



Attendance Policy

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Written by	Emily Sidhu
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Aims

The aims of this policy are:

- To outline our procedures regarding school attendance.
- To have in place a named member of staff who is responsible for co-ordinating, implementing and monitoring our attendance policy.
- To have in place procedures to deal effectively with persistent absence and lateness.

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled, and which enables them to achieve their full potential
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Supporting parents/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually.

We will encourage good attendance through making pupils feel valued, welcome, safe and secure whilst in school. It is important that we build sound relationships with parents/carers and communicate any concerns as they arise. We also acknowledge that some pupils have medical needs which prevent them from achieving 100% attendance and aim to ensure that these families feel supported in achieving the highest percentage possible in this context.

Legislation & guidance

Parents/carers of children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at a school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so, they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or be served with a penalty notice.

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Roles & responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Vice Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Vice Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Considering whether additional support is required for a family

- Liaising with the Principal to decide whether an absence is authorised or not
- Liaising with the Principal regarding issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Working with Education Welfare Officers (EWO) to tackle persistent absence
- Issuing attendance letters, as advised by the EWO
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Working with the Office Manager to delegate the tasks above as appropriate.

Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. They are also expected to:

- Promote and praise attendance at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with office staff and the Vice Principal on matters of absence and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support pupils who have been absent to re-engage with all aspects of school life
- Provide reasonable support for pupils refusing to attend school, such as making phonecalls or providing social stories or symbols
- Report attendance data to parents/carers in end-of-year reports.

The admin team are expected to take calls from parents/carers about absence and record it on the school system.

Parents / carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring the attendance of their child
- Contacting us as soon as possible on the first day of an absence via the school office, and keep us updated regarding their child's return to school
- Requesting a leave of absence for a medical appointment or exceptional circumstance with as much notice as possible
- Supporting the school in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Avoiding taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments where possible
- Contacting their child's teacher for support in the first instance if the pupil is refusing to attend school.

Recording attendance

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils on the register. At Ivel Valley the register will be taken before 9.30am, and again at the beginning of the afternoon session, following DfE attendance codes.

It is important to be on time at the start of the school day. The start of school is used to settle children so they are able to engage positively in their learning. If a child is late, they can miss this valuable time. All lateness is monitored and recorded daily:

- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with the DfE guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded *M*.

Absence

Unplanned absences

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practically possible by contacting the main office.

We will mark absence due to **illness** as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

A child not arriving in school where the parents/carers haven't informed the school of the reason for absence is considered a **safeguarding** matter, therefore information about the reason for any absence is always required.

Processes:

- If a pupil is absent and we haven't heard from parents/carers, we will telephone home on the first day of absence. This is to establish the reason for the absence and consider whether it is authorised or unauthorised.
- If we still have not established contact with parents/carers after **three** days of absence, we will consider implementing Central Bedfordshire's Child Missing Education procedures, including making all reasonable enquiries to establish contact
- If we still have not established contact with parents/carers after **ten** days of absence, the local authority will be notified that the pupil is a Child Missing Education.
- If we have made contact with parents / carers, but the absence is unauthorised, we will consider arranging a meeting with parents / carers to plan how to support the pupil to return to school
- If absence is unauthorised and we have offered support but the absences still persist, we may refer the matter to Central Bedfordshire's Access and Inclusion Service.

Planned absences

The Principal will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion.

Medical or dental appointments: these will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment, which can be done by contacting the school office. We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible; where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Religious observances: this will be authorised where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes: this authorisation covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

Holidays: there is no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday. A holiday will only be granted if the Principal considers there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents/carers wishing to apply for an authorised holiday need to email / write to the Principal explaining why they believe their request meets the criteria of exceptional circumstances. This must be done before making any travel arrangements. If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions of absence reaches the thresholds in the document 'Central Bedfordshire Council -Non-school Attendance – Fixed Penalty Notices – Code of Conduct', which is "at least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil during the last 12 school weeks", parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice or other legal action, in accordance with the code.

Any other 'exceptional circumstances': for example, this could include time needed to respond to a family crisis, taking time to attend private therapy sessions, or attending a sport competition. Any other circumstances will only be granted an authorised leave of absence at the Principal's discretion. Our primary objective has to be supporting the learning of the individual pupil.

Persistent Absentee

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. The school will work closely with parents/carers to understand the cause of any persistent absenteeism, and will work closely with the pupil and their parents/carers to identify solutions. We may refer the matter to Central Bedfordshire's Access and Inclusion Service for support. They may suggest a penalty notice.

Monitoring

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed every two years, or when the need arises, and the necessary recommendations for improvement will be made to the Governors.

Coronavirus addendum

The information in this addendum applies during national lockdowns due to the coronavirus pandemic.

- Our normal attendance policy continues to apply
- We expect pupils to stay at home and engage in remote learning wherever possible
- We will provide school places for pupils as per criteria agreed by the local authority
- The school may need to seek confirmation from employers if parents/carers alert us that they are a critical worker and therefore need a place in school
- Parents/carers must maintain contact with the school throughout lockdowns or isolation periods
- We will share attendance information with key partners in health and social care
- For the 2020/21 academic year, there is a new category of non-attendance to capture circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to COVID-19: 'Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus'. This applies where a pupil's travel to, or attendance at, school would be:
 - Against guidance from Public Health England and/or the Department of Health and Social Care relating to the incidence of coronavirus or its transmission
 - Prohibited by any legislation or statutory directions relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus
- We will continue to register attendance, including the use of this new code
- Our approach and expectations regarding remote education are set out in our remote learning policy. We will monitor pupil engagement with remote learning, but we will not track this information in the attendance register
- Parents/carers will not be penalised if their child does not attend school during lockdown
- If parents/carers should to keep their child at home due to concerns related to the pandemic, but outside of national lockdowns, we will work with the family and the local authority to consider suitable actions to take, and how to support the pupil.