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Midhurst Rother College

Attendance Policy

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Attendance Policy

Introduction

Here at Midhurst Rother College, we believe it is of vital importance that our students have good attendance at school. This is a successful Academy, and all students play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to be proud to belong and to achieve to the best of their ability. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and should be at Midhurst Rother College, on time, every day the Academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly, and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Regular attendance at school is of critical importance to a child's education. Evidence tells us that the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment¹. Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts the learning of others in the same teaching groups by disrupting classroom routines. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at Midhurst Rother College is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from Midhurst Rother College without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Aims

An effective whole school culture of high attendance is underpinned by clear expectations, procedures, and responsibilities. To ensure all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents understand these expectations, and how they apply at Midhurst Rother College, this policy sets out the following:

- Section 1: the practical procedures to be followed at Midhurst Rother College in relation to attendance
- Section 2: the measures in place at Midhurst Rother College to promote regular attendance by its registered pupils
- Section 3: the responsibilities of particular members of staff in relation to attendance
- Section 4: the action to be taken by staff if a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly

Section 1: Practical Procedures

This section sets out the practical procedures to be followed at Midhurst Rother College in relation to attendance, which are as follows:

Timings:

- All students must be onsite and in the building by 8:25am
- Tutor time / Lessons begin at 8:30am every day.
- The school day finishes at 3:40pm on a Monday to Thursday.
- The school day finishes at 1:40pm on a Friday.
- Registers are taken at the start of every timetabled session.

Students should:

¹ [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

- Aim for 100% attendance, only being absent through genuine illness or other unavoidable reasons.
- Arrive at College by 8.25 am and be punctual to every lesson.
- Register at Student Reception if they are late.
- Ensure that a parent/carer contacts the College to provide a reason for any unavoidable absence.
- See individual teachers and catch-up work missed during the period of absence.

Parents/carers should:

- Make contact with the College by 8:00am to report absence if a pupil is not well enough to attend² or unable to attend due to an unforeseen circumstance, by telephoning 01730 812451 then selecting option 1 or by emailing attendance@mrc-academy.org
- Book holidays outside of term time.
- Book medical appointments, as far as possible, outside of college time.
- Ensure that, in the event of an unavoidable absence due to medical appointment or similar, the child does not take a whole day for a short appointment.
- Emphasise the importance of good College attendance with your child.
- Provide a written explanation for any known absence prior to the absence occurring. E.g., medical appointment cards, letters from professionals/professional bodies etc.
- Work with the College to find ways to support and improve attendance if required.

The College will:

- Provide up to date information on Arbor.
- Provide details on attendance in our regular data report sent home for each student.
- Provide advice, help and support to improve student attendance.
- Report attendance rates and patterns regularly.
- Celebrate good attendance.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Run promotional, informative, and competitive events where parents, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the College.
- Follow absence procedures in order to ensure that any absence is correctly coded, and all children are safeguarded.
- Inform you in writing of your child's attendance once it becomes a concern.
- Hold meetings with students and parents/carers where there are concerns relating to attendance and punctuality.
- Refer students and families to appropriate internal and external agencies for support.
- Liaise with the Local Authority to ensure that legal frameworks and processes are enforced and used appropriately.

If a student is absent and no reason has been provided, the College will:

- Send parent/carer a message via our automated system requesting parent/carer to call the College
- Make phone contact to ascertain the reason for the child's absence

Further actions:

² [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

- In order to ensure that the child is safe, the College may also conduct a home visit, and/or contact the Police and Children’s Services, if no information is received
- The parent/carer may be contacted and asked to provide suitable evidence (e.g., medical, letters from professionals, professional bodies etc.)
- A return to College meeting may be carried out with the child
- Parent/carer will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss attendance if the College is concerned about levels of attendance
- Ten unauthorised absences (5 days) in a ten-week period may lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice
- A referral may be made to the local authority.

Absence requests:

- Where an appointment is known in advance, the parent must email the Attendance team in advance and provide evidence to support the appointment.
- Where other absence is requested, this must be done in advance by applying to the Attendance team, providing evidence as necessary.
- Absence request forms can be found on our website: [Attendance Matters \(mrc-academy.org\)](https://www.mrc-academy.org)

Please note: There are clear links from this policy to our safeguarding and child protection duties as set out in the DfE publication Keeping Children Safe in Education³.

The Admissions Register (or “school roll”)

1. As a school, we are responsible for keeping the Admissions Register up to date. This contains specific personal details of every pupil along with the date of admission or readmission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the last school attended.
2. We also hold emergency contact numbers for each pupil. It is our policy to hold more than one such number, so that we have options to make contact with a responsible adult should the need arise.
3. A pupil’s name can only be lawfully deleted from the admissions register in very limited circumstances. Schools only remove a child from the admissions register if they are confident the legal requirements are met. Further information can be found in the [DFE Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance, Section 7](#).

The Attendance Register

4. The register will be taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion, the school will record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
5. These records will be kept electronically to ensure accuracy and the timely sharing and analysis of information – all of which is critical to ensure good attendance.

³ [Keeping children safe in education 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)

Punctuality and Regular Attendance

6. The school day begins at 8:25am every day and finishes at 3:40pm on a Monday to Thursday, and at 1:40pm on a Friday.

Lateness

7. A pupil is classed as late if they arrive after the 8:30am bell. A pupil will be marked as absent if they arrive after the morning register closes at 9:05am.
8. During the day, a pupil will subsequently be marked as late to lessons if they arrive after the second bell between lessons. Teachers will mark this on the register.
9. A late detention will be issued on the following day if a pupil is marked as late.

Absence

10. Parents⁴ must contact the school when their child is absent to explain that absence. This can be done by telephoning 01730 812451 then selecting option 1 or by emailing attendance@mrc-academy.org. Parents must then give the following details:
 - full name of pupil;
 - pupil's Year group or tutor group;
 - Full name of person reporting absence and relation to child;
 - Reason for absence.
11. Where a reason for the absence is not received by 8:00am on the day of the absence, the school will contact the parents on the same day to understand the reason for the absence.
12. Where further unexplained absences occur, the school will make further contact with the parent (including foster parents and/ or social workers where appropriate). This should be with the aim of understanding **why** the absence has occurred, and **when** the pupil will return.
13. The correct absence code will be inputted into the Attendance Register as soon as the reason is ascertained.
14. Granting a leave of absence will only be made in exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted it is for the Headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. It is extremely unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. To request a leave of absence please complete a leave of absence form, which can be found on our website: [Attendance Matters \(mrc-academy.org\)](http://Attendance Matters (mrc-academy.org))

Section 2: Promoting Regular Attendance

This section sets out the measures in place at Midhurst Rother College to **promote** regular attendance by its registered pupils.

Promoting and incentivising

⁴ Throughout this document, the terms 'parent' and 'parents' are interchangeable and apply equally to 'parents and carers' and includes foster parents and social workers where relevant.

15. The School will:
- a) Treat all pupils and parents with dignity. Our staff will always seek to model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance.
 - b) Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels.
 - c) Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
 - d) Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
 - e) Make the necessary statutory data returns to the local authority.
 - f) Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

Data Strategy

16. The School understands that as poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early detection is crucial. We will therefore undertake regular data analysis to:
- both identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils and/ or pupil cohorts that need it;
 - look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.
17. The School will typically carry out the following analysis:
- a) Monitoring and analysing daily/weekly attendance (including punctuality) patterns and trends, including whether there are particular issues for some children on certain days;
 - b) Patterns of attendance within sessions, to ensure that all pupils are attending all timetabled lessons.
 - c) Half-termly, termly and full-year data analysis of patterns and trends, including analysis of pupils and cohorts, identifying patterns in use of certain codes, days where attendance is typically poor and (where appropriate) subjects with low lesson attendance.
 - d) Benchmarking attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against Trust-level, local, regional and national data.
18. We will use this analysis to identify pupils who need support so that we can focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those students and to identify any common themes to support improvement planning. We will use the data to inform us regarding the impact of school-wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented, to evaluate approaches or inform action. We will also provide regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and to school leaders (including any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads).

Absence reduction strategy

19. We will devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data. This may, for example, include pupils in a year group with higher-than-average absence or for specific groups of students.
20. Data and reports will be shared with the Local Governing Body.
21. As part of promoting regular attendance the school will communicate with parents for differing reasons. For example, it may be to inform parents of a reward their child has achieved

relating to their attendance, to request contact and/or a meeting or to enact a statutory duty of care where a child has been absent unlawfully. This list is not exhaustive. Examples of template letters can be found on our website.

22. As part of promoting regular attendance the school will consider the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices (see paragraph 32).

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

23. The School recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as they are for any other pupil.
24. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, we will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This will include:
 - a) Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed.
 - b) Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
 - c) Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. In addition, the school will work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day. Please see the School's SEND policy for further details on SEND support.
 - d) Establishing strategies for removing the in-school barriers pupils may face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
 - e) Ensuring joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance, recognising that such arrangements can be for a limited time only.
 - f) Ensuring data is regularly monitored for these groups including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.
25. Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. Please see the School's policy on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school for further information.
26. In all cases, the school will be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents; and talk to pupils and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve

their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Part-time timetables

27. All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. Please note that a part-time cannot be used as a reasonable adjustment for SEND, unless this is on a temporary basis and as advised by an external agency e.g., Educational Psychologist.
28. A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at school or alternative provision. Formal arrangements will also be put in place for regularly reviewing it (minimum monthly) with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore will treat such absence as authorised. We will of course consider how best to support learning when a child is working on a part time timetable.

Section 3: Particular Responsibilities

This section outlines responsibilities of particular members of staff in relation to attendance.

- The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school is Mr Phillip Lloyd.
- Responsibility for identifying unexplained absences on "day 1" will fall to the attendance team.
- Responsibility for identifying further unexplained absences will fall to the attendance team, under the leadership of Mrs Jackie Saffery.
- More detailed support on attendance can be requested from the attendance team or your child's Head of Year.

Section 4: Specific Action for Failure to Attend Regularly

This section sets out the action to be taken by staff if a registered pupil fails to attend the school regularly.

29. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school works with and supports the family. Wherever possible, we will keep this person consistent.
30. Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic the school will draw on these relationships and listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. In doing so, the school will take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support.
31. In the first instance, the school will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.

32. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, we endeavour to work together with all partners to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need. As a minimum, this will include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school, agreeing actions or interventions to address them and keeping those actions under regular review in discussion with pupils and families. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. Where absence intensifies, so will the support provided, which will require us to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners, as follows:

- If the needs and barriers are individual to the pupil this may include provision of mentoring, careers advice, college placements, 1-2-1 tuition or out of hours learning, or where appropriate an education, health and care plan or alternative provision.
- Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment.
- Where engagement in support is proving challenging, the school will hold more formal conversations with the parents (and pupil where they are old enough to understand). This is likely to be led by the senior leader responsible for attendance and may include the school's point of contact in the local authority School Attendance Support Team. The aim of these meetings will be to clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future but will also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.
- Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with the school will work with the local authority to:
 - Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.
 - Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
 - Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour. In any 10 week period, 10 sessions of unauthorised absence may trigger a Fixed Penalty Notice. Each day counts as two sessions (morning and afternoon registration). Extended unauthorised absence may result in further legal action. In addition to this, unauthorised holiday in term time will also trigger a Fixed Penalty Notice. The Local Authority has a direct role in managing penalty notices for all schools in their area.
 - Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

33. In all cases, the school will monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, the school will work together with all parties to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

Local Governing Body (LGB) Responsibilities:

34. The LGB recognises the importance of school attendance and will:

- promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

35. The LGB will also oversee:

- that the attendance policy and its contents are generally made known within the school and to parents of registered pupils at the school, and
- that steps are taken at least once in every school year to bring the attendance policy to the attention of all those parents and pupils and all persons who work at the school (whether or not for payment).