



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Rationale

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 pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. 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.

All at Silsoe Lower School are committed to maximising attendance for all pupils in order for them to reach their potential within a secure and friendly environment in which all children are valued. We believe that children can only realise their potential if school attendance is deemed to be important and is encouraged by effective home/school partnership. We recognise that home/school communication is vital in implementing this Attendance Policy. This policy supports our vision for our school where all children are enabled to achieve their potential.

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**

Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child. The Home School Agreement contains details of how we will work with parents/carers 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:

- report to parents/carers on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- celebrate good attendance by awarding certificates termly
- publicise attendance attainment for each class in order to promote understanding and foster ambition to improve
- regularly monitor the attendance of all pupils
- have timely discussions with parents where attendance/punctuality seems to be falling

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the attendance of all pupils on a half-termly basis. If falling attendance is noticed by other members of staff this will be reported to the designated member of the Senior Leadership Team who will investigate. They will also ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties, engaging positively

with parents/carers at all times. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, they will send a letter to inform parents of this. If there is no improvement within the next half term, they will send a further letter and ask the Class Teacher to arrange a meeting with parents/carers to discuss the reasons for their child's absence and to ask for medical evidence for any absence in the future. Liaison with the School Attendance Officer will also be effective in cases of persistent or concerning absence. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the Head Teacher.

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff

Classroom staff will be required to:

- ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session
- ensure that attendance is part of our "Home/School Agreement" which is signed by all new parents before their children are admitted to the school
- promote and reward good attendance with pupils 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 who have been absent to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- attend every day unless they are ill or have an unavoidable reason for absence
- arrive at school on time
- try to remember what they need for school (e.g. PE kit/swimming kit)

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.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the Class Teacher any planned absences well in advance
- 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
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- try to ensure their child attends school either side of a medical appointment (not keeping their child off for the entire day)

- provide medical evidence of any appointments during school hours
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance
- ensure they request a leave of absence for an exceptional circumstance from the Head Teacher via a leave of absence form available from the office.

The Registration Period

The registration of all pupils is a statutory requirement and school registers are legal documents that must be maintained and kept for a minimum of three years after the date on which they were last used. Registers must be completed twice each day at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

The morning registration period ends at 9.00 am. Any child arriving after 8.55am time will be marked as late and should report to the school office. If an acceptable explanation is provided, their lateness is counted as authorised. If not, then it will be counted as an unauthorised absence.

The afternoon registration period ends at 1.35pm. Any child arriving after this time will be marked as late and should report to the school office. If an acceptable explanation is provided, their lateness is counted as authorised. If not, then it will be counted as an unauthorised absence.

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late they can miss time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others and it can be embarrassing. Parents/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.

When completing registers, it is important that teachers mark in accordance with the Nationally Agreed Guidelines as indicated in Appendix 1. Under no circumstances should blanks be left for when a child returns to school, neither should a child be marked present when they are absent.

Advice to Parents/Carers

- **What to do if my child is absent?**

A child not arriving at school where the parents haven't informed the school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required. If a child is absent parents/carers must:

1. contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence via telephone. Please leave an answerphone message if necessary.
2. send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence.

It is also the parent/carer's responsibility to collect their child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies including both the police and Children's Social Care. The school may place a child who has not been

collected within a reasonable amount of time into the after-school care club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

If a child is absent we will:

- telephone the parent on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by 9.30am. This is because we have a duty to ensure each child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.
- invite the parent in to discuss the situation with our attendance leader and/or class teacher and Head Teacher if absences persist.
- monitor attendance and liaise with the Education Welfare Officer if necessary to offer support.
- refer the matter to the Central Bedfordshire Council's Access and Inclusion Service if absence is unauthorised and doesn't meet school expectations.

Third Day Absence

If a 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 in 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 make enquiries to known friends and wider family.

Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any child 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 Education. Staff from the Access and Inclusion Service will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Parents are asked to 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 a child misses 39 or more sessions (one session is the morning or afternoon) of absence across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as a *persistent absentee*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child, by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows that these gaps at whatever level affects attainments. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department of Education.

Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated in September 2013:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that Head Teacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. It is important to note that Head Teacher 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 fill in an application form (available from the school office) in advance and 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 Central Bedfordshire Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (10 sessions of absence on 12 school weeks), parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice or other legal action in accordance with the code. Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during term time.

Understanding Types of Absence

Children 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 absence:

- 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 reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent/carer's request.

Unauthorised absences are likely to include: parent/carers allowing their children 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.

Please refer to the following policies;

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Exclusion
- SEND
- Teaching and Learning

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 to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

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

(b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

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

Penalty Notices

Central Bedfordshire Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices states that where a child has had 10 unauthorised absences 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/co-operate 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, or through the school's Attendance Policy.

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.

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

Appendix 1

Code	Description	Meaning
/	Present (am)	Present
\	Present (pm)	Present
B	Educated off site	Approved Education Authority
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (ie pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Authority
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Authority
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Authority
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers close)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Authority
W	Work experience	Approved Education Authority
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances