

Attendance and punctuality policy for Mulberry School for Girls

Approval Body:	Mulberry School for Girls LGB
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Policy Version:	6

Version Control

Version	Reviewed	Changes since last version
1	November 2019	- Additions to the policy on registration procedures, daily absence call procedures, extended leave, persistent absence monitoring and tracking initiative, off-rolling procedures and how the policy will be monitored - Appendix on Children Missing Education
2	November 2021	- Updated roles of new Attendance Welfare Officer and Deputy Year Learning Coordinators in tracking and monitoring attendance and punctuality. - Updated detail about procedures around students registering late, daily absence calls and punctuality sanctions.
3	November 2022	No changes – part of an annual review
4	November 2023	- Updated to reflect new registration times daily - Updated to remove reference to Academic Review Day
5	November 2024	- Daily attendance data now shared with the DfE and local authorities for improved oversight. - Stricter guidelines on penalty notices for unauthorised absences, including a specified fine structure and escalation process. - Removal of the 'H' code for holidays; now recorded as 'C' if approved under exceptional circumstances. - Introduction of half-termly thresholds to proactively track students at risk of persistent absence. - Revised procedures for lawful off-rolling, including verification of new educational placements and notification to local authorities. - Strengthened referral criteria for CME cases, detailing specific conditions under which local authority involvement is triggered.
6	October 2025	Update about removing 6th form students from the school roll.

This policy aligns with the DfE's statutory 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' guidance (August 2024), ensuring adherence to the latest attendance and punctuality standards. This policy should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, School Attendance Parental Responsibilities Measures, and School Attendance Guidance for Maintained Schools, Academies, Independent Schools, and Local Authorities.

Regular attendance is essential for every student's growth, progress, and ability to reach their full potential. Missing lessons can cause students to fall behind academically, and consistent attendance is linked to higher achievement. At Mulberry School for Girls, we prioritize and actively promote full attendance. We expect 100% attendance from all students except in cases of exceptional circumstances. Mulberry School for Girls considers attendance below 97% to be unsatisfactory.

Objectives of the Policy:

- *Promote strong attendance habits and minimize absences, including persistent absence*
- *Ensure that students attend school and their lessons on time*
- *Address absence patterns promptly to support students' continuous learning*
- *Ensure that all students have access to the full-time education they are entitled to*
- *Support parents in fulfilling their legal duty to ensure regular school attendance*

1. Introduction

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for students to derive maximum benefit from their education. Consistent attendance not only supports individual learning but also maintains classroom stability and academic standards across the school. Mulberry School for Girls upholds the principles of the 2024 Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance, emphasizing that strong attendance habits contribute to success both academically and in future careers. Reliable attendance and punctuality foster responsibility and resilience, preparing students for life beyond school.

Good attendance promotes valuable attributes like reliability and punctuality, which are critical for a successful working life after leaving school. Truancy, which can often begin at a young age, is linked to an increased risk of criminalized behaviour. Mulberry School for Girls sets annual attendance targets to keep attendance a high priority. We expect all students to attend regularly and punctually to:

- *Reach their full potential,*
- *Minimize unauthorised absences and truancy,*
- *Support school-wide attendance goals in line with the Mulberry Schools Trust's expectations.*

2. Attendance

2.1 Registration

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. *The school will now share daily attendance data with the DfE and local authorities to facilitate early intervention for students at risk of persistent absence.* The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and again during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present,
- Attending an off-site educational activity,
- Absent,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Pupils are expected to be on school site by 8.40am and expected to be present for registration at 8.45am. *Students arriving after this time must check in at the main reception and will be recorded as late on SIMS.* Reception and the member of the senior leadership team on duty will record this on Edulink or directly onto SIMS.

Registration also occurs from 1.50pm until 2pm at the start of period 5 every day. A pupil will be marked late by the class teacher if they arrive after 1.50pm.

All attendance registers will be entered by tutors into the SIMS system. If a student is absent, they will be initially marked with an 'N'. This code will later be updated by the Attendance and Welfare Officer, Year Learning Coordinators, or Deputy Year Learning Coordinators based on the reason provided for the absence. This process is overseen by the Attendance and Welfare Officer to ensure consistency. If a tutor believes a student is present on campus but not in registration, they should still mark the student with an 'N' and add a note with their initials, indicating that they believe the student is on site. Year Learning Coordinators or Deputy Year Learning Coordinators will then verify and correct this information as necessary. The Attendance and Welfare Officer checks registers daily for accuracy and reports the daily attendance figures to Year Learning Coordinators and the Senior Leadership Team.

In compliance with DfE regulations, the school will share daily attendance data with the local authorities to support early intervention for students at risk of persistent absence.

2.2 Daily Absence Calls Procedures

The Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWO) manages the daily absence call process. Calls are conducted by the Deputy Year Learning Coordinators (YLCs) for each key stage, with additional support from the school admin team as needed or when a Deputy YLC is unavailable.

Daily absence procedures are:

- 1. Review all registers and follow up on any that are incomplete or missing.*
- 2. Make phone calls to families, documenting the reason for absence on SIMS, or noting "no answer" along with initials if no contact is made.*
- 3. Immediately inform the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or relevant YLC of any serious concerns.*
- 4. The AWO sends a daily email to YLCs and SLT, listing absent students and reasons for their absences.*
- 5. Follow-up calls are completed by the AWO, with support from YLCs or Deputy YLCs when necessary.*
- 6. If contact with a family cannot be established within 48 hours, the AWO arranges a home visit.*

2.3 Authorised Absence

An authorised absence occurs when a student is absent and the school accepts the reason provided by the parents or carers. In some instances, the school may require supporting documentation, such as a medical note or a letter from a GP, before authorising the absence. Parents are expected to contact the school each morning to inform them of the reason for their child's absence.

2.4 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is when a pupil has truanted from school or when the reason for absence is not accepted. Pupils may also be marked as unauthorised absence when a note or reason for absence is not received. *The school will not authorise term-time holidays unless deemed exceptional; these absences will not be marked with the previous 'H' code, but as unauthorised following DfE guidance.*

In accordance to DfE guidance, a penalty notice should be considered when a student has 10 sessions (half-days) of unauthorised absence within any rolling 10-week school period. These

absences can be consecutive or spread out over multiple weeks and may include a mix of unauthorised absences, such as term-time holidays or late arrivals after the register closes, spanning different terms or school years if within the 10-week timeframe.

2.5 Extended Leave

Extended leave during term time is strongly discouraged and requires prior approval, with documentation provided. If parents / carers intend to take their daughters on extended leave they must complete and submit to reception an Extended Leave Application form. This form will record the last day of attendance and expected return date, reasons for the application and contact information (address, phone number and e-mail) when abroad. Copies of travel documents must also be submitted. All Extended Leave requests will be recorded centrally. Once the request has been submitted a meeting will be held by the Headteacher with the family or a member of the Senior Leadership team or Head of Year if the Headteacher is not available. If the family are unable to attend a home visit may be conducted.

In line with the Local Authority's guidance on holidays in term time, all requests will be declined. Exceptional circumstances must be made and considered by the Chair of Governors. If a parent/carer decides to take their family on extended leave during term time without permission, the child may be taken off roll. Where permission is granted, and the family fail to return by the agreed date, the school may also take the child's name off roll. A referral to the Attendance and Welfare Advisor for a penalty notice will be made if the period of leave amounts to 5 days or more and attendance at the time of referral is less than 96%.

Following updated DfE guidance, fines for unauthorised absences have increased to £80 if paid within 21 days and £160 if paid within 28 days per parent per child. Persistent unauthorised absences may lead to legal action, including magistrate court involvement after three offences within a three-year period.

2.6 Registration and Coding Section

In line with the 2024 DfE guidance, the school will use updated attendance codes to accurately record student attendance. Term-time holidays will no longer use the 'H' code but will be marked as 'C' for exceptional circumstances. Additional codes such as 'E' (exclusion), 'Q' (unique approved absences), and 'Y6' and 'Y7' (approved activities) will be used as required to ensure consistent tracking of attendance.

This updated policy supports our commitment to reducing absences, enhancing student engagement, and promoting a culture of regular attendance.

2.7 Parents/carers' responsibilities

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually as defined in the Education Act 1996.

Parents/carers should:

- *Parents are required to notify the school each day a child is absent, including reasons for the absence. This daily communication enables the school to offer support and ensure accurate attendance records.*
- *Call the school at the start of each day if the child will not be attending. If the absence extends beyond one day, parents should continue to notify the school each morning.*
- *Provide a written note or medical certificate confirming the reason for the absence when the child returns to school.*
- *Request approval in advance for any planned absences due to exceptional circumstances.*
- *Schedule medical and dental appointments outside school hours whenever possible to minimize disruption.*
- *Check the student's planner, school calendar, or website for important school messages*

- *Discuss the importance of regular attendance and punctuality with their child.*

2.8 Pupils' responsibilities

Pupils must:

- *Attend school every day to maximize learning and achieve their full potential.*
- *Arrive on time for school and each lesson. Pupils arriving late will receive a late detention, as punctuality is essential for academic success and respectful classroom participation.*
- *Wear the correct uniform or adhere to the school dress code to foster a sense of community and belonging.*
- *Be present and engaged in all lessons while on school premises, demonstrating commitment to their education.*
- *Actively participate in lessons and contribute positively to the classroom environment.*
- *Seek support when needed, bringing any challenges or difficulties to the attention of their form tutor, Year Learning Coordinator, Deputy YLC, or a senior member of staff.*

2.9 School responsibilities:

To improve and encourage attendance and punctuality, Mulberry School for Girls will:

- contact parents/carers to find out the reasons for an unexplained absence,
- provide a high-quality curriculum so that pupils enjoy learning and want to come to school,
- provide for the needs of all pupils as far as practicable and reasonable,
- follow up all unexplained or unauthorised absences with parents/carers
- provide support for all parents experiencing difficulties,
- provide a re-integration procedure or programme for pupils who return to school following a prolonged absence,
- contact parents/carers if there are causes for concern.

The school will collaborate with attendance hubs and the National Attendance Ambassador to implement best practices and targeted interventions to improve attendance, particularly for students at risk of chronic absence.

3.0 Rewards, Incentives and Sanctions

Mulberry School for Girls will recognise good and improved attendance and punctuality or sanction poor punctuality through:

Rewards

- verbal and written praise,
- form tutor acknowledging improved attendance/punctuality,
- Public acknowledgement (*attendance and punctuality certificates etc.*)
- Verbal and written praise, attendance certificates, and eligibility for reward trips
- *Acknowledgment the Headteacher / Senior Leadership Team for significant attendance improvements*
- Reward trips

Sanctions

- Withdrawal of privileges e.g., trips,
- Lunchtime / after school Detentions,
- Internal exclusion for truancy,
- Referral for attendance or punctuality interventions if lateness persists.

4. Persistent Absence Monitoring and Tracking Initiative

The initiative focuses on identifying students at risk of persistent absence (12% or higher, whether authorised or unauthorised) and providing consistent monitoring throughout the school year. The school compares absences to set half-termly thresholds to identify patterns, ensuring that support is targeted early. Once these cumulative thresholds are exceeded, students are added to the monitoring list.

The Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWO), Year Learning Coordinators (YLCs), and Deputy YLCs actively track these students. Where necessary, the AWO works directly with students and their families to provide information, support, and interventions. In line with 2024 guidance, this support may include referrals to local authority panels or further interventions aimed at minimizing chronic absence. This proactive approach is designed to reduce the overall number of students in the persistent absence category.

5. Punctuality

Parents and carers receive regular updates on attendance and punctuality expectations through parents' evenings, tutor reports, termly data updates, and phone calls. The importance of punctuality is reinforced by form tutors, YLCs, Heads of Department, and all staff, who emphasize the value of timeliness in both school and lessons.

Form tutors provide daily reminders on punctuality, with Year Learning Coordinators further reinforcing this message in weekly assemblies.

5.1 Sanctions for poor punctuality to school

The following sanctions apply to pupils in the case of lateness to school:

Initial concern:

- A YLC late detention is set for any pupil who arrives late to registration once in one week.
- A Headteachers detention is set for any pupil who repeatedly attends YLC detentions or who fails to attend the YLC detention.
- *Daily notifications are sent to parents via text to inform them of their child's absence or late arrival, enabling timely communication.*

Continuing concern:

- Attendance and Punctuality Report Cards are issued to students whose attendance and/or punctuality over a period of time gives cause for concern.
- YLC will meet parents if punctuality continues to persist.
- *Panel meetings involving the AWO, YLC, and parents are held if a pattern of poor punctuality persists.*
- A referral to AWO is made when a pupil has 15 or more late marks within a 5-week period.
- *A referral to the school police officer may be made if a pupil continues to arrive late.*
- The KS5 bursary is linked to punctuality and detentions and/or supervised study sessions are set for KS5 students whose punctuality is a concern. The KS5 bursary is allocated to a student with attendance 95% or above and who receives FSM.

Serious concern:

When a referral to the AWO is required due to persistent punctuality issues, actions may include:

- Conducting an Early Help Assessment,
- Organizing home visits to engage with the family and address barriers,
- Referring the pupil to external support agencies,

- Referring the case to the borough SIP panel for consideration of court action,
- Pursuing legal action if necessary to enforce attendance requirements.

These additions underscore the school's commitment to punctuality and attendance, ensuring alignment with national guidance while supporting families and enforcing standards to improve student outcomes.

5.2 Sanctions for Poor Punctuality to Lessons

To support a culture of punctuality, the following measures are in place for students who arrive late to lessons without valid reasons:

- *A verbal warning is given to any pupil arriving late to a lesson without a reasonable explanation to reinforce the importance of timeliness.*
- *For repeated lateness to lessons, a detention with the subject teacher or Head of Department may be assigned as a more formal consequence.*
- *Persistent lateness is escalated to the Year Learning Coordinator (YLC), who will contact the parents to discuss concerns and determine appropriate actions to address ongoing punctuality issues.*

5.3 Rewards for Punctuality

Mulberry School for Girls values and acknowledges students who demonstrate good and improved punctuality. The following incentives encourage a positive approach to punctuality:

- *Form tutors provide regular verbal praise to students who show improvement in punctuality, recognizing their efforts in class.*
- *Public recognition and certificates are awarded in assemblies to highlight students who consistently attend on time.*
- *Students with excellent punctuality are entered into a prize draw at the end of each term, celebrating their commitment to being on time.*
- *Letters of commendation are sent home to acknowledge students' exceptional or improved punctuality, reinforcing the positive impact of their actions.*

6. Off-Rolling Procedures

The school strictly follows safeguarding protocols for any removal of a student from the roll to ensure the safety and educational continuity of each pupil. Unlawful off-rolling poses significant risks and potential safeguarding concerns. If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the school, a meeting with the Year Learning Coordinator (YLC) will be arranged to discuss the transition. Confirmation of the new educational provision the pupil is transferring to must be established before removing a pupil from our roll. The Attendance and Welfare Advisor is informed, as is the new local authority the pupil has transferred to. Information about the child and their common transfer file should be passed to the new school.

For pupils who have been permanently excluded, they remain on roll until the appeal process is complete. Similarly, for students on a Managed Move, they remain on roll until they are officially registered at a new mainstream school or alternative provision.

A complete record of all students who have been off-rolled during the academic year is maintained by the data team and regularly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to ensure compliance with all regulations.

Students in 6th form may be removed from the school roll if they do not attend for 20 consecutive days as per DfE guidance in Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Head with responsibility for Inclusion. At every review the policy will be shared with the governing board.

As part of the enhanced attendance monitoring framework, daily attendance data is collected and shared with the Department for Education (DfE) and Tower Hamlets Local Authority as required. This data-sharing enables early identification of attendance issues and allows for timely interventions. The integration of expanded attendance hubs further supports the school's ability to address and respond to persistent absenteeism.

Appendix 1

STAFF GUIDELINES: Children Missing Education

Children missing from education face significant risks, including lower academic achievement, exposure to safeguarding issues, and a greater likelihood of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Mulberry School for Girls adheres to the statutory Children Missing Education guidance and follows protocols from Tower Hamlets Local Authority to protect vulnerable students.

Enrolment and Attendance Registration:

All students are registered on the school roll from their confirmed start date. If a student fails to attend on the first expected day, the school promptly investigates to determine the child's location before notifying the local authority if concerns persist.

Attendance Monitoring and Absence Referrals:

Year Learning Coordinators monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register and enquiries are made with parents as to the nature of any absences. Mulberry School for Girls adheres to the Tower Hamlets Attendance and Welfare Service criteria for referrals. Referrals are made where there has been one of the following:

- *10 consecutive days of unauthorised absence,*
- *10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a ten-week period,*
- *15 late marks in a five-week period,*
- *15 sessions of authorised absences in a five-week period with no medical certificate received,*
- *Failure to return to school following a fixed term exclusion, subsequently could affect school roll status,*
- *Failure to attend alternative provision after the fifth day of an exclusion,*
- *Pupils who parents have notified the school in writing that they are educating the child at home,*
- *Any occasion where immediate safeguarding concerns have arisen.*

Reporting Off-Rolling to Tower Hamlets Local Authority:

Mulberry School for Girls will notify Tower Hamlets Local Authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point. The school will provide:

- *The full name of the pupil,*
- *The full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives,*
- *At least one telephone number of the parent with whom the pupil lives,*
- *The full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable,*
- *The name of pupil's destination school and the pupil's expected start date there, if applicable,*
- *The specific regulation under which the pupil's name is being removed, as per Annex A of the Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance (2016).*