

3rd September 2026

Dear Families

### **Attendance Matters**

Welcome back! We hope term has started positively for you. Thank you for your continued support in helping us create a school environment where all children can feel they belong, achieve and thrive. Together, we aim to make attending school and accessing education purposeful and rewarding.

In July 2026 the statutory guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) was updated. The new version reinforces the requirement for all schools and academies to follow a support-first approach to removing barriers to attending school and accessing learning. It also reinforced messaging around registers, coding, analysing absence data and monitoring absence.

With the above in mind, we have developed a new Attendance Engagement Framework to support everyone to understand that attendance must not be viewed or discussed in isolation and that everyone has a role in noticing, discussing and supporting children to attend school regularly. It is important that a 'whole child' approach is taken when considering the causes of absence and planning support, and it is essential that conversations happen as early as possible.

Our framework will help to encourage curiosity, connection and collaboration with children and families, further embedding our support-first approach. This new framework is intentionally linked to our adaptive and inclusive practices of therapeutic thinking through 'Respectful Relationships', SEND (APDR), safeguarding, and the culture of belonging, recognition, celebration and achievement for all; where children and families feel supported and working together is normalised.

We have a Senior Attendance Champion in every academy to lead on promoting attendance and supporting staff to perform their roles and ensure each academy is compliant with the law regarding accurate register completion and analysis of attendance data.

Our attendance policy has also been updated this year to include the changes in statutory guidance and embed the inclusive approaches we use as a trust. You will find the policy [here](#) once it is uploaded. We must remind you that although support will always be our first approach, there are statutory duties to enforce attendance that we must consider when absence reaches national thresholds; although this is always a last resort. The DfE Statutory Guidance states we must:

- Identify and explore all absence before, or when, it reaches the Persistent Absence National Threshold of **10 sessions of absence in 10 school weeks** and make parents aware via conversations, emails/letters and meetings. This is alongside the offers of early support, reasonable adjustments, support plans, attendance contracts and early help to resolve any barriers to attending school and promote well-being.



- Only authorise absence that is requested in **advance** and that is for **exceptional circumstances** (absence for the purpose of holidays, recreation or leisure do not generally meet that criteria and, if taken, there is an automatic consideration of legal action).
- Consider whether a referral to the local authority for legal action should be made wherever absence reaches **10 unauthorised absences in 10 school weeks** (the threshold of the National Framework for Penalty Notices and Legal Action).
- When support does not lead to improved attendance, formally warn parents of potential consequences using a Notice to Improve Warning Letter to encourage urgent action to improve attendance to prevent intense statutory support or legal action to be considered, e.g. a Penalty Notice Fine, Court Prosecution or Family Court Order.

## How You Can Help

- **Connect** and **Communicate** with your academy to report, reduce and prevent absence. **Collaborate** with staff to identify any barriers to attendance, planning and engaging with support when it is needed.
- Provide supportive information wherever possible to help us accurately record absences and ensure the right support and people are involved in helping your child.
- Plan absence outside of term time but if there is an **exceptional circumstance** for absence, request absence in advance (at least 3 weeks' if possible) using our Exceptional Term Time Leave of Absence Request Form (ETTLA).
- Schedule appointments to avoid missing registration where possible (we know this can be less easy, but it not only helps to avoid absences, but registration/class times are important for receiving information and bonding with peers).
- Work with us to encourage positive attitudes toward school and talk openly about any worries to build self-awareness, encourage problem solving skills and boost confidence.

Please reach out to your child's academy to discuss any concerns. This allows us to put supportive and preventative actions into place as early as possible.

Warm regards

Sharon Templeman  
Meridian Trust Attendance Welfare Leader

# Meridian Attendance Engagement Framework

**Knowing, valuing and supporting** our students to enable improved attendance and Achievement for All

