



Kirk Merrington Primary School

Attendance Policy

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Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

Kirk Merrington Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be, and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met, but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and, therefore, at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to a child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

Here's what the national data shows:

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Attendance Matters:

Percentage	Days absent	Comment	Achievement	Attendance Stage
Above 97%	Less than 6 days absence per year	Excellent attendance	Will almost certainly achieve full potential	CELEBRATE
95-96%	10 days absence per year	Missing 2 weeks of every school	Likely to achieve but could still improve	ENQUIRY
90-94%	19 days absence per year	Missing one month of school every year	Will be harder for the children to achieve their best	ENQUIRY
85-89%	29 days absence per year	Missing 6 weeks every school year	High risk of under achievement	ENQUIRY AND SUPPORT
80-84%	38 days absence per year	Missing a year of school over the time spent in Primary education	Almost impossible for the children to keep up	SUPPORT AND ENFORCE
BELOW 80%	More than 38 days absence per year	Missing over a year of school over the time spent in Primary education	Extreme impact on learning and development	SUPPORT AND ENFORCE

At Kirk Merrington Primary School we recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the school's day to day life.

We recognise the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium).

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding, anti-bullying. Behaviour, SEN and supporting children with medical conditions.

Kirk Merrington Primary School and all partners will work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can and want to be in school and are ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



Listen and Understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen and to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



Facilitate Support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



Formalise Support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances they may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our pupils is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- We aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other pupils.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

At Kirk Merrington Primary School we aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school. From the moment children join the school we want to ensure we work together with parents to promote good attendance and shared responsibility.

2. Attendance data

At Kirk Merrington Primary School attendance data is analysed continually at whole school level, class level and individual level. This enables us to target efforts to the children and cohorts who need it most.

We identify patterns of poor attendance and aim to work with families to remove any barriers or provide support. When necessary, support from other agencies would be sought and more formal steps taken.

3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

When a pattern is spotted, the school will discuss this with the pupil and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and make a plan / otherwise agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

4. Facilitate support

Kirk Merrington Primary School will work hard with families to remove barriers to attendance and help children and parents access support. This might include Early Help or a whole family plan if there are wider issues affecting attendance. All possible help will be sought and any necessary processes put in place to reduce persistent or severe absence.

5. Formalise support

Where support is not working or when attendance does not improve then plans will be escalated and formalised in conjunction with the local authority. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

6. Enforce

When all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Frequently asked questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you enrol your child in a school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' which gives permission for a child to be absent from school. Leave of absence must be applied in advance and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's head teacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's head teacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Attendance and absence management

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

Kirk Merrington Primary School promotes good attendance and punctuality through:

- Parental information provided in leaflet form
- Communication via Dojo
- Letters home
- Appropriate rewards and incentives
- Attendance assembly and display

Communication

The school requests that all parents report and explain the reasons for absence and ensure that your contact and emergency contact details are up to date. It is vital that school can contact parents if a child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

Absences are analysed continually across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone or letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The sooner that concerns are shared, the sooner they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

On the first day of absence

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home, the school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about the reasons.

Doctor's and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should.

Periods of extended absence

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days, then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received, the school will call to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's head teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parents provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and, therefore, have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Punctuality

Registration time is at **9am**. At 8:55am the pupil entry gates will be locked and any pupils arriving after this time must enter by the main entrance.

It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for the child who is late and the rest of the class. Any child arriving between 9am and 9.15am will receive a late (L) mark in the register. Registers will be closed at 9.15am and any children arriving after this to time will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark. A U mark is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs).

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions, the head teacher will request a meeting to discuss reasons and to offer support.

If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason the head teacher will request a formal meeting with the parent and the school's Local Authority Attendance Officer.

Help and Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed, we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are not able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually, taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Pupils with specific needs

In order for the Attendance Policy to be applied fairly and consistently, the school will consider the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Please see key contact list and details at the start of this document.