievement, radicalisation and becoming NEET (not in education, employment, or training) later in life.

Effective information sharing between parents, schools and Local Authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from the academy without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the academy and the Local Authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

We will notify the Local Authority when we are removing a pupils' name from the academy admission register. We will also notify Children's Social Care if we have any safeguarding concerns.

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 2 years by Carly Vass, Principal. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full local governing body.

- Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment

S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency

Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays