



Attendance Policy for Students

Recommended by:

Teaching, Learning & Achievement Committee Date: 3 February 2015

Adopted at Full Governing Body Meeting Date: 17 March 2015

Signed by R J Collis DL, Chair of Governors:

Review date: Spring Term 2019 (earlier if any legislative change)

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY – UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2015

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The law relating to safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management - Attitude to Learning
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18. Failing to attend this School on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter and dealt with accordingly by the Assistant Headteacher (Student Experience) and/or the Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

In September 2013 the Government amended key legislation relating to attendance. This decision was made to encourage schools to take a firmer stance on absence and to make parents/carers aware that there is no entitlement to time off for holidays during term and that Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Since 1 September 2013 Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any requests for leave during term time in exceptional circumstances should be made in writing to the Headteacher, who will respond in writing to the request. It is important that parents/carers understand that leave in term time will not be agreed by

the School at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

In considering the request the School will also look at various factors such as:

- The timing of the request.
 - When a student is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
 - Students should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods, eg. SATs, GCSE or any other public examinations.
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a student's attendance rate is already below 96% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave.
- Other periods of leave which the student may have had, either during the current or previous academic year.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the School, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may ultimately attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. In certain circumstances, parents/carers risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the student does not return to school on the agreed return date. Readmission cannot be guaranteed.

Further information from the Department for Education

We advise that you do not plan for your child to be absent from school without gaining prior agreement from their school first. Headteachers cannot retrospectively authorise absence from school under any circumstance. Any disagreement between estranged parents should be resolved prior to submitting this request to your child's school.

Please note this is not an entitlement.

Headteachers will not authorise absences if they believe it is to the detriment of a child's education. Please note that supporting documents to aid decision making must be submitted at the time of your request for absence.

If your request is authorised, you are required to ensure your child catches up on any missed school work. This is your responsibility and school are not obliged to provide work for your child to complete.

Any unauthorised absence will be recorded on your child's attendance records. This may result in legal proceedings against you, either through a Penalty Notice or the Magistrates' Court. Please see Buckinghamshire County Council's Code of Conduct for issuing of Penalty Notices (Appendix 2)

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, students and all members of school Staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Monitor attendance of all students on a weekly basis.
- Give you details on attendance in our newsletter.
- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in School, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their progress and attainment.

- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through the giving of merits, class competitions, and certificates.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from School has to be classified by the School (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from School only for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, religious observance, or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes the following examples:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the School, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 20% or more schooling across the school year *for whatever reason*. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark over a five week period, *or* is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately by the Assistant Headteacher (Student Experience).

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with our intervention programme to minimise the impact where absence affects attainment. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

Absence Procedures

If your child is unavoidably absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence on 01296 689720 or email studentabsent@cottesloe.bucks.sch.uk and every day thereafter until your child returns to School. Please include full student name, dates and reason for absence.
- Send a note in *on the first day they return* with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us. Again, please include full student name, dates and reason for absence.
- Or, you can come into School and report to Reception personally. If necessary you can arrange for an appointment to discuss the issue with your child's Form Tutor, Head of Year, or the Assistant Headteacher (Student Experience).

If your child is absent we will:

- Inform you by letter if we do not receive an absence note within 10 school days.
- Raise our concerns with you regarding attendance via a letter in the first instance.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the student's Form Tutor, Head of Year, or the Assistant Headteacher (Student Experience) if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance does not improve.
- If your child's attendance becomes a serious concern over a five-week period you will be notified via a letter inviting you to contact school to discuss any issues. In order to put in place interventions to support your child's full attendance at school we will also inform you that a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance does not improve.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number – if we do not then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year. You can send in a note or email the School at office@cottesloe.bucks.sch.uk with new contact details.

The School Attendance Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the School may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer. S/he will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can seek a prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from Bucks County Council (General Enquiries 01296 395000).

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child is late for the start of the day they can miss contact with their Form Tutor, getting vital information, assemblies and crucial learning activities. Late arriving students can be embarrassed by the experience and cause lesson disruption, both of which can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at **8.40am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **9.00am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a referral to the Education Welfare Officer if the problem persists

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Form Tutor and/or Head of Year to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

School targets, projects and special initiatives

The School has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our school newsletter and on via the school's website and we ask for your full support.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this School are:

- Assistant Headteacher (Student Experience)
- Heads of Year
- Attendance Officer

Summary

The School has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All School staff are committed to working with parents and students in the best way to ensure a high level of attendance. In achieving high levels of attendance we believe that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in four years (earlier if any legislative change).

Student attendance rate target updated September 2015

SUMMARY OF EXPECTATIONS REGARDING ATTENDANCE AT THE COTTESLOE SCHOOL**Students**

- Leave for School on time and come straight into School. If you arrive in the coach park you are not allowed off site.
- Go to registration promptly or sign in at Heads of Year Room if you are late or you miss registration. It is your responsibility to ensure you get a mark.
- Do not leave School premises unless you have a lunch pass, you are being signed out by a parent/carer or you have a letter from the person giving you permission. Show your letter to the teacher if you need to leave the lesson early and hand it in at Heads of Year Room as you sign out.
- If you come back the same day, remember to sign back in at Heads of Year Room, next to where you signed out.
- When you return from an illness etc remember to hand a note from your parent/carer in to your form tutor.
- If you are in School, but unable to go to registration, please sign in and out at Heads of Year Room.
- Late marks – students sign in within thirty minutes of the end of registration, otherwise they will get an unauthorised mark.
- Target for individual attendance should be 96%, which is calculated over the period of the whole school year.

Parents

- Ensure that students arrive at School on time.
- Bring in or arrange transport for your child if your child misses their usual transport; if the school transport fails to arrive you should contact Passenger Transport in the first instance on 01296 383737.
- Telephone or email School *on the first day of absence* and leave a message, preferably before 9am, if your child is absent. Please speak clearly and give a brief reason. Either telephone or email every day or make sure you write a note to cover for all dates absent.
- Write a note for your child to hand in to their Form Tutor on the first day your child returns to school. Please give the student's full name, dates of absence and reason for absence, clearly written.
- Write a note prior to medical appointments for your child to show the teacher whose lesson they are leaving and to hand in at Heads of Year room as they sign out or in, if they are late. If it is an emergency appointment please notify School Reception about this to give permission for leaving school.
- Be aware that Headteacher's cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances - any requests for leave during term time in exceptional circumstances should be made in writing to the Headteacher for their decision.

Form Tutors

- Mark registers promptly and remember to save marks.
- Return your register to Heads of Year trolley promptly after registration, using a student monitor if preferred.
- Check, sign and date absence notes received and put the separate pocket of the register folder.
- Check your register folder thoroughly for messages for students and letters for distribution, etc. Keep your folder tidy and cleared out frequently. Display relevant information in Form Room.
- Pass on any concerns and relevant information regarding long term or frequent absences to your Head of Year.
- Remind students to bring in an absence note for you, if they return to School from an absence without one.

Teaching Staff

- Do not let students out of your lesson without a slip from you or a note from parent/carer.
- Notify Reception if students are missing from your lesson, to check whether they have been marked present.
- If covering a registration please mark promptly and remember to press 'Save'. Also check the folder for urgent messages and letters for distribution, etc.
- Return the register to Reception promptly, using a student monitor if preferred.
- Notify other staff, in particular the Attendance Officer, of the names of students out of school on trips, sporting fixtures or out of lessons.

Attendance Officer

- Log all telephone calls or emails received by parents regarding absence.
- Process absence notes received from tutors and send letters home to parents requesting reasons for unexplained absences.
- Ensure overall accuracy of student marks.
- Pass on serious concerns regarding student attendance to the Assistant Headteacher (Student Experience) where necessary.
- Contact selected parents/carers on the first day of absence, if no message is received before *9am*.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ISSUING PENALTY NOTICES FOR
UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL****1. The Legal Basis**

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school is, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, a legal requirement. Therefore parents are responsible for ensuring that their child of compulsory school age receives sufficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have.

For the purpose of this legislation and Code of Conduct a 'parent' is defined under section 576 Education Act 1996 as: -

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although they are not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has the day to day care of a child or young person.

(Throughout this document, references to 'parent' mean each and every parent coming within the definition, whether acting jointly or separately.)

For the purpose of the legislation and Buckinghamshire County Council's Code of Conduct, compulsory school age is defined as:

Commencing at the start of term on or after a child's fifth birthday and concluding on the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they turn 16.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 came into effect on 27 February 2004. Under Section 23 of this Act, the Education Act 1996 was amended with the introduction of 2 new subsections under Section 444 (subsections 444A & 444B) which has made it possible for Penalty Notices to be used as an alternative to prosecution in cases of unauthorised absence from school. The responsibility for authorising absence rests with the school's Head Teacher.

The procedural guidance for the implementation of those subsections is contained within The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (No 1867).

In respect of an excluded pupil The Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 103 places a duty on parents in relation to an excluded pupil, to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of each and every fixed term and permanent exclusion. These days are known as the "specified days of exclusion". Section 104 of the Act requires schools to notify parents in writing that they are responsible for the child during these days.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 105 allows for a penalty notice to be issued to a parent guilty of an offence under section 103.

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, there is a general requirement to ensure that all the measures introduced take into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Race Relations (Statutory Duties) Order 2001 and the Equality Act 2010.

2. The Context in Buckinghamshire

Attendance at school is essential for pupil attainment and for safeguarding the child.

Buckinghamshire Local Authority and schools have established a rigorous approach to addressing unauthorised absence from school. The new legislation governing Penalty Notices complements the measures already in place.

4. The Circumstances that Penalty Notices may be Issued

- Irregular school attendance;
- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps);
- Parentally-condoned absences;
- Unauthorised holidays in term-time;
- Being in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion

To ensure consistent delivery of Penalty Notices the following criteria will apply:

- In respect of Secondary School pupils that they have 85% attendance – with at least 10% unauthorised absence or below over the last 5 weeks.
- In respect of Primary School pupils that they have 95% attendance – with at least 5% unauthorised absence or below over the last 5 weeks.
- The usual response to a “first offence” is a written Formal Warning. This allows a parent fifteen days to improve the attendance of their child. If an unauthorised absence occurs within that period a Penalty Notice may be issued.
- In certain circumstances, including where ten sessions of absence comprise of unauthorised holidays in term time, a Penalty Notice can be issued without a Formal Warning having been issued previously.
- Where a child who has been excluded is present in a public place during the first five days. A penalty notice will be issued on the first occasion if appropriate.
- A Penalty Notice may also be issued without a Formal Warning if a Formal Warning has already been issued to the parent/carer previously.

5. The Procedure for Issuing Penalty Notices

Within Buckinghamshire, the responsibility for issuing Penalty Notices and managing arrangements for their payment and the collections of monies rests with the Education Welfare Service Specialist Unit. This ensures that all procedures relating to Penalty Notices are consistently applied, that enforcement action is not duplicated and that any subsequent court action is integrated into the existing attendance procedures.

Penalty notices will only be issued within the terms of the Code of Conduct. The Education Welfare Service Specialist Unit will ensure that penalty notices are properly issued and only issued for offences where the Buckinghamshire County Council is willing and able to prosecute.

Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an ‘on the spot’ action; this is to ensure that all evidential requirements have been met and that Health and Safety requirements are also met.

No parent will receive more than two separate Penalty Notices resulting from the unauthorised absence of an individual child in any one academic year. Penalty Notices will be issued to each parent / carer of the child exhibiting the relevant patterns of unauthorised absence and, where appropriate, in respect of more than one child.

In cases where families contain more than one child with unauthorised absence, multiple issuing of Notices may be necessary but this will be the subject of careful consideration by the Education Welfare Service Specialist Unit and discussion with the Head teacher.

The Education Welfare Service Specialist Unit will consider requests from schools, the Police, other agencies such as Social Care or the Youth Offending Service and neighbouring authorities as appropriate for issue of a Penalty Notice.

6. The Procedure for payment of Penalty Notices:

Arrangements for payment will be provided with the Penalty Notice

Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parent of liability for the attendance period in question. S/he cannot subsequently be prosecuted for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days is £60 and payment after 21 days, but within 28 days, is £120.

The Education Welfare Service Specialist Unit will send a Certificate of Payment of Penalty Notice to the payee.

Buckinghamshire County Council retains any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs (collection or prosecution in the event of non-payment).

7. Procedure to address Non-Payment of Penalty Notices

If after 28 days the notice remains unpaid, the Education Welfare Service Specialist Unit will send a Certificate of Non Payment of Penalty Notice to the parent/carers.

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice may trigger a prosecution under the provisions of section 444 of the Education Act 1996 on the basis that the parent has failed to secure regular school attendance. NB The prosecution is for the Non Attendance and NOT the non- payment of the Penalty Notice.

In respect of an excluded pupil, non-payment of the Penalty Notice may trigger a prosecution for the offence under Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

8. The Procedure for Withdrawing Penalty Notices

Guidance only allows a Penalty Notice to be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- Proof has been established that the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person
- The issuing of the Penalty Notice did not conform to the terms of this Code of Conduct
- It ought not to have been issued i.e. no offence has been committed
- If a prosecution is not contemplated

Where a Penalty Notice is withdrawn in accordance with the above, a Notice of Withdrawal shall be given to the recipient. Any amount paid towards the Penalty Notice in pursuance of that notice shall be repaid to the payee.

No proceedings shall continue or be instigated against the recipient for the offence in connection with which the withdrawal notice was issued or for an offence under Section 444 (1/1A) of the Education Act 1996 arising out of the same circumstances or for an offence under Section 103 Education and Inspections Act 2006 arising out of the same circumstances.

9. Policy and Publicity

Buckinghamshire County Council will provide information on the use of Penalty Notices in publicity campaigns outlining the importance of school attendance, and with its range of leaflets, which are available to parents.

All policies in schools relating to school attendance should include information on the utilisation of Penalty Notices and this sanction should be brought to the attention of all parents.

10. Reporting & Review

The Education Welfare Service Manager will report at regular intervals on the use and outcomes of Penalty Notices.

The Manager of the Education Welfare Service Specialist Unit will review and amend the use of Penalty Notices at regular intervals and amend the strategy as appropriate.

If you wish to make any comment regarding this Code of Conduct please direct all communication to the Education Welfare Service Specialist Unit Manager at:

Education Welfare Service Specialist Unit
Floor 2
County Hall
Walton Street
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP20 1YU

educationwelfareservice@buckscc.gov.uk

