



Mossbourne Riverside

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. Excellence, Unity and No Excuses

At Mossbourne Riverside Academy (hereafter MRA) we aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For each pupil to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly which means each pupil should be at school, on time, every day the Academy is open.

This policy has been written in line with

- Hackney Education's School Attendance Guidance September 2020
- DFE Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities September 2020
- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Mossbourne Federation Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2020-2021

2. Introduction

MRA is committed to working with parents and other partners to improve school attendance and punctuality. Underpinning this commitment is the understanding that unless children and young people attend school regularly and punctually they will not be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

In March 2020 when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, we made it clear that no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

Now the circumstances have changed, it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on school risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance is therefore mandatory again from the beginning of the Autumn Term in September 2020.

This means that pupils should be back in school and the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- Parents' duty to ensure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age
- Schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- The availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with Local Authorities' codes of conduct

3. Attendance and Punctuality

3.1. Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus may well be around for the foreseeable future. Returning to school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Time spent out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged/vulnerable children. This impact can affect both current levels of learning and a child's future ability to learn.

MRA wants all families to recognise that returning to school is now vital for children and young people's education and wellbeing. The longer children and young people spend out of an education setting, the greater the impact will be across all areas of their learning and development.

3.2. Building Community Confidence

The expectation is that all children will return to school in September.

Many parents may be anxious about coronavirus, MRA will work with them to reduce these anxieties and where necessary provide targeted support.

If parents of pupils are concerned, MRA will discuss the concerns with families and provide reassurance of the measures put in place to reduce the risk.

In addition, MRA will;

- Identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. This includes disadvantaged and vulnerable children, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic. Where necessary, MRA will call upon existing partner agencies such as CAHMS, Children's Social Care, Young Hackney, the REU, SEN, Hackney Education's school attendance service and Synergy Education and Welfare Service.
- Communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families. MRA will make contact with vulnerable families to emphasise that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence or is unable to attend because of sickness).

Where pupils do not return or where attendance is irregular, we will follow normal absence procedures; this includes but not limited to, phone calls, letters of concern and/or attendance meetings.

3.3. Management of Pupil Absence

- 3.3.a. The Principal is the designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance and punctuality.
- 3.3.b. From the Autumn Term, absences will be challenged sensitively and authorised only where satisfactory evidence has been provided.
- 3.3.c. The following is in place at MRA
 - i. An updated policy available via the website.
 - ii. A first day contacting system with parents of children who are absent from school to establish why the child is absent, and when the child is expected to return.
 - iii. Admin support to administer and manage the process of managing attendance.
 - iv. Monitoring of school attendance and interventions when appropriate.
 - v. For pupils' whose attendance continues to deteriorate, a multi-disciplinary discussion will take place with regard to the child's needs and to identify further support that may be required by the pupil and/or their family.

3.4. Wider Support / Interventions

- 3.4.a. If a pupil's attendance fails to improve following in school procedures, MRA will identify any additional needs and secure the right level of support in order to facilitate a pupil's return to school.
- 3.4.b. A school attendance meeting may be arranged, and a plan put in place to improve pupil absence. This plan should also identify any additional support needed by the pupil and/or their family.
- 3.4.c. Given the restrictions on meetings during these times, meetings will be held virtually and consideration will be given to the family's access to technology. Should a meeting be held virtually, then all the participants will have access to the technology which will allow them to hear and speak throughout the meeting.
- 3.4.d. Possible interventions agreed at this meeting could include;

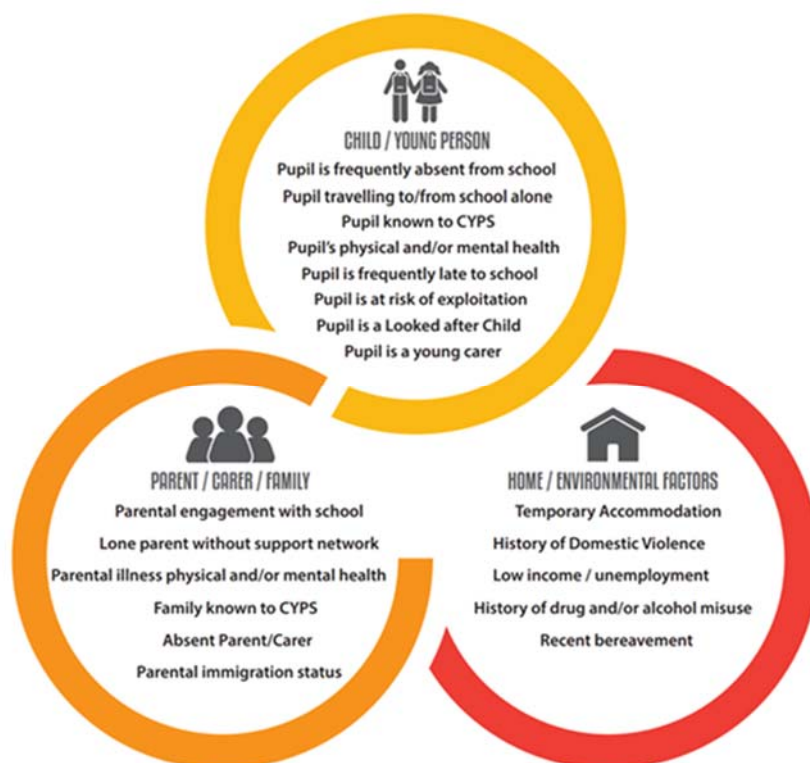
- i. additional in-school support and intervention, including CAMHS and/or the school welfare officer
 - ii. referring the pupil and/or the family to external support services
 - iii. considering a specialist assessment such as those by CAMHS
- 3.4.e. Interventions should be kept under regular review. Any review should allow sufficient time for the support to be put in place and have the desired impact.
- 3.4.f. Following any review, dependent on progress the outcome will likely be
- i. the intervention is closed as sufficient improvement has been made;
 - ii. further targets are set, with appropriate support identified and a new review date set; or
 - iii. following support, there has been a lack of engagement and/or improvements not made. Therefore, consideration will now be made for a more statutory response.

3.5. Statutory Response – Enforcement

- 3.5.a. Synergy Education and Welfare Service Ltd can issue warnings.
- 3.5.b. The key consideration in deciding whether to issue a penalty notice at this time will be whether it is reasonable and will be effective in helping to get the pupil who is not attending, back into school.

3.6. Considering Vulnerability

- 3.6.a. MRA will ensure that vulnerable pupils are known to Synergy Education and Welfare Service Ltd.
- 3.6.b. Where a pupil exhibits difficulties with regular school attendance, such matters maybe discussed with Synergy Education and Welfare Service Ltd or a consideration made for appropriate referrals to services to ensure that the child and family are supported, safe and well.
- 3.6.c. This diagram below seeks to consider the vulnerability for any pupil who is absent, by considering all the relevant factors around the child, parent and family, home and environmental factors. MRA will remain ‘professionally curious’ when any child is absent.



3.7. Other considerations

- 3.7.a. There is a new absence code for 2020 to 2021 related to coronavirus (COVID-19) absences.
- 3.7.b. There are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

- 3.7.c. A new category of non-attendance has been created – **‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19) Code X** (MRA will continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as before the outbreak).
- 3.7.d. This category is only used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:
- i. contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
 - ii. prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- 3.7.e. This new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.
- 3.7.f. MRA will use the attendance and absence codes in use before the outbreak in addition to the new category of ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)’:
- vi. Pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)’ will be recorded using **code X**
 - vii. MRA will continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak

3.8. Reception No-Shows for September 2020

- 3.8.a. MRA will follow the reasonable enquiry flowchart for pupils on a pre-admission list/register for Reception children who do not arrive on the expected start date. MRA will try to establish contact as swiftly as possible as there may be a lot of movement due to Covid-19.
- i. Day 1-2 of non-attendance
 - Telephone/email/text parents and all named contacts to establish child’s whereabouts.
 - ii. Day 3-5
 - Community checks such if siblings attend another school or contact child’s previous school. Contact any known linked agencies and/or professionals. If child resides in another LA, contact with the home authority.
 - iii. Day 6
 - As an interim measure, should MRA fail to make contact with the family a referral can be made to CSF or FAST. If the child is open to CSF, then a referral should be made to the allocated Social Worker. If not, then a referral should be made directly to FAST.
 - Any referral will provide detailed information on the steps taken to contact the family, along with any specific concerns/risks.
 - iv. Day 6-20
 - Following a referral to FAST/CSF MRA will continue enquires including checks with local agencies. At this time, the child will remain on roll until instructed to remove by a member of the Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team.
 - v. If MRA believes the child is at risk, we will contact FAST immediately.

3.9. SEND

- 3.9.a. MRA will make all necessary adjustments to allow for SEND pupils to attend full time.

3.10. Absences

- 3.10.a. Every half-day absence from the Academy has to be classified as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

- 3.10.b. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.
- 3.10.c. Unauthorised absences are those which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:
 - i. Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
 - ii. Truancy before or during the school day
 - iii. Absences which have never been properly explained
 - iv. Any unauthorized leave in term time

3.11. Persistent Absenteeism

- 3.11.a. A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (hereafter PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any pupil's educational prospects. MRA insists on parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.
- 3.11.b. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully.
- 3.11.c. All our PA pupils' parents must agree to actions/interventions to improve their child's attendance, this may include: provision of 'medical evidence only' and or home visits by the Attendance Officer.

3.12. Absence Procedures

- 3.12.a. If a pupil is absent the parent must:
 - i. Contact MRA on the first day of absence and every subsequent day.
 - ii. Provide an explanation of the absence – in PA cases medical evidence must be provided.
- 3.12.b. If a pupil is absent MRA will:
 - i. Telephone the parent on the day of absence for an update, if a call has not been received.
 - ii. If the first contact is not available, the next contact on SIMS will be called.
 - iii. Invite Parent to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer and/or a member of the senior leadership team if absences persist;

3.13. Telephone numbers:

- 3.13.a. MRA will keep up to date contact numbers at all times. Parents must keep MRA up to date with any changes to contact numbers.

3.14. Lateness

- 3.14.a. Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If pupils miss the start of the day they miss learning time. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, and it can be embarrassing for the pupil and can also encourage absence and disengagement.
- 3.14.b. Late Arrivals
 - i. Late entry to the Academy is not guaranteed.
 - ii. If a pupil arrives late but is in time for their year group's allotted time, the pupil may enter the Academy gates on the discretion of the staff member.
 - iii. If a pupil arrives late for their allocated arrival time and the year group's time, they must move away from Academy and return at 09.00.
 - iv. On the return at 09.00, the pupil lines up at Gate 2 supervised by the parent
 - v. The pupil waits for a member of staff and further instruction.
 - vi. Pupil receives a L mark in the register

- vii. If a pupil has a sibling that has a start/finish time considerably different to their own, agreements can be made to enable the parent to use the earlier start time and later pick up time for both children, one sibling will wait for the other supervised by staff.
- 3.14.c. If pupils arrive late on 3 or more occasions a letter will be sent to the parent requesting immediate improvements.
 - 3.14.d. If a pupil is persistently late arriving after registers close they can receive a mark (U Code) that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.
 - 3.14.e. If a pupil has a persistent late record parents will be asked to meet with the member of the Senior Leadership Team and/or the Attendance Officer to resolve the problem. Parents can approach MRA at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

3.15. Punctuality of Parents at Finish Times

- 3.15.a. If a pupil has a sibling that has a finish time considerably different to their own, agreements can be made to enable the parent to use the later pick up time for both children, one sibling will wait for the other supervised by staff.
- 3.15.b. We expect every pupil to be picked up at agreed time. Failure to do so places strain on academy resources and is not in the best interest of the child.
- 3.15.c. If parents do not communicate with the academy and the child has not been picked up by 17.45 it can also become a safeguarding issue and may be referred to the police or social services.
- 3.15.d. If a parent is late the pupil will be placed in the 'late' meeting point. If a parent picks up a child late 3 times or more, they will receive a letter from the academy. They may also be invited to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership team. Late pick ups will also effect the selection process for extended day care including after school club and enrichment activities.

4. Leave in Term Time

- 4.1.a. The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. Any absence from school will disrupt a child's learning. Parents may consider that a holiday, special leave or children accompanying them for work is educational, however children miss out on the teaching that their peers receive during the leave. It also sends the wrong message to children, that they are exempt from the rules that apply to others. Leave in term time also disrupts the routines developed and which are beneficial to the child's development. Children returning from a term time leave are also unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed. Teachers then have to give more time to help individual children catch up on missed work. This poses a potential risk of the under achievement of other pupils in the class. This is something we all have a responsibility to avoid, therefore;
 - i. Leave in term time will not be agreed by MRA.
 - ii. Any period of leave taken will be classed as unauthorised.
 - iii. Fines are issued for leave taken in term time for three days or more.
- 4.1.b. Please note that fines can be issued for each child taken out of school. A penalty notice is a fine of £60 which increases to £120 if not paid within the first 28 days. Thereafter, the penalty remains unpaid this may result in legal action.
- 4.1.c. The Department for Education allows the Principal the discretion to consider authorising leave in term time only in "exceptional circumstances". If you consider that your request for leave is exceptional you will need to discuss with the Principal. If you do not consider it an 'exceptional circumstance' and choose to withdraw your child in term time for leave then a fine is issued.

5. Summary

The Academy has a legal duty to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All Academy staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every pupil's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.