



THE BEDIFFERENT FEDERATION



ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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Introduction

The BeDifferent Federation of Lonesome, Singlegate and William Morris Primary Schools is committed to providing an excellent and efficient education to all children.

We believe that a high level of school attendance is essential in ensuring that all children reach their full potential. We will consistently work towards a target of 100% attendance for all children and recognise the impact that regular and punctual attendance has on children's:

- Achievement
- Attainment
- Enjoyment of learning through a diverse range of curricular opportunities and experiences
- Ability to build relationships within school
- Motivation to learn
- Confidence

The BeDifferent Federation endeavours to provide an environment where all children feel valued and welcome and embraces the concept of equal opportunity for all.

We promote early intervention and the prevention of poor attendance.

School attendance is subject to various educational laws and this policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

The BeDifferent Federation will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals and will analyse attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets each year.

This policy contains within it the procedures that the schools will use to meet the set attendance targets.





Roles and Responsibilities

The **Chief Executive Headteacher** is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance
- Implementation of this policy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting to Governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of identified children
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Working with the Attendance Officer to identify any families/children whose attendance is a concern and making referrals to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) for issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The **Attendance Officer** is responsible for:

- Ensuring that any absence reported is logged on the school SIMS system with the reason for absence
- Ensuring that the office team is making 'first day' absence calls to any child recorded as absent where there is no reason provided by the parent
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to the Chief Executive Headteacher and reporting concerns about attendance
- Working with the EWO to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Chief Executive Headteacher when a referral may need to be made to the EWO to issue fixed-penalty notices

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office
- Monitoring any children who may have attendance issues that are linked to concerns around Child Protection and to be vigilant in reporting any unexplained





absence to the DSL or Deputy DSL

The **Governing Body** is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the Federation's policies and ethos
- Ensuring that school leaders are fulfilling expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for each school
- Ensuring that staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding Senior Leaders to account for the implementation of this policy

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child(ren) is in school every day and arrives on time
- Calling the school to report their child's absence before 8.00 am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when their child(ren) is expected to return
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child and review these as required
- Ensuring that, where possible, appointments for their child(ren) are made outside of the school day and providing medical evidence of any appointments booked

School Procedures

Absence

We keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. Registers provide the daily record of attendance of all pupils. They are legal documents and the register may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance in school.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. **The register for the first session will be taken between 8.30 am and 8.45 am and will be kept open until 9.00 am. The register for the second session will be taken on the children's return to the classroom after the lunchtime period.**





Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45 am on each school day.

The register is marked using the codes as advised by the Department for Education (DfE) 'School Attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities).

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Only the Chief Executive Headteacher or a Senior Leader acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as 'no reason given' and a phone call will be made to the parents, followed by a ParentMail if a reason is still not obtained. On the first day of absence, parents should telephone the school to inform them why their child is unable to attend and how long they are expected to be absent. The school is then able to mark the register appropriately as either an authorised or unauthorised absence. The decision as to whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised rests with the school.

Parents/carers must inform the school of the reason for the absence by 8.00 am on the first day of an unplanned absence, or as soon as is practically possible, by calling the school office. There is an option on the school answering system to report a child's absence and a message may be left. This message must include:

- The child's full name
- The child's class
- The reason for absence – this must be specific e.g. vomiting, chesty cough
- When it is anticipated that the child will return to school
- Whether a GP appointment is being sought (if necessary)

Parents/carers may also report their child's absence using the ParentMail absence reporting feature.

If a child is absent from school, he/she should not be on the school site during the day of the absence.

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the child should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Attending a medical or dental appointment will be





counted as authorised as long as the child's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Evidence of appointments (e.g. letter/appointment card) may be requested.

Ten Days Absence

Any child who is absent without an explanation for 10 days in a term will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the EWO. The school will include any details of the action that has been taken in the referral.

Frequent Absence

Registers are monitored regularly by the Chief Executive Headteacher, Attendance Officer and EWO to identify any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a child begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem, depending on severity, using strategies such as:

- Attendance Officer or Chief Executive Headteacher talking to the parent/child
- A letter from the Chief Executive Headteacher
- A meeting with the Attendance Officer, Family Support Worker and/or Chief Executive Headteacher
- A referral to the Education Welfare Officer

Where attendance falls below 90%, the school may request medical evidence (and provide parents with guidance on acceptable examples of medical evidence) for all future illness absences. The school will also refer the child to the School Nurse or the Specialist Nurse in the Education Welfare Service, if there is a high level of absence for medical reasons. If medical evidence is requested but not provided, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. A high level of unauthorised absence will result in a referral to the EWO who will issue a Penalty Notice Warning. A monitoring period will then follow, and if attendance does not improve within the monitoring period, a Penalty Notice may be issued which carries a fine of £160.00.

For children with appropriately evidenced illness, the school will follow appropriate protocols to offer support.

Supporting Children





It is important that, where appropriate, on return from a period of absence all children are made to feel welcome. This should include a discussion about the best way for a child to catch up on any missed work where appropriate and be brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other children.

We recognise that some children may have attendance problems that could be caused by a variety of factors which may include chronic illness; anxiety; family issues etc. We aim to support children in a variety of ways including:

- Interviews with parents or carers
- Pastoral Support Programmes
- Individual Support Programmes
- Referral to a range of external agencies
- Working with our Family Support Workers

Lateness

School officially begins at 8.30 am for all children in Reception – Year 6.

Children must arrive in school by 8.45 am on each school day for registration at that time.

The register is taken daily by 8.45 am. Any child who arrives after 8.45 am must enter via the school office and register with office. Any child who arrives in school after 8.45 am will be marked 'L' for late.

In accordance with the 'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006', if your child arrives after 9.00 am, they will receive a mark, code U, 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 you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice or other legal action if the problem persists.

Children who arrive late following an early morning appointment should bring evidence of this, e.g. an appointment card.

Children who are consistently late for school are disrupting not only their own





education, but also that of other children.

Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, you will be invited to a meeting to resolve the issues. If there is no improvement following this meeting, further action will be taken which may include referral to external agencies.

You may approach the school at any time for support and advice if you are having difficulty getting your child to school on time or maintaining regular attendance.

Late Collection of children after school

School ends at 3.15 pm for Reception – Year 6 children Monday – Thursday and at 2.30 pm on Friday.

As per Local Authority guidelines for schools where no after school childcare provision is offered - after 1 hour if it has not been possible to contact a parent/carer/emergency contact, then we will contact our Safer Neighbourhood Police Officer, or Mitcham Police Station.

A child is considered to be 'late' when a parent/guardian has not collected them within 15 minutes of the end of the school day/planned school activity.

When a child is collected late from school, it is distressing for them and unfair on the staff member who has their own personal or professional commitments. A late book is kept in the office where the time a child is collected is recorded. Where necessary, this book will be submitted as evidence for the EWO (Education Welfare Officer).

If a child is not collected from school promptly and contact has not been made by the parent/guardian with a valid reason, the Federation will follow the below outlined procedure:

- Where it is the first instance of late collection in a term:
 - o A phone call will be made home and parents/guardians informed that the child has not been collected
- Where it is the second instance of late collection in a term:
 - o A phone call will be made home and parents/guardians informed that the





child has not been collected

- The parent/guardian will be made aware on collection that any further instances of late collection will result in a fee to be paid to the school
- Where it is the third instance of late collection in a term:
 - A phone call will be made home and the parents/guardians informed that the child has not been collected
 - Parents/guardians will be informed that they will now incur a fee which must be paid into the child's ParentPay account for childcare

Any additional instances of late collection after this will continue to incur a fee to be paid by the parent/guardian.

The fees for late collection are:

- £5.00 for up to 30 minutes
- £10.00 per half hour for any period over 30 minutes

Leave of Absence

The Governors of the BeDifferent Federation believe that leave of absence should be avoided as it can have a damaging effect on a child's education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that on occasions there may be extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify such leave.

The School Attendance (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2024 state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

The school policy is as follows:

- Parents must request leave of absence in writing using the Leave of Absence form, Appendix 2 (or verbally if this is not possible – this will then be recorded in writing by a member of staff) to the school as far in advance as possible
- The request must include the reason why it is necessary to take such absence during term time, including exceptional circumstances and any additional supporting evidence, such as a medical certificate. For an emergency trip, evidence of the last-minute booking of flights must be provided





- On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form, together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. Without the appropriate evidence, all leave of absence will be unauthorised
- A letter outlining the decision of the school (whether absence is authorised or unauthorised) will be sent within 7 days

The only criteria that will be considered for leave of absence in term time is the exceptional nature of the request for the absence. We will not consider your child's current attendance or attainment in order to decide the outcome of your request.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised is very likely to result in a Penalty Charge Notice being issued and/or prosecution under s4441 Education Act 1996, by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Charge Notice currently carries a fine of £160.00

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away but are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid.

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with school policy.

Working in partnership with Parents/Carers

Building respectful relationships with families and working in collaboration is essential to ensuring the best outcomes for children. We require all parents to actively support the work of the school, including promoting attendance and engagement. The school is committed to ensuring that systems and processes are in place with regards to promoting attendance and would encourage parents to make contact if they have





concerns about their child.

It is pertinent that school and parents/carers work together with a shared plan and outcomes when supporting a child's attendance and wellbeing. If despite persistent attempts to work with parents, there continues to be a lack of engagement, then legal procedures may be followed to secure engagement and school attendance.

The schools will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education.

Attendance Contracts (see Appendix 3 for example contract)

An Attendance Contract is a formal written agreement with the school, parent/carer, child and EWO.

The aim is to offer support by listening to the reasons for absence and difficulties that prevent regular school attendance during a meeting with the parent/carer, child, school staff and EWO.

The purpose of the meeting is to set out an action plan to address the poor school attendance of the child with realistic achievable targets to be made within a reasonable time scale. An Attendance Contract can cease after 4 weeks if there is no improvement in attendance/punctuality in line with the targets set.

Attendance Awards

The school will use the following system(s) to reward children who have good or improving attendance:

- Weekly celebration assembly for children to celebrate classes achieving the National attendance target
- Weekly individual personalised certificates for children who are being supported on a parental contract and are attending school more

Each class whose attendance exceeds the National target of 94% on a Friday each week will be eligible to receive an attendance award the following Wednesday. The class with the highest attendance on a Friday will be rewarded with a celebratory Pizza Party with





personalised stickers. All other classes who achieved the target will receive either a personalised certificate for each child in the class or another personalised gift as agreed by the Head Boy and Girl Team and the Chief Executive Headteacher.

Attendance Targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. Progress towards these targets will be analysed regularly by the Chief Executive Headteacher and strategies adopted in line with this policy will be implemented to achieve or exceed the target. It is the responsibility of parents, staff and children at Lonsome, Singlegate and William Morris Primary Schools to ensure good attendance and achievement of targets set.

Legal sanctions

The Local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued, the Penalty Notice fine is £160.00 and issued per parent per child and should be paid within 28 days.

Under the Merton Code of Conduct for the issuing of Penalty Notice fines they are issued by the Local Authority at the request of the school.

Penalty Notice fines can be issued for:

- Unauthorised Leave of Absence of 5 days (10 sessions) or more in any rolling 10 week period or for longer periods of absence if the attendance of the pupil meets the criteria for this action to be taken
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as a leave of absence taken in term time without permission
- Where a child is suspended or excluded and is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.





Leaving Lonesome, Singlegate or William Morris Primary School

If you are moving from your address or leaving the UK (therefore leaving Singlegate, Lonesome or William Morris Primary School) you must inform the school office as soon as you know that your child will be leaving us. We will request information from you to enable us to provide your child's school information to their new school and to update our records. If you are moving to an address in the UK, we will need you to provide us with the details of the new school that your child will be attending.

If you do not notify the school, your child will be recorded as a Child Missing from Education and in line with legislation we will notify the Local Authority who will then carry out appropriate searches.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE). Legislation sets out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance.

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs he may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term 'parent' is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.





The legal requirements are found in:
The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006





Appendix 1: Categorisation of Absence

Any child who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those children where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those children who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note: Children recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration





Appendix 2

THE BEDIFFERENT FEDERATION Leave of Absence Form LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

Request for Leave of Absence for exceptional circumstances during Term Time

It is not advisable to take your child/ren on a leave of absence during term time as this causes disruption to their education. Schools must follow the law in this regard and may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances if certain criteria are fulfilled.

School Attendance (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2024

- **Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances is authorised at the discretion of the Chief Executive Headteacher.** (This is **not an automatic right** of parents/guardians)
- You should not normally take your child(ren) on a leave of absence during the school term.
- **Please do not book your leave of absence until authority is given.**
- Each request for leave of absence will be considered individually, taking into account the circumstances of the request and any supporting evidence provided.
- If the absence is approved by the Chief Executive Headteacher you will be advised as to how many days the Chief Executive Headteacher has approved for your child's absence.
- If the school does not agree the absence and you take the leave without permission or your child is absent for more than the agreed number of days the absence will be unauthorised.
- Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of the school may lead to your child(ren) being referred to the Education Welfare Service and the possibility of statutory action and a fine/prosecution

In order for your application for absence to be considered, please complete below:

Name(s) of Child(ren).....





Year Group/Class.....

Home address:.....
.....
.....

Dates of absence: From..... To:.....

Reason for request **(additional evidence may be required)**/Who is travelling?
.....
.....
.....
.....

Signed: Parent/Guardian

Email address:..... Mobile phone number:.....

Date form submitted:.....

The above request for leave of absence in term time for
has/has not been authorised. If authorised, your child/ren should return to school
on:.....

Signed..... Headteacher/Principal.....





School Data Checklist:

For School Office Use Only

<u>Pupil's name</u>	
Previous leave of absence requested/taken (last 2 years)	
Nature of exceptional circumstances and evidence provided	
No of days granted (if any)	





Appendix 3

The BeDifferent Federation Attendance Contract

Student Name		DOB/Year Group		Student's School	
Parent/Carer 1 Full Name		Parent/Carer 2 Full Name		Address	
Contact Number		Contact Number			
Child's Ethnicity		Any SEND			
				Date	
				Time (start/end)	
Attendance last year 2022-2023		Sessions of unauthorised absence		Number of late marks	
Attendance to date:					
What are we worried about?		What's working well?		What needs to happen? What will it look like to not be worried anymore?	
0					
10					
<p>On a scale of 1 to 10 , where 10 means <i>the child</i> is attending school regularly on every day the school is open and only absent in exceptional circumstances and when authorised and 0 means that <i>the child's</i> attendance is not improving, where do we rate the situation?</p>					





Targets for pupil, parent, school and agencies	Date to be achieved by	Review of targets	Date to be achieved by

Date of review:

This is a voluntary agreement where all parties agree to work together to follow the agreed plan to support the pupil attend school regularly and punctually.

I agree to work together with X Primary School and the local authority to follow the agreed plan

Signed: Date: Student's score

Signed: **Date:**..... **Parent's score**

Signed: Date: Parent's score

I agree to provide the above support to the parent(s) for the purpose of complying with the plan.

Signed:..... **Date:**..... **Professional's score**.....

Signed: Date: Professionals score

