

Attendance at Bedford Free School

We know that for our students to gain the greatest benefits from their education, it is vital that they attend school daily. We expect our students to attend on time (lined up on the playground by 8.25am) every day unless the reason for absence is absolutely unavoidable. It is very important that parents/carers recognise their responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.

We believe **98% attendance** is a realistic and achievable target for all students that allows for the occasional emergency or sick absence.

To put this in perspective: whilst gaining 90% in an exam is great, for attendance it is not good at all.

90% attendance = ½ a day a week missed

90% attendance = 4 weeks missed every year

90% attendance = ½ a school year missed every 5 years

On average, when attendance drops to 90% students see an entire grade drop in each of their GCSE subjects!

Headline Information:-

- **Attendance below 95% - Student remains in school until the normal home time of 4.00pm on a Friday**
- **Attendance below 95% - Student attends Catch-Up Club instead of electives**
- **Attendance below 95% - tutor input with student and parent/carers**
- **Attendance below 93% - Pastoral Team will meet with parent/carers for a supportive chat**
- **Attendance below 90% - Student attends Catch-up Club & Educational Welfare Officer support triggered - student is lawfully deemed to be a "Persistent Absentee", fines (Fixed Penalty Notices) and possible court action**
- **Golden Time will only be awarded if a signed sick note has been sent following any period of absence**

Support for absence

- Catch-up Club is a support for students to catch-up on any work missed, including class an homework, learning of knowledge maps and reading
- It is the students' responsibility to gather and independently complete any work missed during their period of absence
- Catch-up Club takes place in the elective periods and the last session on a Friday afternoon
- Attendance is monitored in ten week blocks – as long as attendance is above 90% generally and above 95% in the last 10 weeks then students will no longer need to attend Catch-up club
- There are rewards for improving attendance!!! It is possible to gain back Golden Time even if attendance is below 90% your child will be allowed home at 3.15pm on a Friday (provided they have achieved the other criteria to gain golden Time) once they have completed and sustain a full run of 20 days or more in school

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities:

- **Every day** your son/daughter is off sick please call us on 01234 332299 **before 8.15am** to advise us why they are absent and when you expect them to return
- On the day your child returns to school following any period of absence **send a signed explanation letter into school**
- Only agree to your son/daughter staying at home if they are genuinely ill – we are happy to monitor a child here at school who is 'under the weather' and call you if necessary
- Where minor ailments can be alleviated by painkillers we can administer medicines/pain killers in school as long as there is a covering note from the parent or carers

- Make medical appointments outside of Bedford Free School hours – due to our same day detention policy it is advised this is after 5pm or better still I half term or holiday periods
- **Never take term-time holidays** - Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to parents if students take holiday in term-time
- Talk to your son/daughter about their schooling and how they feel about it. **If there are problems communicate openly with us – we are here to support.** They are more likely to attend and enjoy school if they feel supported and listened to

What to do if there is a problem with your son/daughter's attendance...

- Remember – your child's current attendance percentage is recorded weekly on their Achievement Card – you can monitor it too!
- Contact Tutor or Pastoral Leader to address the reason for any non-attendance
- You are not alone - your son/daughter's welfare is important to us. We can help you resolve issues and can offer lots of support for you and your child
- Be supportive to your child in the run up to tests and be aware of coursework deadlines
- Encourage your child to take full responsibility to catch up with all work - a missed day should not mean missed work or homework
- Remind your child to make arrangements to collect work from the relevant subject teachers – they can complete this in Catch-Up Club

In order to help you understand the importance of excellent attendance, please refer to the Bedford Free School Attendance Diamond below. This outlines how we will deal with attendance as a school.

Who to contact for support:-

The Form Tutor or Pastoral Support Leader should be the first point of contact should you have any concerns about your child getting into school.

