



**Minerva**  
Learning Trust



# **Attendance and Punctuality Booklet 2020-21**

**Important information during COVID-19 for students and their parents and carers**

# Introduction

At Minerva Learning Trust we believe it is vitally important for students to attend school regularly and punctually. This will give them the best opportunity to progress and achieve their full potential. Good attendance and punctuality will also encourage students to become responsible and resilient individuals, which will serve them well in their future working lives. Every student at Minerva Learning Trust, in line with the Government's expectations, is expected to maintain an attendance level of 100%.

Regular school attendance keeps children safe, whereas evidence shows that students who truant are more likely to be involved in crime and anti-social activity. We hope that you appreciate how crucial good school attendance is to your child's progress, achievement and chances in life and we look forward to working with you to ensure that your child's attendance is the very best it can be to give them the very best chances in school and after it.

## Standards

At Minerva Learning Trust we

- Expect every student to attend school 100% of the time
- Expect students to arrive on time every day
- Will support parents in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually
- Believe family holidays should not be taken during term time. We will not authorise requests for holidays during term time, unless in exceptional circumstances in line with section 444 of the Education Act.

The Government expects schools and Locals Authorities to

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence

And

- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- All students to be punctual to their lessons

Parents should contact us by telephone on the first day and each subsequent day of their child's absence. Our Attendance Officer's with a member of the Pastoral Team will visit children who is absent from school. The school should be informed of any planned absences in advance; this includes unavoidable medical appointments during the school day.

# Policies and Procedures

## Recognising good attendance and punctuality

At Minerva Learning Trust we use a range of measures to praise and reward students who meet their attendance and punctuality targets. This will include celebration assemblies, certificates, other rewards such as school visits and extracurricular activities and entry into prize draws.

## Covid-19 and attendance

### **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus which is linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

### **Symptoms of COVID-19**

Symptoms can include fever, a loss or change to taste and smell, cough and shortness of breath. In severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal. These symptoms are very similar to the flu or the common cold, which is more common than COVID-19.

### **How COVID-19 spreads**

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person through coughing and sneezing. Individuals can also be infected from touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and then touching their face. COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces for several hours, but simple disinfectants can kill it.

Links to more detailed and further guidance can be found below. Schools and parents or carers can keep up to date by following the government links below.

This includes advice on:

- How to help prevent spread of all respiratory infections - including COVID-19
- What to do if someone confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19 has been in a school or other educational setting;
- What advice to give to individuals who have travelled from specified countries or areas within the last 14 days.

All the schools in the Minerva Learning Trust are following the Trusts robust reopening action plan and thorough risk assessments in order to mitigate risks and to ensure that the re-opening of settings happens in a planned way that keeps all stakeholders safe and well.

Government has been made mandatory for all year groups to return to school and sixth form full time from the beginning of the autumn term.

### **Students should not attend if:**

- **Students who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Students who have symptoms should self-isolate and get a test.

If a student tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school.

If a student tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone.

If someone in the student's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test. If the member of the household tests negative, the student can stop self-isolating and can return to school.

If the household member tests positive, the student should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms.

In all cases of self-isolation, schools should ask parents to inform them immediately about the outcome of a test.

- **Students who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Students may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19).

The NHS test and trace guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 14 days if they have had recent close contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in the school community, the local health protection team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with the person that has tested positive when they were infectious

- **Students who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine**

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine.

- **Students who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only**

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of students who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

If in future, rates of the disease rise in local areas, children still on the shielding list (or family members still on the shielding list) from that area, and that area only, may be contacted by the government and advised to stay at home and shield during the period where rates remain high. Families will receive a letter if they are required to shield again that parents will be able to share with the school.

## Addressing poor attendance

We work diligently to help students attend well. We will communicate regularly with parents/carers and always provide support to overcome barriers in good attendance.

Our Attendance Officer and Pastoral Teams works with families when attendance falls to unacceptable levels. Any students whose attendance falls below 97% and fails to meet interim thresholds throughout the year is more likely to become a persistent absentee (PA).

In these cases, further absences due to illness or medical reasons will not be authorised unless supported by additional medical evidence such as doctor's appointment card or letter.

We will conduct regular home visits and hold meetings with parents. Should there be no further improvement in attendance, we will ultimately pursue court action.

Please refer to the attendance bands in this leaflet to identify the different stages of action, should your child's attendance fall below our expectation. Please be aware that the descriptions are for guidance only and a student can be 'fast-tracked' to any stage as is deemed appropriate.

## Attendance Panels

Governor's Attendance Panels are calendared throughout the school year. Parents or carers maybe invited in if their child has a pattern of absence from school, their attendance is 90% or below and they have either a period of 10 or more consecutive unauthorised sessions or 10% unauthorised absence over a six week period. The Attendance Panels are to ensure that intervention strategies are put into place early to tackle school attendance issues.

The purpose of the Attendance Panel is for the parents carers and student to meet with Governors, a member of Senior Leadership Team, a member of the Pastoral Team and Attendance Officer to identify the reasons for absence and to formulate an action plan to promote working together to improve attendance and meet the attendance targets which will be set for the student.

A review panel will be held in a further six weeks to review the progress of the action plan and whether the attendance targets have been met.

## Attendance Review Panels

Attendance Review Panel will take place six weeks after a Governor's Attendance Panel has met to set attendance targets for a specific student and agreed an action plan to enable the targets to be met.

The purpose of Attendance Review Panel is to review the progress of the action plan towards meeting the attendance targets and make decisions as to any further action needed. If attendance targets are met the review panel can recommend that no further action is required and the case be closed.

If attendance targets are not met the review panel will consider recommending:

- Prosecution of the parents or carers
- Consultation with a view to an application for an Educational Supervision Order
- A different strategy to improve attendance for instance a Positive Parenting Group
- A further action plan will be agreed.

## Holidays in term time

At Minerva Learning Trust we believe family holidays should not be taken in term time. We will not authorise any holidays, unless exceptional circumstances. Penalty notice will be

issued, under section 444b of the Education Act 1996, where unauthorised holidays are taken.

## Punctuality

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child attends school every day and on time. Students should be on the school site by 8:35am every day. Students who arrive late to school without good reason will receive a 15 minute break time detention and if students fail to attend they will receive same day after school detention.

Our Attendance Officer and Pastoral Teams work with parents to overcome barriers which prevent students arriving on time. If punctuality problems persist we may involve our Minerva Learning Trust Education Welfare Officer, who may issue a penalty notice for persistent lateness under section 444 of the Education Act 1966.

MINUTES LATE PER DAY	EQUIVALENT OF MISSING
5 Minutes	4.4 School days a year
10 Minutes	6.9 School days a year
15 Minutes	10.3 School days a year
20 Minutes	13.8 School days a year
30 Minutes	20.7 School days a year

## Parents Carers support for good punctuality

We would ask parents to support us in maintaining good punctuality by:

- Ensuring that their child gets up in plenty of time to be ready and prepared for their school day.
- Ensuring their child has organised their uniform, bag and equipment the night before so that this does not delay departure in the morning.
- Check traffic and public transport for journeys to the school using relevant websites or apps daily, to ensure good records of punctuality are maintained.
- Discussing any issue of lateness to ensure this does not become a habit.
- Monitoring their child's attendance record when it is sent home and looking for patterns of lateness.

## Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the school and the parent. It can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract outline attendance targets and will detailed agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The conduct will be

reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

## Attendance Bands

Below is a table of the attendance bands that identify the different stages of intervention should your child's attendance falls below our expectations. Please be aware that the descriptions are for guidance only and a student can be fast tracked to any stage as is deemed appropriate.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Excellent Attendance</b> <b>100%</b></p> <p>This is an achievement that you can be proud of and gives you the best chance to be very successful in school and achieve the highest possible grades.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Good Attendance</b> <b>99.9% - 97%</b></p> <p>This gives you every opportunity to be successfully in school and achieve your best grades in your exams. Although, this would mean that you would miss 4-9 days of learning which 20-45 hours of learning.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Step 1: Requires Improvement</b> <b>96.9%-95%</b></p> <p>You are missing too much school and getting behind in your lessons, you are reducing your chances of achieving your best in your exams. This would mean that you would miss between 10-13 days of school across the year; which is 50-65 hours of learning. You will be closely monitored and a meeting will be held with the Pastoral or Attendance team to establish reasons, set a target for improvement and establish any support needed.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Step 2: Requires Improvement</b> <b>94.9%-92%</b></p> <p>You are missing too much school and it will be hard to keep up; you are unlikely to achieve your best in your exams. This would mean that you would miss between 13.5-15 days of school across the year; which is 67.5-75 hours of learning. We will continue to monitor you closely and contact will be made with parents by the Pastoral or Attendance team. A letter will be sent out to confirm expectations and possible consequences of further absence.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Step 3: Legal Action</b> <b>91.9% and below</b></p> <p>You are missing a lot of school and will find it very difficult to keep up; you are unlikely to achieve your best in your exams. This would mean that you would miss between 15.5-19 days of school across the year; which is 77.5-95 hours of learning. A letter will be sent to parents/carers inviting them to a meeting with the Trust EWO to agree targets for improvement and establish ways that we can provide support in school. A first legal warning may be issued.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Persistent Absence</b> <b>90.9% and below</b></p> <p>You will be missing so much time from school that you will be falling far behind and cannot reach your potential. This will mean that you would miss between 19.5-28 days of school across the year; which is 97.5-140 hours of learning. Parents and carers could face legal action.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Critical</b> <b>84.9% and below</b></p> <p>Your attendance has become critical because you are falling so far behind that you cannot reach your potential and your lesson work will become too difficult. This would mean that you would miss between 29-39 days of school across the year; which is 145-295 hours of learning. Parents and carers could face legal action.</p>

# Additional Information

## Unavoidable Absence

Absences which are considered unavoidable may be authorised by Minerva Learning Trust. These include:

- General illness, unless your child attendance is below 97%
- Attending a religious festival or ceremony with family
- An emergency medical or dental appointment that could not be made outside of school hours
- Being in hospital or having hospital treatment
- Attending a funeral with family
- Attending an interview for a job or place at college
- Taking part in public performance or an examination

Please inform the school on the first day and each subsequent day of absence. The Pastoral and Attendance Team will visit children who are absent from school.

## Avoidable Absence

Absences which are considered avoidable will not be authorised by the school. These include:

- Trivial illness or looking after an ill relative
- Looking after the house or waiting for workmen/deliveries etc
- Holidays in term time
- Looking after brother or sisters, including dropping them off at school or nursery
- Helping with housework or family business
- Being unhappy or not getting on with others at school
- Being up late the night before, including for family problems

If you feel there is anything we can do to support you or your child, or would like to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact school. We are keen to work with you and to support you and your child.

## Parents/Carers FAQs

(Frequently asked questions)

### **Why has my child been marked as absent for the whole morning when they arrived at 9:30am?**

DfE guidelines state the register must be closed after a reasonable time in the morning. If arriving after 9.10am, a child will be marked as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

### **Could I receive a fine if my child is persistently late?**

If your child receives 10 or more unauthorised absences you could be issued with a fixed penalty notice (FPN). Payment within 21 days of receipt of a notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. This payment is per parent/carer per child. Penalties are issued by post to your home.



**My child was only a couple of minutes late. It seems harsh that they should get a late mark and a detention?**

The school has to abide by the rules and expectations laid down for all schools. Lateness for the school (or work) is a failure to arrive on time and will be marked as such. We would encourage students to set off in good time so that any small delay does not cause them to be late.

**Our whole family overslept and it is not my child's fault that they are late. Will they receive a late mark?**

This cannot be taken as acceptable reason for lateness so a late mark or unauthorised absence would be recorded, depending on the time of arrival.

**My child has to take public transport, which is sometimes late. Will they receive a late mark?**

Any lateness is recorded as thus on the register. We would advise that the child leaves earlier and checks the relevant websites or apps or any travel issues, so that even if the chosen transport is late, they will still arrive on time. If transport is sometimes late, then it's not a reliable way to ensure arrival in good time.

**Would you make allowances for lateness if, for example, there were major traffic problems in the area perhaps because of an accident, so my car/the bus was unavoidably stuck in traffic?**

The school cannot make allowances for the individual problem (however genuine it may be). However, it does make allowances when there are known reported major problems that effect a large number of people; very heavy snowfall would be such an example.

**What if I phone/email to say my child is going to be late? Would they still get a late mark?**

Yes, they will still be marked late, but it is very helpful to know that you are aware and for us to know the expected time of arrival and reason for lateness.

**If I know my child is going to be late, do I need to ring/send a note?**

It is very helpful if you do this. If your child is very late they will be marked as an unauthorised absence and your note may give an alternative acceptable reason to allow us to authorise the absence.

## How can Parents/Carers encourage good attendance?

### TALK

Regularly with your child about their school and how they feel about it. They are more likely to attend if they feel supported and you listen to their anxieties.

### PHONE

As soon as possible to let us know of your child's absence.

### DO NOT

Take holidays in school term time.

### DO NOT

Allow your child to have time off unless it is really necessary.

## ENSURE

Your child is in the school during exam weeks and for assessments.

## DISCUSS

With the School at the earliest opportunity, any problems or worries that are affecting your child's attendance.

## RING US

If you have any concerns – we will check attendance and be discreet.

## PRAISE & REWARD GOOD ATTENDANCE

Even the small improvements and successes.

## Contacting us



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