



## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

### 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 is in line with:

- DFE Working together to improve school attendance
- Hackney Education's School Attendance Guidance
- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Mossbourne Federation Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Extended Hours Terms and Conditions

### Introduction

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

It is vital for all children to attend regularly to minimise, as far as possible, the potential impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Absence from school risks pupils falling behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to progress less well in both primary and secondary school. **School attendance is therefore mandatory.**

This means that the following rules on attendance apply, including:

- Parents' duty to ensure that their child attends regularly
- 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

Parents and pupils may have anxieties related to school attendance. MRA will work with pupils and parents to reduce these anxieties and where necessary provide targeted support. In addition, MRA will:

- identify pupils and request support for the family from partner agencies such as the Mental Health Support Team, CAHMS, Children's Social Care and Synergy Education and Welfare Service;
- communicate clear and consistent expectations around attendance.

Attendance 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 and 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 attendance is vital for children's education and wellbeing. The longer children spend out of an education setting, the greater the impact will be across all areas of their learning and development.

### **Management of Pupil Absence**

A member of the Senior Leadership Team is the designated leader with responsibility for attendance and punctuality. Absences will be challenged sensitively and authorised only where satisfactory evidence has been provided.

The following is in place at MRA:

- An updated policy
- A first day contacting system
- Admin support to administer and manage the process of managing attendance
- Monitoring of school attendance and interventions
- Identification of further support that may be required

### **Wider Support / Interventions**

Where a concern arises regarding pupil's attendance and/or punctuality, possible interventions could include:

- Meetings and attendance plans agreed with class teacher/phase leader/pastoral lead/attendance admin officer
- Referring the family to Synergy Education Welfare Service
- Referring the family to external support services
- Regular reviews
- Statutory response

### **Statutory Response – Enforcement**

Parents could face legal action if their child does not attend school regularly and on time. Synergy Education and Welfare Service Ltd can issue Fixed Penalty Notice Warnings for unauthorised absences. Hackney Education can issue fines for unauthorised absences, and court action can be taken for persistent absences.

### **Considering Vulnerability**

MRA will ensure that vulnerable pupils are known to Synergy Education and Welfare Service Ltd. Where a pupil exhibits difficulties with regular attendance, such matters may be 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. To consider the vulnerability for any pupil who is absent, MRA considers all relevant factors around the child, parent and family, home and environmental factors. MRA will remain 'professionally curious' when any child is absent.

### **Other considerations**

MRA will use the attendance and absence codes in line with the DFE's School attendance guidance.

## **Reception**

MRA will follow reasonable enquiry for pupils on a pre-admission list/register for reception children who do not arrive on the expected start date.

## **SEND**

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

## **Absences**

Every session of absence has to be classified as either Authorised or Unauthorised. Information about the cause of any absence is always required. Authorised absences are for illness, appointments which unavoidably fall in school hours (parent/carers must endeavour to book any medical appointments around the school day), emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

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.

Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences that follow a pattern
- Truancy
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Any unauthorised leave in term time
- Holidays

## **Persistent and Severe Absenteeism**

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year) a pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (hereafter PA). Pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school) are considered severely absent (hereafter SA).

Absence at these levels is doing considerable damage to any pupil's educational prospects. MRA insists on parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

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 and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully.

All our PA and SA 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.

## **Absence Procedures**

If a pupil is absent the parent must:

- contact MRA on the first day of absence and every subsequent day;
- provide an explanation of the absence; in PA cases medical evidence must be provided.

If a pupil is absent MRA will:

- telephone the parent on the day of absence for an update, if a call has not been received;
- if the first contact is not available, the next contact on SIMS will be called;

- invite parents or carers to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer and/or a member of the senior leadership team if absences persist.

### **Contact Details**

MRA requests from parents/carers more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. Parents must keep MRA up to date with any changes to contact numbers.

### **Punctuality**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If pupils miss the start of the day they miss learning time. Late pupils also disrupt lessons, and it can be embarrassing for the pupil and can encourage absence and disengagement. Parents can approach MRA at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

Late Arrivals:

- Pupils arriving after 08.55 are late.
- Pupils must report to the main office and wait for further instruction.
- Pupils receive a late mark in the register.
- If pupils arrive late on 3 or more occasions a letter will be sent to the parent requesting immediate improvements.
- 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.
- If a pupil has a persistent late record, parents will be asked to meet with a member of staff to resolve the problem.

### **Punctuality of Parents at Finish Times**

We expect every pupil to be picked up at the agreed time. Failure to do so places strain on academy resources and is not in the best interest of the child.

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 external services.

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. Further club allocations may be affected in line with the terms and conditions of the clubs.

### **Leave in Term Time**

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 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 under achievement for other pupils in the class. This is something we all have a responsibility to avoid, therefore:

- Leave in term time will not be agreed.
- Any period of leave taken will be classed as unauthorised.
- Fines are issued for leave taken in term time for three days or more.
- Please note that fines can be issued for each child taken out of school. A penalty notice is a fine which increases if not paid within the first 28 days. Thereafter, if the penalty remains unpaid this may result in legal action.
- Leave taken in term time may impact Extended Hours allocations and children can be withdrawn from clubs.
- The Department for Education allows MRA the discretion to consider authorising leave in term time only in “exceptional circumstances”. If parents consider that the request for leave is exceptional they must discuss this with a Senior Leader prior to taking the leave. If it is not considered an ‘exceptional circumstance’ and leave is taken, a fine is issued.

### **Summary**

MRA 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.