Mercia School

MERCIA COLLEGIATE SIXTH FORM ATTENDANCE POLICY

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

Unless there are legislative or regulatory changes in the interim, this policy will be reviewed every year. Should no substantive changes be required at that point, the policy will move to the next review cycle.

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Mercia Collegiate Sixth Form Attendance Policy

The school reserves the right to amend this policy at any time in the academic year and to direct formal disciplinary procedures at any level, as appropriate. The contents of this policy will be disseminated and shared with all scholars during their induction period and is available online.

Introduction

Mercia Collegiate Sixth Form (MCSF) recognises that regular attendance is essential if scholars are to achieve their full potential. Staff will work in partnership with scholars and their families to ensure that all scholars attend school regularly and punctually.

MCSF will establish effective systems of incentives and rewards to recognise and encourage good attendance, and will challenge the behaviour of scholars and parents/carers who do not prioritise attendance and punctuality.

MCSF will also maintain clear and effective communication with scholars, parents/carers and relevant external agencies to provide information, advice and guidance.

National data highlights the importance of regular school attendance. Department for Education data (2025) shows that persistently absent pupils earn, on average, more than £10,000 less than those who are absent for fewer than 10% of possible sessions. Pupils in the highest attendance band earn an average of £32,200, compared to £29,800 for those in the next attendance band.

As a sixth form that promotes high aspirations, this national context helps to frame conversations around the importance of attendance.

Absence Band	Number of Pupils (n)	Average earnings at age 28 (2024 prices)
0-1%	33,530	£32,200
0-9.9%	366,139	£29,800
10-100% Persistently absent	145,088	£19,500
50-100% Severely absent	5389	£10,100

1 Department for Education, 2025

Internal data further reinforces this message. Analysis of MCSF A Level outcomes for the Summer 2026 cohort shows a clear relationship between higher attendance and stronger academic outcomes.

No scholar in the 2026 cohort finished Year 13 with attendance below 90%. Scholars with attendance of 97% or above achieved an average UCAS tariff of 152.0 points, compared with 117.3 points for scholars with attendance between 90% and <95% — a difference of 34.7 tariff points.

The pattern is also evident in individual A Level grades. Scholars with attendance of 97% or above achieved an average grade score of 47.1, equivalent to an average grade of A, compared with an average grade score of 39.1, equivalent to an average grade of C, for scholars with attendance between 90% and <95%. In the 97%+ group, 69.8% of A Level grades were A or A*, compared with 29.6% in the 90-<95% group.

This evidence reinforces an important distinction: 95% is MCSF's minimum attendance expectation, not an aspirational target. The strongest academic outcomes are associated with scholars maintaining attendance well above this threshold.

Attendance Band	Average UCAS Tariff	Average Grade Score	Average Grade
90–95%	117.3	39.1	C
95%+	129.4	42.3	B
97%+	152.0	47.1	A

Core Principles

We expect all scholars to attend Mercia Collegiate Sixth Form every day. Mercia Collegiate Sixth Form is a full-time educational provider.

All scholars are expected to be in school by 8.15am each day. Punctuality plays a crucial role in a scholar's achievement and academic success and is therefore monitored closely. Sanctions will be issued for lateness, and scholars are expected to adhere to the expectations of the school at all times.

The school day finishes at 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 3.45pm on Fridays. All scholars are required to complete the full school day, in line with the expectations of KS3 and KS4. Our communication and actions will always be driven by a commitment to ensuring scholars are in school and learning.

If a scholar's attendance falls below 95%, a series of interventions will take place to offer support and ensure that any gaps in learning are addressed through directed study. Please note that any concerns regarding attendance will be shared at the earliest possible opportunity.

Parents' Responsibilities

Section 7 of the Education Act (1996) states that parents/carers must ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Section 444(1) of the Act states that parents may be guilty of an offence if their child does not attend school regularly.

The Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance for schools reiterates that responsibility for ensuring regular attendance lies with parents, including caregivers or anyone with parental responsibility. Parents (or the person with parental responsibility) are primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school.

Parents/carers are therefore expected to fulfil the following responsibilities:

- Parents/carers (or the person with parental responsibility) are primarily responsible for ensuring that their child attends and remains in school.
- Parents/carers must ensure that their child arrives at school on time, correctly dressed and prepared to learn.
- Parents/carers should avoid, wherever possible, making non-emergency medical or dental appointments during school hours. Where this is unavoidable, parents/carers must inform MCSF in advance and provide medical evidence (e.g. letter, appointment card, text or email confirmation) at least 24 hours before the appointment. All scholars are expected to attend school before and/or after any appointment.
- Unauthorised absences include, but are not limited to: looking after siblings, caring for a parent, birthdays, shopping, and attending driving lessons or driving tests. Only MCSF, within the context of the law, can authorise absence - not parents/carers. When a parent/carer provides a reason for absence, the school is not obliged to accept this as a valid reason. Absence without a valid reason, or where no explanation is provided, will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Parents/carers do not have the right to remove their child from school during the school day without medical or official documentation.
- Parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time. MCSF is unable to authorise any holidays taken during the academic year. Any such requests must be submitted in writing to the assistant headteacher in advance. Any unauthorised absence may be subject to a fixed penalty notice. Where a scholar is absent due to an unauthorised holiday, the scholar will be expected to complete catch-up after school for one hour per day for each day missed.

Scholars' Responsibilities

Scholars are responsible for ensuring that their attendance and punctuality are maintained at the highest level (minimum 95%).

- Scholars are expected to attend school and all lessons on time, fully equipped and ready to learn.
- Scholars must follow the correct procedure when arriving late to school after the close of registers. Scholars must sign in at reception and will receive a sanction for arriving late.
- The normal sanction for a late arrival in the morning is a same-day lunchtime detention. However, the assistant headteacher with responsibility for MCSF and the Director of Attendance reserve the right to set an after-school detention for persistent lateness.
- Any concerns regarding attendance should be discussed with the scholar's Professional Tutor or another member of the MCSF team.

- If a scholar misses a lesson due to absence, they must organise a meeting with their teacher to catch up on work missed. We recognise that some absence is an important part of the sixth form experience, for example attending university open days or academic seminars. Scholars are expected to communicate proactively with staff and organise suitable catch-up.
- Scholars who leave the school site at lunchtime are expected to return for all afternoon lessons, unless an authorised absence has been granted. Scholars who fail to return without authorisation will complete one hour of catch-up for every curriculum hour missed, including independent study and enrichment periods. Scholars who fail to return after leaving site for lunch will have their off-site privileges revoked until the end of the current term, or longer at the discretion of the assistant headteacher with responsibility for MCSF.

Attendance Intervention

MCSF uses cumulative absence thresholds to identify concerns early and ensure that scholars receive appropriate support before absence becomes a barrier to academic success. These thresholds are designed to prompt communication, support and catch-up planning; they do not remove the school's discretion to consider individual circumstances, including evidenced medical, wellbeing or exceptional circumstances.

Stage 1: Attendance Monitoring

If a scholar misses the equivalent of three full school days, or where an emerging pattern of absence is identified, contact will be made with the scholar and their family. This will outline the scholar's attendance record, remind them of the importance of regular attendance, and ensure that missed learning is addressed.

Stage 2: Attendance Support Meeting

If a scholar misses the equivalent of five full school days, if attendance falls below 95%, or if concerns continue, a formal attendance support meeting will be arranged with the Director of Sixth Form, the scholar and their family. The meeting will explore reasons for absence, identify any barriers to attendance, reinforce expectations and agree a support and catch-up plan.

Stage 3: Formal Attendance Contract

If a scholar misses the equivalent of seven full school days and concerns remain, or if agreed actions from Stage 2 are not followed, a formal attendance contract may be issued. This will set clear attendance targets, outline support, and include a review date. Continued failure to meet attendance expectations may lead to further formal action.

Where there are exceptional or extenuating circumstances, these must be supported by appropriate evidence (for example, a letter from a GP) and shared with MCSF at the earliest opportunity.

If, despite intervention, attendance remains below the agreed target for the contracted period, this will be treated as further confirmation that the scholar is a persistent absentee.

A formal parental meeting will then take place with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher with responsibility for MCSF to consider the scholar's future options. MCSF reserves the right to withdraw scholars from courses for persistent low attendance and, where appropriate, to decline entry for A Level examinations.

Reasons For Absence

Illness

If a scholar is absent due to illness, the absence may be authorised if the school accepts the reason as valid and the scholar's attendance is 95% or above.

Absence due to illness must be reported by a parent/carer on the day of absence via a phone call to the school.

Where there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, the school reserves the right not to authorise the absence.

Medical or dental appointments

Appointments should be made outside of school hours wherever possible.

If a medical or dental appointment must take place during the school day, the school must be informed at least 24 hours in advance for the absence to be authorised.

Parents/carers must notify the school office by phone so that permission can be granted for the scholar to leave their lesson and sign out at main reception.

Please note that medical appointments for scholars whose attendance is below 95% will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

All scholars must sign out before leaving the school site and sign in again upon return. Scholars will be issued with permission to be excused from their lesson if necessary.

Parents/carers may be asked to provide evidence to verify appointments.

Return to Learning Meeting

Where a scholar is absent for three or more consecutive school days due to illness, injury, medical treatment, or any other medical reason, a Return to Learning Meeting will be arranged with the Director of Sixth Form, the scholar and their parent/carer.

The purpose of this meeting is to welcome the scholar back into school, confirm that they are fit to return, identify any ongoing support needs, and agree a clear plan for catching up on missed learning. This may include directed study, subject-specific catch-up, or further communication with home.

This meeting is supportive in nature and is not a disciplinary sanction. However, where absence becomes frequent, patterns of illness emerge, or attendance falls below expected levels, the school may also apply the staged attendance intervention procedure outlined above. A Return to Learning Meeting may form part of the school's staged attendance intervention process where the absence contributes to cumulative attendance concerns.

MCSF reserves the right to request appropriate evidence where there are concerns about the authenticity, frequency or impact of absence.

Family bereavements

MCSF recognises that the death of a family member is a particularly traumatic event and has the discretion to authorise such absences.

Mental health and wellbeing concerns

MCSF acknowledges that mental health and wellbeing are an important part of a scholar's overall development.

Absences related to mental health will be treated sensitively and may be authorised where appropriate, with the expectation that the scholar and their family work with MCSF to provide support and plan catch-up for missed learning.

Minding the house, looking after siblings, caring for parents

In the vast majority of cases, such absences will be unauthorised.

Absences for social occasions

Absences for social occasions, including birthdays and family outings, will be unauthorised.

Work experience

MCSF recognises that meaningful work experience can be difficult to secure. Where a placement offers clear educational or career value, MCSF may authorise a maximum of five school days of term-time absence for work experience. Placements should preferably take place during school holidays wherever possible.

Work experience will not be authorised during assessment periods. Any term-time placement must be requested in advance by the scholar using the MCSF Authorised Absence Request Form and must not proceed until approval has been given. Scholars remain responsible for catching up all learning missed during an authorised placement. All placements must be logged and approved through the Unifrog platform.

Holidays

If parents/carers take their child out of school for a family holiday during term time, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers may be issued with a fixed penalty notice.

Assessment periods, including mock and official examinations

Absence during assessment periods will not be authorised without medical evidence or official documentation.

If a scholar misses an assessment, the paper will be awarded a U grade, as would be the case in an official examination.

The Local Authority/Government Perspective

Schools and local authorities are expected to monitor patterns of both persistent and severe absence, identify scholars and cohorts who require targeted attendance support, and take prompt action where needed.

Schools are able to set their own sixth form attendance policies, including sanctions for scholars with poor attendance.

At Mercia Collegiate Sixth Form, attendance below 95% is considered inadequate. This expectation is clearly emphasised during induction.

Persistent failure to adhere to this standard, without sufficient improvement, engagement or evidenced exceptional circumstances, may result in removal from the school's admission roll.