

Stratton Upper School

Attendance Policy



Approved by: [Name]

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Attendance and Punctuality Policy

This policy is written in line with an agreed common approach to attendance across the secondary phase in Biggleswade.

Section 1: Rationale

Promoting good attendance is a key part of our wider safeguarding responsibilities.

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 pupils 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 pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines young people 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

Our approach to monitoring attendance and punctuality is the same for all year groups, including the sixth form. However our interventions do not include penalty notices or prosecutions for parents of sixth form students.

Every student has a minimum attendance target of 96%.

Section 2: Operating the policy

2.1 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 work with parents/carers and our expectations of what parents/carers 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 regular home school communications such as Headlines, InTouch emails and the school website
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- celebrate good attendance by displaying form group achievements
- reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and events
- set attendance targets for the whole school and individual pupils and ensure that these are well publicised.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of the school's attendance leader

A member of the senior leadership team 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 also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that 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 classroom staff

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance of 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 with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of students

- 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 registering at the reception desk 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 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 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, 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: Registration and Absence Procedures

3.1 Recording attendance

Legally the register must be taken twice daily; once at the beginning of the school day (at Stratton this is 8:45am) and again in the afternoon (at Stratton this is 12:35 pm). We also take a register (lesson monitor) for each of the five periods daily.

3.2 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 and lessons is used to give out instructions and organise work. If your child is late they miss time with their tutor, important assemblies and getting vital information. Lateness to lessons causes disruption to learning for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8:45 am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time**. Pupils arriving after this time are recorded as late. Morning registration closes at 9:30 am. Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with the Department for Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- 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 are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other pupils. Ongoing and repeated absent lates (U code) are unauthorised absences and **maybe 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 offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions 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.

3.3 What to do if your child is absent

First day absence

A child not arriving at school, and where a parent/carer has 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
- 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.

To report an absence please call our attendance office on 01767 220000 and press 1 when prompted to do so in the menu options. Please state clearly the child's full name and tutor group and reason for their absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone 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 their regular school attendance

- invite you in to discuss the situation with our attendance officer and/or pastoral leaders if absences persist
- 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

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 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 making enquiries to known friends, wider family as appropriate.

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 Education. Staff from the Access and Inclusion Service will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So 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 38 or more sessions (19 days) 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 affect attainment. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

Section 4: Requests 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 must write to the Deputy Headteacher (Ms Roz Hodges) at least 4 school weeks 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 in 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.

For national guidance refer to:

School attendance, 2016, located at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance

Section 5: Understanding types of 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 leave of 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.

The school will, 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: Legal Measures for failing to ensure regular school attendance

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 (5 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/co-operate at a parenting contract meeting

Parents and carers are alerted to the possibility of a penalty notice being requested for unauthorised absence, via the school's newsletters, 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 will be subject to careful consideration and co-ordination.

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 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

Section 7: Additional Information for Parents/Carers

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 sorted out 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 or head of year immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems 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. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

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 uniform and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

Your child has a school planner. Please ensure you look at it with your child every evening and sign it weekly. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

7.2 Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when leaving at the end of Year 11) parents are asked to:

1. Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans, including the date of the move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to Stratton 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.

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

A parent can seek leave of absence from the 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.

7.4 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

7.5 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. The 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 they are away. Please note that pupils must have attended 200 sessions (100 days) 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.

7.5 Study leave

We believe that pupils' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. No study leave will be granted during this period, therefore, and pupils will be expected to attend school in the usual way. Study leave will only be granted to Year 11 pupils during the time of the GCSE and mock examination period. Should any pupils wish to attend school (or should their

parents wish them to) on the days and at times when they are not sitting examinations, arrangements will be made for them to do so. The school will work within the legal requirements, i.e.:

- study leave should only be granted to Year 11 pupils and never to those in other year groups
- it should never exceed 15 school days in a year and is most appropriately granted during the examination period itself, i.e. not before the beginning of that period
- it should always be granted sparingly, taking account an individual pupil's ability to manage and benefit from unsupervised study
- any pupil has the right to attend school during study leave and a parent has the right to insist he/she does so
- any session given to pupils as study leave has a statistical meaning of authorised absence and is recorded as S on the register and reported on by the school as such.

7.6 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 will usually be allowed no more than 18 weeks of authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence may be treated as unauthorised.

Section 8: The 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 will include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and 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 will be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.