

# MORE HOUSE SCHOOL

## POLICY

### Attendance and absence policy

## Kindness, Spirit, Responsibility

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#### Rationale:

**This policy is developed in conjunction with the Department of Education's most recent publication of *Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2024* (this follows the withdrawal of *School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities*). *More House School is committed to maintaining high levels of school attendance.***

It must always be considered alongside guidance surrounding children missing education, supporting pupils with medical conditions at school, education for children with health needs who cannot attend school, suspensions and exclusions, alternative provision, and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

In order for all pupils to fulfil their potential the School has a responsibility to make sure they attend regularly. This includes pupils in the Sixth Form who, from September 2015, are the subjects of the increased age-limit for compulsory education so that they are required to remain in education until their eighteenth birthday. The School is the subject of legal obligations in respect of:

- promoting good attendance,
- recording levels of attendance,
- investigating the causes for absence and
- reporting concerns.

Absence from School is likely to disadvantage pupils because:

- those absent miss planned teaching and learning opportunities;
- the provision of support for pupils who are, or have been, absent can affect the learning of other pupils;
- individual pupils' development of social skills and their social integration within their peer group may be hampered by repeated or significant absence;
- absence from School may be a result of other factors threatening the child's welfare, and is therefore identified as a Safeguarding risk-factor.

#### Purposes:

- Most importantly, to ensure that the school's culture reflects that which ensures pupils want to be at school, rather than seek to avoid it. This requires a connection between a significant proportion of approaches within the school, maintaining a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment. It is essential, therefore, that the school works in partnership, in a collaborative fashion, with pupils and parents accordingly;
  - To encourage a high level of attendance from all pupils;
  - To ensure a consistent approach to monitoring and recording the attendance of all pupils in the School, including those in the Sixth Form, by stating the responsibilities of School staff, parents and guardians;
  - To ensure the School is able to provide attendance data as required for monitoring by the
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governors, census and inspection purposes;

- To support the School's safeguarding arrangements for all pupils;
- To identify unauthorised absence, providing guidance for addressing instances of such absence.

More House School uses the approach suggested by *Working Together, 2024*, of **Expect, Monitor, Listen and Understand, Facilitate support, Formalise support** and **Enforce** to achieve its objectives with support from external agencies.

It is recognised that pupils attending More House School may be considered vulnerable due to their learning needs and this is taken into account with the publication of this policy.

More House School, within its ethos of Kindness, Spirit and Responsibility, will seek to ensure productive and healthy relationships are maintained with pupils and parents. This may include the need to challenge parental views of 'good attendance' if that deviates from the high expectations and ambitions held by the school.

### **Broad Guidelines:**

#### **The School's responsibilities**

Pupils' attendance is registered twice daily; before the first teaching period and again at the end of the last teaching period. Registration of pupils' attendance and absence is recorded on the school's database, by each child's form-tutor, or other designated member of staff supervising the form's registration period, during each of these registration periods, using the codes specified in guidance issued by the Department for Education (see Appendix A). A pupil may be recorded as being present if the person completing the register has seen them in School during the session (half-day period), or is informed by another member of staff that the pupil has been seen by them to be in School. Any pupil who has not been seen to be in School is recorded as being absent.

For any absent pupil, the member of staff completing the register records the absence code appropriate to the information held by the member of staff.

The morning registration is open between 8.30am and 9am, at which point the register is closed and is returned to the School's administrative staff. For any pupil whose absence has not been communicated to the School in advance by the parent or guardian, the School will investigate the absence by making telephone contact with the parent or guardian as soon as possible after 9.05am. This investigation is usually conducted by a designated member of the administrative staff, unless it is arranged that another member of staff, such as the form-tutor, head of year or senior member of staff will investigate. Once the reason for absence has been ascertained, the appropriate code will be recorded on the database by the investigating member of staff, and the form-tutor informed. Pupils arriving at School any time after 8.30am must report immediately to the main School office reception on arrival so that their presence may be recorded.

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If the School is unable to ascertain the reason for a Year Eight or younger pupil's absence from

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School by 9.30am, and is therefore unable to be certain of the pupil's immediate safety, they will invoke the procedures described in the School's Missing policy, and the Headmaster will be informed. For Year Nine or older pupils, this deadline may be extended within the framework specified by the School's Missing policy, whilst investigation is ongoing.

Each form-tutor will monitor the levels of attendance for pupils in their form-tutor group, and identify to the head of year any levels of absence which are greater than those of others in the form-group, and any patterns of lateness or absence they identify. Such reporting will happen on a weekly, or more frequent, basis.

Each Head of Year will monitor the records of attendance for all pupils in their year group by meeting regularly with form-tutors to discuss attendance, and by inspecting records of attendance at least once every half-term. They will do this to make sure records are comprehensive and accurate, and in order to identify pupils whose levels of attendance give cause for concern, noting patterns of lateness or absence. The Head of Year will communicate with individual pupils' parents and guardians as appropriate to challenge absence and lateness, especially repeated absence or lateness, with the aim of reducing absence.

The Deputy Head – Pastoral and Head of Safeguarding (Lead DSL) will meet with the Heads of Year at least once each half term to discuss attendance. The purpose is to ensure that attendance is being monitored and promoted effectively, and that persistent absence or lateness is being identified and challenged. The Deputy Head – Pastoral and Head of Safeguarding (Lead DSL) will support and advise Heads of Year and form-tutors regarding attendance, and make sure that any patterns that may indicate a Safeguarding concern regarding a pupil are investigated and addressed according to the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding arrangements. The pastoral team, in its entirety, will ensure that patterns of absence and subsequent risk are addressed and the earliest point. This may include a voluntary Early Help assessment. Actions which may be considered beyond this point include an attendance contract, an education supervision order, a Notice to Improve and/or penalty notice, social care engagement or further action in accordance with DfE guidance (2024).

The School will maintain records of attendance for a period of six years after the last entry, and make them available for inspection purposes as necessary.

Parents and guardians must make every effort to inform the School in advance of their son's or ward's absence from School (see details below relating to the responsibilities of parents and guardians). Absence because of illness, or because of medical and dental appointments will normally be authorised by the Headmaster. The School may request the parent or guardian provides medical evidence to support an explanation of absence as resulting from illness, especially if such absence is prolonged or appears to support the identification of a pattern of absence. It is not necessary for a parent to inform the school on every individual day of an absence if they have shared a long-term absence.

In circumstances relating to the above, surrounding appointments or illness, the school will provide school work for pupils who may have an ongoing medical condition, resulting in one long period of absence or more frequent, shorter periods. The school will not provide school work for

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pupils who are absent for a short period (from one day to one school week – 5-days).

The Head of Year will put in place appropriate measures to support any pupil returning to School after a period of absence, including supporting their social reintegration with peers and addressing, as far as possible, learning missed whilst absent.

The School will notify Surrey local education authority, or the local education authority responsible for the pupil's placement, or in which area the pupil's home residence is registered, in the following circumstances:

- if a pupil funded by the local education authority leaves the School;
- if a pupil leaves the School and the School does not know the pupil's new school placement, or if the School has information that the intention of the parent or guardian is to educate the pupil outside the school system, e.g. at home;
- if a pupil has a medical condition certified by the School nurse that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend School;
- If a pupil will miss 15 consecutive days of school due to illness;
- if a pupil is permanently excluded;
- if a pupil is absent without the Headmaster's authorisation for a continuous period of ten days or more.

The School, whilst following Safeguarding guidelines, will request further information to provide to Inclusion teams for local education authorities if attendance drops below an 80% threshold.

If a pupil is deemed to be 'missing' from education (children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school), the school will file CME (Child Missing Education) documentation with the relevant Local Authority, as well as the Single Point of Access through Surrey Local Authority. However, the school will also notify the relevant local authority in the case where a pupil is absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeated occasions. The school will, however, have engaged with external stakeholders including parents and the police, if there is reason to believe a pupil is at risk.

If a pupil's placement has ceased for any reason, the presiding Local Authority will be communicated with at the point of departure.

### **Parent and guardian responsibilities (a summary)**

- Parents and guardians must make every effort to inform the School in advance of their son's absence from School.
- Informing the School of a pupil's absence can be done by e-mailing the School administrative staff ([schooloffice@morehouseschool.co.uk](mailto:schooloffice@morehouseschool.co.uk)), or by telephoning on 01252 792 303. When communicating by e-mail, parents are asked to copy in the pupil's form-tutor as well. By ensuring all messages are received by the School's administrative office, the possible absence of the pupil's form-tutor will not prevent the information reaching the administrative staff.
- If reporting absence on the day of absence, e.g. because of illness, the parent or guardian should telephone the school office administrative staff on 01252 792 303, and leaving a message on the absence voicemail facility where appropriate.

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- Wherever possible, parents and guardians should arrange pupils' medical and dental appointments for outside School hours.

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- Parents and guardians are required to request the Headmaster's authorisation for any other anticipated absence in advance. The School is obliged to grant pupils leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of each individual case. Such leave may be granted for religious observance.

### School administrative staff responsibilities (a summary)

- The School's administrative staff will communicate all information received regarding any pupil's absence or attendance to the pupil's form-tutor or, in the absence of the form-tutor, to the pupil's head of year.
- Any request made by a parent or guardian for a pupil's anticipated leave of absence to be authorised will be communicated to the Deputy Head (Pastoral), who will then communicate with the parent or guardian as necessary.
- One or more designated members of the School's administrative staff will investigate unexplained absence of any pupil as soon as possible after 9.05am on the first day of absence, by seeking to speak directly with the pupil's parents or guardians using such contact information as is held by the School.
- Information obtained will be used to make an accurate entry in the attendance register, and will also be communicated to the pupil's form-tutor or, in their absence, the pupil's head of year.
- If, by 9.30am for any pupil in Year Eight or younger, and by 10.30am for any pupil in Year Nine or older, it has not been possible to ascertain the reason for a pupil's absence from School and it is not known that the pupil is safe at the immediate time, the School's procedures, described in the Missing policy, will be invoked.

### Form-tutor responsibilities (a summary)

- Completing the database session-attendance register by 9am each morning, and by 4.20pm each afternoon.
- Recording the attendance for each pupil in the tutor-group, marking a pupil as being present on-site only if they are in the registration room at the time of registration, or if it is known by the person completing the register that the pupil has been seen by a member of staff during the session (half-day);
- otherwise using the appropriate attendance code (see Appendix A) if a pupil is known to be attending an off-site educational activity, at an authorised college/university or employment interview, participating in a supervised sporting activity, attending an educational visit or trip, or participating in work experience;
- marking all other pupils as absent, recording those for whom the absence is authorised using the appropriate code (see Appendix A), and recording all others using the '*Absent – no authorisation yet*' code (this will be investigated by administrative staff as described above);
- recording the late arrival of any pupil (i.e. after the completion of the morning register but before lunchtime) by using the '*Late – Authorised*' or '*Late - no authorisation*' codes as applicable.
- Investigating unexplained absence from afternoon registration period, invoking the Missing policy procedures where a pupil's absence is not expected and their immediate welfare cannot be established.

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- Monitoring the attendance levels of each pupil in the tutor-group, and communicating concerns and identified patterns to the Head of Year and, where appropriate, the DSL.
- Ensuring attendance and absence records for all pupils in the form are completed in a timely fashion, containing accurate and comprehensive information as described in this policy. It is the form-tutor's responsibility to make sure that the attendance records for their form are accurate on a weekly basis; the records for a week should be accurate, including accurate codes used throughout, by the Friday afternoon of that week or, if the tutor is absent, by the Monday morning of the following week.
- The school retains a class attendance registration, as well as 'session' attendance, which ensures the form tutor can monitor if pupils have missed, or are missing, certain lessons within the school day. This is also considered as part of the Behaviour for Learning protocol.

### **Heads of Year responsibilities (a summary)**

- Monitoring the records of attendance for all pupils in the year group by meeting regularly with form-tutors to discuss attendance, and by inspecting records of attendance at least once every half-term.
- Making sure records of attendance and absence for all pupils in the year group are comprehensive and accurate, and that form-tutors are adhering to their obligations as stated within this school policy.
- Identifying pupils whose levels of attendance give cause for concern, noting patterns of lateness or absence.
- Communicating with individual pupils' parents or guardians as appropriate, or through the form-tutor, to challenge absence and lateness, especially repeated absence or lateness, with the aim of reducing absence.
- Communicating individual concerns to the Deputy Head – Pastoral and Head of Safeguarding.

### **Deputy Head – Pastoral (Senior Attendance Champion) responsibilities (a summary)**

- Meeting with the heads of year at least once each half term to discuss attendance.
  - Ensuring that attendance is being monitored and promoted effectively, and that persistent absence or lateness is being identified and challenged.
  - Supporting and advising heads of year and form-tutors regarding attendance.
  - Crew meetings, held every three weeks, will incorporate discussion surrounding attendance and concerns arising as a result. This includes medical, office, teaching, boarding, safeguarding and pastoral staff members.
  - Making sure that any patterns that may indicate a Safeguarding concern regarding a pupil are investigated and addressed according to the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding arrangements.
  - Reporting to the headmaster serious concerns regarding any individual pupil's attendance
  - In the exceptional circumstance of a pupil requiring a part-time timetable, this will gain the agreement of the school and the parent, it will have a clear ambition and reintegration plan, inclusive of regular review dates as well as an expected, full return date. This will be instigated by the Deputy Head (Pastoral) with liaison with other key leaders. In the case that a pupil has an EHCP, this will be discussed to ensure the support package is suitable and achievable, given reasonable adjustment.
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In cases where a parent or external agency need to engage with the school on an attendance matter, they should contact the Deputy Head (Pastoral) on the normal, school office contact telephone number.

#### **Headmaster responsibilities (a summary)**

- Making sure systems are in place for the effective monitoring of attendance for all pupils.
- Providing information to the governing body regarding levels of attendance, trends and concerns, once each term at the meeting of the full governing body.
- Informing parents and guardians of their responsibilities.

The school's Welfare and Safeguarding Committee (governors) will also request attendance information and further detail (as appropriate) during half-termly committee meetings.

#### **Conclusion:**

The effective monitoring and promotion of pupils' attendance in School supports the safeguarding of all pupils, increases pupils' chances of realising their academic potential, and encourages the development of pupils' social development and confidence.



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#### **APPENDIX A**

The following codes are to be used to record pupils' attendance and absence:

#### **Attendance codes**

|   |                             |  |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| <u>Present</u> in school a.m.   | <b>Present,</b><br><b>/</b> | <u>Present</u> in school p.m.                            | <b>Present,</b><br><b>/</b> |
| <u>Attending a School trip, or off-site educational activity where the provider is approved by the school</u> | <b>B</b>                    | Attending school/college/university/employment interview | <b>J</b>                    |
| Attending education provision arranged by the local authority   | <b>K</b>                    | Attending an educational visit or trip                   | <b>V</b>                    |
| Attending a <u>sporting activity</u> where the provider is approved by the School including school matches    | <b>P</b>                    | Late, before registration closes.                        | <b>L</b>                    |
| Attending authorised work experience (applicable only to Sixth Form pupils)                                   | <b>W</b>                    | Arrived in school after registration closes.             | <b>U</b>                    |
| School not satisfied with absence reason (unauthorised absence)   | <b>O</b>                    | Reason for absence not yet explained                     | <b>N</b>                    |
| Dual registered at another school   | <b>D</b>                    |  |                             |

#### **Authorised absence codes**

(The School has either given approval in advance or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.)

|  |          |   |          |
|--|----------|---|----------|
| Leave of absence authorised by the school (exceptional circumstance) | <b>C</b> | Excluded but no alternative provision made (used whilst a pupil is suspended from School) | <b>E</b> |
| Holiday authorised by the school                                     | <b>H</b> | Illness (not including appointments)  | <b>I</b> |
| Medical or dental appointments                                       | <b>M</b> | Religious observance, as authorised by the headmaster                                     | <b>R</b> |

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|  |           |  |           |
|--|-----------|--|-----------|
| Study leave (only applicable to Sixth Form students , or to Year Eleven during public examinations, as agreed in advance by the head of year and sanctioned by the headmaster) | <b>S</b>  | Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence                                | <b>T</b>  |
| Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available  | <b>Y1</b> | Unable to attend school due to a lack of access arrangements     | <b>Q</b>  |
| Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel  | <b>Y2</b> | Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed | <b>Y3</b> |
| Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed  | <b>Y4</b> | Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention       | <b>Y5</b> |
| Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause  | <b>Y7</b> |  |           |

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#### Unauthorised absence codes

|  |          |   |          |
|--|----------|---|----------|
| Holiday not authorised by the headmaster or in excess of the authorised period | <b>G</b> | Absent without authorisation (the reason for absence or its authorisation is not yet confirmed, or the School is not satisfied with the reason given) | <b>N</b> |
|--|----------|---|----------|

**Administrative codes** (these codes are not available to form-tutors, and can only be applied by designated administrative staff)

|   |          |   |          |
|---|----------|---|----------|
| Not required to be in School (applicable to pupils over the age of eighteen only)<br><br>OR<br><br><b>'Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' (obsolete as of September 2021).</b> | <b>X</b> | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (the School, or part, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; transport provided by the School or local authority is not available; a local or national emergency resulting in widespread disruption to travel preventing the pupil from attending; or the pupil is in custody (if <b>B</b> cannot be used because there is not the supporting evidence) | <b>Y</b> |
| The pupil has been removed from the admissions register   | <b>Z</b> | Planned whole or part-School closure (including INSET and bank-holidays)  | <b>#</b> |