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**Monkfrith School**

**Attendance Policy**

At Monkfrith, we believe that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance, and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

* Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
* Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
* Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils and parents.
* Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
* Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
* Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
* Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
* Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and pupils.
* Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

1. **Legal Framework**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

* Education Act 1996
* Equality Act 2010
* The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
* The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
* Children and Young Persons Act 1963
* DfE (2022) ‘Working together to improve school attendance’
* DfE (2022) ‘Keeping children safe in education 2022’
* DfE (2016) ‘Children missing education’

1. **Roles and Responsibilities**

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

* Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
* Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school’s ethos and policies.
* Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
* Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
* Regularly reviewing attendance data.
* Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
* Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school’s Complaints Procedures Policy.
* Having regard to ‘Keeping children safe in education’ when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
* Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The headteacher is responsible for:

* The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
* Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance officer role.
* Ensuring all parents are aware of the school’s attendance expectations and procedures.
* Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

* Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
* Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
* Modelling good attendance behaviour.
* Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
* Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The attendance officer is responsible for:

* The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
* Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.
* Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
* Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
* Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance.
* Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
* Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.

Pupils are responsible for:

* Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
* Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

Parents are responsible for:

* Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
* Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
* Updating the school if their details change.
* The attendance of their children at school.
* Promoting good attendance with their children.

1. **Definitions**

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

**Absence:**

* Arrival at school after the register has closed
* Not attending school for any reason

**Authorised absence:**

* An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
* Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
* Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
* An absence due to a family emergency

**Unauthorised absence:**

* Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
* Truancy before or during the school day
* Absences which have never been properly explained
* Arrival at school after the register has closed
* Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
* Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
* Leaving school for no reason during the day

**Persistent absence (PA):**

* Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

1. **Attendance Expectations**

The school has high expectations for pupils’ attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

* The morning register will be marked by 8:55am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time. Pupils attending after this time up until 9.15am will receive a mark to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark
* The afternoon register will be marked by 1:30pm. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.

1. Absence Procedures

Parents are required to inform school via Arbor or a telephone call on the first day of their child’s absence with an explanation and an estimation of how long the absence will last.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by **the close of the morning register** to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school. Children who walk to school independently will be prioritised.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

* Ascertain the reason for the absence.
* Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
* Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
* Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

In the case of PA, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the attendance officer. The school will inform the LA, on a termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation.

Children with attendance below 90% will be discussed at the termly meeting with the Educational Welfare Officer.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries.

1. Attendance Register

The school uses Arbor to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and share with the appropriate authorities.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

* / = Present in the morning
* \ = Present in the afternoon
* L = Late arrival before the register has closed
* C = Leave of absence granted by the school
* E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
* H = Authorised holiday
* I = Illness
* M = Medical or dental appointments
* R = Religious observance
* B = Off-site education activity
* G = Unauthorised holiday
* O = Unauthorised absence
* U = Arrived after registration closed
* N = Reason not yet provided
* X = Not required to be in school
* T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
* V = Educational visit or trip
* P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
* D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
* Y = Exceptional circumstances
* Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

1. **Authorising parental absence requests**

Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the headteacher – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the headteacher, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil’s education into account. The headteacher’s decision is not subject to appeal; however, the school will be sympathetic to requests for absence by parents, and will not deny any request without good reason.

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents to contact the headteacher **in writing** prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil’s previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. The school is not likely to grant leaves of absence for the purposes of family holidays.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

* Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
* When a pupil’s attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
* Where a pupil’s authorised absence record is already above **10 percent** for any reason

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

**Illness and healthcare appointments**

Parents will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to obtain approval for their child’s absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

**Performances and activities, including paid work**

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances or activities, whether they receive payment or not, which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school’s absence(s).

Additional arrangements will be made by the school for pupils engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education – this may involve private teaching. These arrangements will be approved by the LA who will ensure that the arrangements are suitable for the pupil.

The pupil will receive education that, when taken together over the term of the licence, amounts to a minimum of three hours per day that the pupil would be required to attend a school maintained by the LA issuing the licence. This requirement will be met by ensuring a pupil receives an education:

* For not less than six hours a week; and
* During each complete period of four weeks (or if there is a period of less than four weeks, then during that period), for periods of time not less than three hours a day; and
* On days where the pupil would be required to attend school if they were attending a school maintained by the LA; and
* For not more than five hours on any such day.

Where a licence has been granted by the LA and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the school. Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the LA, it is at the discretion of the headteacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day. The headteacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a pupil’s attendance would fall below **96 percent**. Where a licence has not been obtained, the headteacher will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

**Religious observance**

The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil’s parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

1. SEND and health-related absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil’s non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child’s lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

1. **Working with parents to improve attendance**

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The school will ensure that there are two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child’s legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parents about their child’s levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the school will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

**W**here these barriers are related to the pupil’s experience in school, e.g. bullying, the attendance officer will work with the headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g. the DSL and SENCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school’s control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil’s family, the attendance officer will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children’s social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

1. **Persistent Absence (PA)**

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:

* Children in need
* LAC
* Y**oung** carers
* Pupils who are eligible for FSM
* Pupils with EAL
* Pupils with SEND
* Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend school. These include:

* Meeting with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
* Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.

1. Legal Intervention

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils’ attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect, the school will consider:

* Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school’s point of contact in the Educational Welfare Team.
* Working with the LA to put a parenting contract or an education supervision order in place.
* Engaging children’s social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

Where the above measures are not effective, the headteacher will issue a fixed penalty notice in line with the LA’s code of conduct.

Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

1. **Monitoring Attendance**

**The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence, for:**

* **The school cohort as a whole.**
* **Individual year groups.**
* **Individual pupils.**
* **Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds.**
* **Other groups of pupils, e.g. pupils with SEND, LAC and pupils eligible for FSM.**
* **Pupils at risk of PA.**

**The governing board will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.**

**The school will also benchmark its attendance data against local-, regional- and national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement, and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools.**

**This policy will be reviewed annually.**