



# **Pupil Attendance Policy**

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## **Manchester Secondary Pupil Referral Unit - Mission Statement**

The Manchester Secondary Pupil Referral Unit (MSPRU) provides full time education for pupils who are permanently excluded, or at risk of being permanently excluded from their mainstream high school/academy.

We offer a curriculum that combines a focus on core subjects (English, Maths, ICT, Science) with a wide range of enrichment through the art and sport programmes to support our pupils' personal and social development.

Each MSPRU pupil has an individual learning plan which is reviewed regularly. Targets for each pupil address learning needs, personal development and attendance as well as planning for next steps.

Pupils stay with us for varying lengths of time and are supported throughout transitions to new placements or schools where they are identified as the best long term setting for the pupil.

Excellent attendance is the single most important factor enabling us to provide the best support for pupils in achieving their personal goals and targets.

### **This policy will aim to:**

- Demonstrate a strong attendance ethos that improves the overall attendance of pupils and reduces the number of persistently absent pupils.
- Develop a framework which identifies roles and responsibilities of the whole school community.
- Highlight a clear structure for promoting good attendance and tackling absence.
- Promote effective, non-bureaucratic systems for monitoring attendance.
- Encourage the use of attendance data and other information to improve school and pupil performance.
- Promote the general importance and legal requirements of good attendance to pupils and their parent/carers.
- Enable early intervention when an individual pupil's absence gives cause for concern.
- Install clear support systems for vulnerable pupils.
- Celebrate good and improved attendance.
- Promote effective partnerships with external support agencies and the Local Authority.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if pupils are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 MSPRU believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling pupils to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 MSPRU value all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

1.4 MSPRU recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also considers the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

## **2. Legal Framework**

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

2.2 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

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

2.4 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 and Department for Education – Working together to improve school attendance guidance September 2022, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.5 The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present
- absent
- present at approved educational activity
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

### 3. Categorising absence

3.1 Where pupils are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

3.2 **Absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher and cannot be authorised by parent/carer.** All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

3.3 Parent/carers must advise the MSPRU learning centre their child attends by telephone, on the first day of absence and provide an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

3.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

#### 3.5 Illness

Parent/carer may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the Headteacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

#### 3.6 Medical/Dental appointments

Parent/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parent/carer must show the appointment card to school.

#### 3.7 Other authorised circumstances

This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

#### 3.8 Excluded (no alternative provision made)

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The pupil's MSPRU learning centre will plan for work to be sent home.

3.9 Parent/carers who need to take their child out of school during term time due to **exceptional circumstances** must complete an 'Application for leave of absence from school' prior to making any arrangements and return it to the Headteacher. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

3.9.1 All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.

3.9.2 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parent/carer has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the pupil will lose their school place.

3.9.3 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent/carers takes their child out of school the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a penalty notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrate's court.

### 3.10 Religious observance

MSPRU acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends, and this necessitates a consideration. Parent/carers must complete an 'Application for leave of absence from school' prior to the religious observance and return it to the Headteacher. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

### 3.11 Study leave

Study leave **may** be granted for year 11 pupils approaching GCSE examinations. School will offer school study programmes during this period to reduce absence levels.

### 3.12 Traveller absence

It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

3.12.1 To protect Traveller parent/carers from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent/carers is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

3.12.2 When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

3.12.3 MSPRU will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at MSPRU will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

3.12.4 MSPRU can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parent/carers must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

3.12.5 MSPRU will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

3.12.6 Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

3.12.7 Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.

### 3.13 Late arrival

Morning registration is between 8.45am and 9.15am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (L). The register will close at 10am, pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late (U). This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate. Afternoon registration is at 1.00pm. Registers must be submitted no later than 1:30pm.

3.13.1 On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the MSPRU learning centre office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

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

3.13.3 The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

3.14 Unauthorised absence will not be authorised unless parent/carers has provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the Headteacher.

3.14.1 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Family holidays

## 4. Deletions from the Register

4.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with the Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

4.2 MSPRU will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 MSPRU believes that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parent/carers, pupils and the wider school community.

As such, the Governing Body and strategic leadership team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parent/carers
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parent/carers
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually in line with the latest DfE guidance - [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/105441/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) May 2022
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and designated staff are adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource



- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through regular reporting to the Governing Body
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

5.2 Learning Centre Managers and staff/Teachers and Attached Teachers/ Pastoral Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parent/carers
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parent/carers
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

5.3 Request that Parent/carers will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and aspire to be the best they can
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance

- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances send an 'Application for leave of absence from school' to the Headteacher.

## 6. Support Systems

6.1 MSPRU recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parent/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

6.2 MSPRU also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

6.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parent/carers and pupils
- Learning Centre Action Plans
- Attendance Officer Attendance Panels
- Senior Management Team Attendance Panels
- Parent/carer contracts
- Referrals to support agencies
- Pupil voice activities
- PSHE
- Time limited part time timetables (PTTT)
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support
- Early Help Assessments
- APST referrals

6.4 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parent/carers and pupils.

6.5 Where parent/carer fails or refuses to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, MSPRU will consider the use of legal sanctions.

## **7. Legal Sanctions**

### **7.1 Prosecution**

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parent/carers realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

7.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent/carer fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

7.1.2 A parent/carer found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

7.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parent/carer Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

### **7.2 Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)**

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence following written warning to improve.

7.2.1 A Penalty Notice gives the parent/carer the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

7.2.2 Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

7.2.3 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

