



Fulbrook Middle School

Attendance Policy

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Fulbrook Middle School – Attendance Policy

**Please read this policy in conjunction with:
Coronavirus Addendum**

Section 1 - Rationale/statement of intent

For a child to achieve their full educational potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital that a child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good school attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between educational achievement and absence levels
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to maintain
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders find transition points easier to manage

Section 2 - Operating the policy

2.1 Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parent/s and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in our weekly bulletin/newsletter/website as appropriate.
- report to parents on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- celebrate and reward good attendance
- set attendance targets for the whole school, year groups, form groups and individual pupils, ensuring that these are shared with all relevant parties

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

Senior and middle leaders; school administrator

A member of the senior leadership team (the Behaviour and Attendance Lead) will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will work with the school administrator to ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and reported to Year Leaders and Form Tutors as necessary. Support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep these to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the Headteacher.

Responsibilities of other staff, especially form tutors and subject teachers

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance lead on matters of absence and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Governors

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration, England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt an Attendance Policy and review it annually
- Agree targets for attendance at School
- Ensure that they receive reports from the Headteacher regarding school attendance as part of the school monitoring, notably via the Headteacher's report to Governors
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance target, or when the Governors believe there is cause for concern, they should require a review of the systems and procedures in place to promote good attendance
- To promote the strong link between attendance and educational attainment to parents and pupils where appropriate and ensure that the school attendance policy and procedures are communicated effectively
- Authorise the Headteacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

Responsibilities of pupils

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an unavoidable reason for absence.
- Arrive at school on time and fully equipped for lessons.
- Get to registration and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for reporting to and registering at Reception if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 7 Education Act 1996) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

A 'parent' is defined in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 and is defined as follows;

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person

- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that the child lives with and is looked after by that person, irrespective of what their relationship is).

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the tutor/school administrator any planned absences, well in advance if possible
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by email/letter if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Section 3 – Recording attendance

Legally the register must be taken twice daily. Once at the beginning of the school day (8:40 am) and again in the afternoon (1:05 pm). In addition to the legal requirements attendance and lateness to lessons will also be recorded.

3.1 Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and also to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late, he/she is likely to miss time with the teacher, as well as miss vital information. Late arrival can also cause disruption to the lesson for others; it can be, embarrassing, which – in turn – can lead to possible further absence.

The school day begins at 8.40 am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time**. Registration begins at 8.40 am and the register closes at 8.55 am.

- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with the Department of Education 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*. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.
- Punctuality at school is vital and registers will only be kept open for 15 minutes.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated absent lates (*U* code) are unauthorised absences and **may be subject to legal action** (see Section 6 for further detail). Parents, guardians or carers of pupils, who have patterns of lateness, will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support will be offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions (one session = one morning or one afternoon) of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 12 week period, the school may ask Central Bedfordshire Council to issue parents with a Penalty Notice.

3.2 What to do if my child is absent?

First day absence

A child not arriving at school where the parents have not informed the school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required. If your child is absent, you must:

- contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence via phone, email or letter.

We ask that children are collected promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or is significantly late, the school is obliged to share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies including both the Police and Children's Social Care. If one is available, the school may place a child who has not been collected at the appropriate time into the after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as his/her regular school attendance
- invite you in to discuss the situation with our attendance officer and/or pastoral leaders, school administrator and/or the Behaviour and Attendance Lead if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Central Bedfordshire Council's Access and Inclusion Service, if absence is unauthorised and does not meet school expectations

Third day absence

Please note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence, the school is required to consider implementing the *child missing education* procedures as set down by Central Bedfordshire Council. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and the wider family. **We may also visit the home address**

Ten days' absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the Child is Missing in Education. Staff from the Access and Inclusion Service will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Please help us to help you and your child, by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number and home address.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 39 or more sessions of absence across the school year, for whatever reason, he/she is defined as a *persistent absentee*. Concern is triggered when a child's attendance is recorded at 90% or less. Absence, for whatever reason, disadvantages a child, by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows that these gaps, at whatever level, affect attainment. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

All our persistent absentee pupils and their parents are subject to an Attendance Plan or home school contract.

A welcome back

It is important that, on return from an unavoidable absence, all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is offered help to catch up on missed work and receive information shared with other pupils.

Section 4 – Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated in September 2013:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining **exceptional** are **rare**, **significant**, or **unavoidable**, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. Circumstances where absences may be regarded as **exceptional** will vary from school to school and family to family.

There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to contact the Headteacher, via the school office, in the first instance. The school administrator will then issue an application form (also available on our school website) in advance and before parents make 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 Central Bedfordshire Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (10 sessions of absence within 12 school weeks), parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail). Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Section 5 – Authorised/unauthorised absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an unavoidable reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request.

Unauthorised absences are likely to include: parents allowing their child/ren permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for

- shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Section 6 - Legalities

6.1 Legal Measures for failing to ensure regular school attendance (including penalty notices)

Section 7 of The Education Act 1996 requires parents to secure the education of their children of compulsory school age.

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

(a) to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

6.2 Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

The following legal measures may be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school and are not attending regularly:

Penalty Notices: The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

Magistrates Court Action under Sec 444 (1) and (1a) of the Education Act 1996

6.3 Penalty Notices

Central Bedfordshire Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices states that where a child has had 10 unauthorised absences (the equivalent of five school days) in a 12 school week period, the school may request a penalty notice be

issued. The code of conduct is a statutory document that ensures that the powers for this legal sanction are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

Penalty Notices can be issued when:

- a pupil has taken holiday during term-time and the absence has not been authorised by the school, providing the school has taken into account DfE guidance to inform its decision-making
- where the school believes that the sanction will lead to an improvement in attendance, e.g. persistent late arrival at school; parents' failure to attend/cooperate at a parenting contract meeting

Parents and carers will be alerted/warned about the possibility of a penalty notice being requested for unauthorised absence through the leave of absence request form and/or through the school's attendance policy and website.

If more than one parent has parental responsibility, both parents will receive a Penalty Notice. In situations where there is more than one pupil in a family with irregular school attendance, multiple penalty notices can be issued to the same parents during the year. However, this action must be subject to careful consideration and co-ordination.

6.4 Legal Action taken under Section 444 (1) and (1a) Education Act 1996

Where the school has tried to address a pupil's unauthorised absences but the measures taken have been unsuccessful, it can then refer on to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer. If there is either no improvement in the attendance nor satisfactory evidence provided for the absences following this intervention, then it is likely legal action at Magistrates Court will be initiated.

Sanctions available to the court are as follows:

- a fine of up to £2,500
- a conditional discharge – the parent will be given a set amount of time in which to improve the child's attendance. Should this fail, the Council may bring a further prosecution against the parent and, if found guilty, he/she will be sentenced for both offences
- an absolute discharge – the case is proved but the parent will not be subject to a penalty, although he/she will receive a conviction
- a community order such as unpaid work, curfew or tagging
- imprisonment - for up to three months

Section 7 – Absence variances

7.1 My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend then it is better not to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may also make things worse. Contact your child's form tutor immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, friendship problems, bullying or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. The school may provide an "attendance success plan" to support you and your child. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

7.2 What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

Your child will bring home a school diary each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it once a week. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat about the things he/she has learnt, what friends he/she has made and even what he/she had for lunch!

Reduced Timetable:

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a reintegration package. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.

7.3 Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to upper school at the end of Year 8), parents are asked to:

1. Give the school administrator comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move, new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing
2. If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which may include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

7.4 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

A parent can seek leave of absence from a school for their child to take part in a performance. They must however contact the head teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of this, the impact that this may have on their child's education, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

7.5 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching. The regulations related to children participating in public performances are separate to those around authorising leave of absence. Head teachers can authorise this absence. For further advice and guidance on Child Employment and Performance Licenses contact Central Bedfordshire Council on 0300 300 4953

7.6 Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

The absence of a child, from a Traveller family, who has left the area can be authorised if the absence is for the parent's work purposes only and it is believed

that the family intends to return. A school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll whilst they are travelling. When the child is travelling the school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised by using the *T* code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at School, although may offer support to the pupil whilst he/she is away. Please note that pupils must have attended 200 sessions in a rolling 12-month period to be able to use travelling for work purposes as a defence against prosecution. For further advice and guidance on attendance and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families, contact Central Bedfordshire Council on 0300 300 4953.

To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration at two schools is allowed.

7.7 Teenage pregnancy

Support will be directed to keeping a pupil in school and, wherever possible, her return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Section 8 - Admission and Attendance Register

8.1 Amendments to the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

8.2 Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Appendices:

- Trigger letters 1, 2 and 3;
- 'Lates' letter;
- Leave of Absence Request form for the Fulbrook Pyramid
- Attendance success plan

Trigger Letter 1

Dear

Pupil's Name DOB

I am writing to you with reference to the attendance of your son/daughter. The attendance register (copy enclosed) shows that his/her attendance currently stands at XX%. I am concerned that this attendance level may seriously impact upon his/her ability to fully access the curriculum.

The school's minimum attendance target is **XXX** and we would appreciate your support in ensuring that your son/daughter's attendance improves to at least our minimum school target.

If there is anything we can do to support you to help improve **XXXX** school attendance or if you would like to discuss this matter please contact me.

The Local Authority requests that schools ensure that parents are made aware of both the definition of who is a parent and also what the law says parents must do with regards to their child's education. Please see our attendance policy, which can be accessed via our school website. Alternatively, a hard copy can be requested from the school office.

Yours sincerely

Trigger 2

Dear

Pupil's Name DOB

I am writing to you with reference to the attendance of your son/daughter. The attendance register (copy enclosed) shows that his/her attendance currently stands at XX% **with XX number of unauthorised absences**. I am concerned that this attendance level may seriously impact upon his/her ability to fully access the curriculum.

The school's minimum attendance target is..... and we would appreciate your support in ensuring that your son/daughter's attendance improves to at least our minimum school target.

Unfortunately we will be unable to authorise any further absences as illness, from the date of this letter onwards, unless satisfactory medical evidence is provided to support these absences. Medical evidence can take the form of copies of prescriptions, appointment cards or sight of medication. In certain cases, a letter from a GP or Consultant would be required so that extra support to help a child access education, because of a medical need, can be arranged.

Should **XXXXX** level of attendance fail to improve, or the school does not receive satisfactory evidence to support the absences, we may need to consider requesting that you attend a joint meeting with the Headteacher and the Local Authority School Attendance Officer, or may request that a Penalty Notice is issued in line with Central Bedfordshire Council's Code of Conduct.

Yours sincerely

Notification Letter

Dear

Pupil's Name

DOB

I am writing to inform you that due to XXXXX's irregular school attendance, I have requested that the Local Authority issues you with a Penalty Notice <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/schoolsportal/administration/inclusion/referrals.aspx>

OR have made a formal referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer, who will be in contact with you in the near future.

Should you have further information that would support XXXXX's level of absence, I ask that this is shared with the School Secretary or the Headteacher.

Yours sincerely

Lates

Dear

Pupil's Name DOB

Re: Persistent Lateness

I am writing to inform you that your child _____ is persistently late for school. Between *date* and *date* he/she was late on _____ occasions and missed _____ hours of education.

When pupils arrive late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson. This can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. Your child may also feel awkward arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled. Furthermore, when one pupil arrives late, it disrupts the entire class and the teacher – everyone's education is compromised.

- 5 minutes late every day = 3 DAYS OF SCHOOL LOST A YEAR
- 10 minutes late every day = 6.5 DAYS OF SCHOOL LOST A YEAR
- 15 minutes late every day = 10 DAYS OF SCHOOL LOST A YEAR
- 20 minutes late every day = 13 DAYS OF SCHOOL LOST A YEAR
- 30 minutes late every day = 19 DAYS OF SCHOOL LOST A YEAR

Further lateness may result in you being served with a Penalty Notice. Parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. .

Meanwhile, if anything can be done to support _____ getting to school on time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

<i>School will:</i>
Who can help?

Attendance target:	
Timescale for improvement:	
Date for review meeting:	

I confirm that this Attendance Success Plan was agreed by all present.

Signed:

..... Parent/carer

..... Pupil

..... School representative/s

.....

..... Other agency