

21 September 2022

Dear Families,

RE: Updated School Attendance Policy

I hope that this letter finds you well.

I wanted to begin this letter today by introducing myself to you as Morley Newlands Academy's Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance.

As you may already be aware, in May 2022, the government released a new guidance document outlining the responsibilities placed upon schools, the local authority, and parents/carers in respect of achieving excellent attendance. At Morley Newlands Academy we consider excellent attendance to be attendance that is greater than 96.5%. Very pleasingly, the overwhelming majority of our students meet our attendance expectations day in, day out and we seek to recognise and reward this achievement on a regular basis.

Within this letter today, I would like to draw your attention to the key changes to attendance procedures, as well as ensure that you are aware of the steps that we as a school are required to take should attendance not meet the expectation set out above.

Firstly, and very importantly, within the new attendance guidance, the government has set out clearly that schools are now only permitted to keep registers open for 30 minutes after the school day begins. This means that should a child arrive to school more than 30 minutes late in the morning, they would be recorded as being absent for the full morning session. Naturally, this would have a significant impact on their overall attendance for the year.

Register Opens	Register Closes
08:45	09:15

Whilst we continue to ask that parents/carers avoid booking medical appointments during the school day, where this is necessary, we politely ask you to consider the above timings in your planning for such appointments.

We acknowledge that some students face greater barriers than their peers. These can include students who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs or disabilities. We work collaboratively with parents to understand the barriers to attending, and where required will put in additional support to help improve attendance.

In addition, within the attendance guidance document, there is a clear 'flow chart' of processes that must be followed for attendance that is below our expected level. As you would expect, this begins with support. Morley Newlands Academy is absolutely committed to supporting families in overcoming barriers to attendance. This will always be the first position that we adopt, and we ask that where your child's attendance is of concern, parents/carers work with us to support your child in attending school regularly.

Where initial support is not effective in improving attendance, a more formal process will be undertaken as outlined in the Government's guidance document. This will include the introduction of 'Attendance Contracts' and in some cases, 'Parenting Contracts' or 'Education Supervision Orders'. In all cases, the aim of these processes is to support pupils in accessing school on a regular basis. It is, however, important to stress that non-engagement with these processes could have significant consequences and as such, positive engagement is essential.

Where it is deemed that there has not been an improvement in attendance and further engagement in the above processes is unlikely to see a student return to regular attendance at school, schools are required to begin formal legal prosecution proceedings via the Magistrates Court. Clearly, this is something that we as a school will do our utmost to avoid, however, we feel that it would be wrong of us to not share with all parents/carers that this is now a requirement placed upon schools. Where a case proceeds to the Magistrates Court, a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment can be issued.

As stated throughout this letter, our primary goal at Morley Newlands is to ensure that your child attends school on a daily basis, is happy, and makes excellent progress. It is our utmost priority to work closely with all families to ensure that where barriers to excellent attendance at school exist, these are overcome. We do, however, think that it is essential that we took the time to update you on the latest government guidance in relation to attendance.

A full copy of our new Attendance Policy can be found on our website.

If you have any questions in relation to attendance, or if you feel that you require additional support from us as a school in securing excellent attendance for your child, please do not hesitate to contact us via email at enquiries@morleynewlands.leeds.sch.uk.

Yours faithfully



Mrs S Bretton
Assistant Principal - Attendance Lead