

Date of Issue	ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY	Policy Number
08.12		
Review Date		Policy Owner
08.13		

1. Purpose

By law all children of compulsory school age (between 5-16) must have a “proper full time education”. Parents and Carers are responsible for making sure that this happens, either by registering their child at a school or by making other arrangements which provide an effective education.

- 1.1 The purpose of the policy is to ensure that staff, students and parent/carers are aware of their responsibilities under the Law, the Education Act 1996 and DFES guidelines on whole school attendance.
- 1.2 The policy and associated procedures have been developed with the DFES guidance, the Education Act 1996 and the Law in mind, in particular Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act of 2003

2. Policy

- 2.1 Ensures that we maximise the potential of all students through promoting full time attendance and punctuality.
- 2.2 To recognise the needs of the individual students following significant periods of absence.
- 2.3 To improve the overall percentage attendance of all students at the school in line with agreed targets.
- 2.4 To provide support, advice and guidance to students and carers through effective use of the Education Welfare Service.
- 2.5 To make attendance and punctuality a priority with staff, parents, carers, students and governors.
- 2.6 To ensure parents/carers are aware of the schools procedures regarding holidays during term time

Statutory Registration

When a child attends school there is a legal requirement that ensures that every child is marked in by a register during tutor in the morning and during lesson 5 (the afternoon session).

Absences shall be classified as either authorised or unauthorised absence as determined by the principal or his designee. **Only a school can decide whether an absence is authorised**

Authorised Absence is defined as when the school has given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be absent, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence. .

An unauthorised absence is when a student is absent from class or school without a satisfactory explanation.

An Unauthorised Late is when a student arrives to school after the register has closed.

Punctuality

Students should arrive for morning registration by 8.25am. If a Student arrives after this point they will be marked late. The registers will be closed at 9.00am and after this point the Student will receive an unauthorised absence mark.

If a Student is late they will be given a 45 minute detention at the end of the day. Failure to attend the detention will result in a 1 hour 45 minute detention the following day. Failure to attend both these detentions will result in the student being placed in isolation.

Saturday morning detention will be set for persistently late students.

We encourage good punctuality by ensuring students are rewarded in line with the School's Reward Policy

Leaving the School Grounds During the Day

This is strongly discouraged except in cases of emergency. Any students leaving the school during the school day **must** obtain permission from either the Attendance Officer or the Principals PA. . Students are allowed to leave the site at morning break or lunch time.

If a student is ill, they must always tell a teacher who will refer them to the medical room where their condition will be reviewed. Parents will always be contacted by the school prior to the School sending a student home.

Parents are requested not to collect students who have phoned them unless otherwise contacted by the school. In any case of doubt please contact the school.

Truancy

Truancy is when a student absents himself or herself from school without good reason and without permission from home or school. This will be dealt with by a sanction and recorded on the Behaviour Log.

Absence During Term Time

It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time. The school works closely with the Education Welfare Service to improve attendance when necessary.

To help in this, if your child is absent from school, you must:

- Telephone the school **every day** on **(01234) 332299** and leave a message on the Absence Hotline.
- Upon the students return to school, please write a note or write in the students planner explaining the reason for the absence, for your child to give to their Form Tutor.

Parents should avoid making non-urgent dental/medical appointments during the school day. If a student is late due to an appointment they will receive an unauthorised absence mark for the whole session unless they have attended morning registration at 8.25am.

A student who arrives late due to such an appointment, or who needs to leave during the school day for an appointment, will need a letter from home for the school to be able to authorise the absence and the student **MUST** sign out at Reception. Students **MUST** sign in at Reception upon their return. We would encourage students to register in school prior to any medical appointment to get their attendance mark.

Colluded Absence

If a parent or carer deliberately allows their child to be absent from school, without good reason, then they are colluding with their child's absence from school. This will be coded as an unauthorised absence and may result in:

- 1) A referral to the Education Welfare Service
- 2) Fixed penalty notice £50
- 3) Prosecution through the Magistrates Courts.

Holiday During Term Time

The law says that parents/carers do not have a legal right to take their child out of school for holidays in term time.

However, schools can allow parents/carers to take their child out of school providing there are **special** circumstances for the request and a letter of application is made in advance by

the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides. Only in **exceptional** circumstances will more than 10 school days absence be granted in any school year.

If you take a holiday without the school's permission or if your child fails to return by the agreed date, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and noted on your child's records. If your child has not returned within 10 days of the expected date of return, then the school may take your child off roll, after consultation with the Local Authority.

The school may also ask the Education Welfare Service to consider a Penalty Notice. The Penalty Notice is £50 if paid within 28 days or £100 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. If you do not pay a Penalty Notice, you will be prosecuted in Court.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Parent/Carers

If your child does not attend school regularly, the local education authority can take legal action against you. This can result in criminal proceedings. The courts can impose a fine on each parent or carer of up to £2500 for each child not attending school and/or impose a 3 month prison sentence. As a parent or carer you would then have a criminal record. The school also has the power under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act of 2003 to ask the education authority to impose a £50 penalty (£100 if not paid within 28 days) for unauthorised absences and ultimately may seek a parenting order through the court.

3.2 Bedford Free School

We operate a system where if attendance falls to less than 95% over a 4 week period the Tutor will discuss this with the student. If attendance then falls below 90% a Concern letter is issued. Students and parents will normally then meet with a member of the team to consider what support we can offer to improve your child's attendance. If attendance falls below 85% we will then automatically involve the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who will monitor individual pupils on a fortnightly basis and become directly involved in such cases where significant improvements have not been achieved.

Within the school we have a number of staff that will help support this process and deal with attendance and punctuality issues. The School Attendance Officer is the first point of contact for ALL parents and carers when their child is absent. Parents will be contacted if no reason for absence is recorded. Where we have concerns about attendance or punctuality these will be addressed fortnightly through meetings with the Attendance Officer and

Education Welfare Officer, and it is at these meetings that persistent absentees are identified and support put in place.

Clearly any support which is put in place can only be successful with the parent or carer's support and we are keen to work with parents and carers to maintain a high level of attendance. It is therefore vital that concerns are addressed early so that they can be dealt with.

In order to support this policy these are the key actions:

1. The Attendance Officer regularly monitor the weekly figures and reports to senior staff.
2. Attendance and Punctuality is regularly reported to parents via Parent Consultation Evenings and Assessment Profiles.
3. All students identified with high levels of absence are tracked via fortnightly liaison meetings. School meetings and Pupil Profiles (see Appendix 2) will be put in place for those students with attendance concerns.
4. The referral of students to an attendance panel where short term targets can be identified and parental support put in place.

Individual support for students identified with high level of school absence.

1. Learning mentors to provide support for students before, during and after lessons to ensure they do not become disengaged.
2. Meetings with Attendance Lead and Attendance Officer to monitor and support improvements in whole school attendance.
3. Student attendance survey and blitz days run in conjunction with the Education Welfare Service to encourage students to share difficulties and develop appropriate support for success.

4. Related Documents

4.1 The DFES guidance regarding attendance

4.2 The Education Act 1996

4.3 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996

4.4 The Anti-Social Behaviour Act of 2003

5. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The school Governors are responsible for ensuring th Free School adheres to this policy and that this policy is periodically monitored and reviewed.

5.2 A termly report will be made to the governing body covering

The number of students in the following categories

100% - 96% Attendance

95.99% - 86% Attendance

85.99% and below

Any issues that have had an impact on our attendance figures

5.3 This policy will be reviewed at least every two years.