

FLITWICK LOWER SCHOOL



Policy

Pupil Attendance and Absence Policy

General Principles

The law defines compulsory school age between 5 and 18 years old. Young people between these ages must attend school full time to benefit fully from their education. This calls for close communication and co-operation between Central Bedfordshire County Council, the school governors, school staff, parents, carers, pupils, and the local community. Schools have a special responsibility to encourage full attendance.

We believe that punctuality is of the utmost importance.

Aims

At Flitwick Lower School we aim to:

- Promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere in school, where children feel safe and valued
- Create very positive attitudes towards high standards of attendance and punctuality
- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and absence is followed up promptly
- Check registers regularly, to note unexplained absences and identify patterns of absences or lateness, if they are occurring
- Involve other agencies when attendance or lateness gives cause for concern

We have a legal obligation to:

- record attendance at the start of the school day and during the afternoon on a paper or computer register
- tell the Local Authority (LA) if:
 - a pupil fails to attend regularly
 - a pupil is absent for 10 or more school days in a row. The school should tell the LA why the pupil is absent if it knows.
 - record in the register whether absence is authorised or unauthorised
 - publish the percentage and number of authorised and unauthorised absences in the prospectus
 - comment on any unauthorised absence in pupils' annual reports
 - allow the LA/Educational Welfare Service (EWS) to inspect the register during school hours

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents have a legal duty to make sure their child/ren attends school regularly and that their children arrive at school on time (8.50am) and are collected from school on time (3.30pm and as soon as clubs finish). It is the parent's responsibility to tell the school as soon as possible why a pupil is absent and to provide any further information that the school needs.

REGISTERS

The class teacher will record attendance of the child at the start of the morning and the afternoon sessions. If the child fails to attend regularly or is absent for 20 sessions in a 10 week period, the LA will be informed. The register is a legal document and may be used as evidence in court. Procedures for completing the register are as follows:

- Complete the register accurately so information can be correctly recorded into G2
- Not mark a pupil present unless the pupil is in the room when the register is called
- Not leave any spaces in the register
- Make any changes to the register clearly distinguishing between the original entry and the correction
- Not allow pupils to mark the register
- Mark pupils who are present a.m. and p.m.



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- Mark pupils who are absent as O and use the absence codes in the front of the register if reason is known.
- Mark pupils who arrive late, after the register has been called at 8.50am mark as L.
- Mark pupils who arrive after 9am, when the register is closed, as U.

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Only the school can authorise an absence. An absence is not automatically classed as 'authorised' because it is covered by a written or verbal note from the parent; this is at the Head teacher's discretion and will take into account any number of previous pupil absences and reasons given for the absences. An absence may be authorised by the school when a parent/guardian contacts the school and the Head teacher is satisfied with details of the absence. Authorised codes are kept in the class registers.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Her Majesty's Inspectors define unauthorised absence as: "Absence from school for any period as a result of a premeditated or spontaneous act by the pupil or parent or both. This includes parentally condoned absence." (Education Observed, No 13) This includes those with parental responsibilities and who may not be the parent.

Parentally condoned absences include absences when:

- a parent gives in to a pupil who wants to stay at home
- a parent is ill
- a parent is using the pupil as a childminder
- a pupil is supporting other members of the family
- work patterns, for example shift work, make it difficult for the family to ensure the child attends school
- a parent wants company
- it is the pupil's birthday
- a parent does not care whether the pupil attends school
- a parent has taken the pupil shopping
- a parent cannot control the pupil
- a parent has taken the pupil to the hairdresser
- a pupil is in paid work
- a parent is hostile towards the school or towards education in general
- a parent distrusts authority
- a parent is using the pupil as an interpreter

LATE ATTENDANCE

The Department for Education (DfE) recommends that the class register close 30 minutes after the start of school. As lessons start at 9am at Flitwick Lower School, if any child arrives after this point, this will be counted as an unauthorised absence. If a child is frequently late, the parent may be failing to ensure that the child is receiving full-time education. This could lead to prosecution of the parent under the Education Act 1996, section 444.

COLLECTION OF CHILDREN

It is parents' responsibility to ensure that their child/ren are collected promptly from school as soon as the school day (3.30pm) or after school clubs finish, when the school is no longer responsible for their supervision. Parents are responsible for making proper arrangements for the collection of their child/ren from school promptly at the allocated time by a responsible adult or designated person and for informing the school of these arrangements and personnel.

FAMILY HOLIDAY REQUESTS AND EXTENDED ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

We believe that absence from school has a considerable impact on a child's learning and progress. This is supported by national evidence that shows that pupils with a poor attendance record do not achieve as well as pupils who regularly attend school. With this in mind, any leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday in any



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school term will not be granted/authorised. This change is in line with the policy being adopted at other local schools in the Redborne School's partnership cluster.

Regulation 7 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 amended 2013, makes it clear that head teachers may **not** grant **any** leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Parents have no right to demand that absences are authorised. The law states that you do not have the right to take your child out of school for holidays during term time. Whenever possible, parents should take their holidays during the school breaks.

If parents need further information they can contact Andrew CopperWheat, Access and Inclusion Service, on 0300 300 6995.

Appendix 1 contains further information for parents who are considering taking their child out of school during term time and the form for requesting a leave of absence.

The Local Authority works with us to reduce the numbers of children missing school because of holidays taken in term time and we can refuse parents' requests to take their child/ren out of school.

We will contact the Education Welfare Officer if:

- Any child who has 20 absences (10 days) or more unauthorised absence in one school year may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer who could initiate court proceedings against the parent.
- Any child's attendance rate falls below 85%, authorised or not, is monitored by the Education Welfare Officer who visits the school twice a year.
- A pupil is taken on holiday during term time without the Head teacher's permission; we will record the absence as unauthorised and will inform the EWO.

A leave of absence application request form is available from the school office and must be completed and returned at least 10 days prior to leave period. If a pupil goes on holiday during term time without prior permission, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. No permission can be given for holidays already taken without seeking prior authorisation. If you would like to discuss a leave of absence application please make an appointment to see the head teacher.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH PUPIL ABSENCE

Our procedure for ensuring all children are safe and attend school is as follows:

- If a pupil is absent without explanation, we will contact the parents as soon as possible, preferably on the first day by 9.30am
- If a pupil is absent for three days without an explanation, we will contact the parents.
- If a pupil returns from absence without a letter of explanation, we will contact the parents asking why the pupil was absent.
- We will date and initial notes from parents, records of telephone calls and medical certificates. We will store these in a secure place, as they may contain sensitive information.
- If an explanation for absence is not satisfactory, or if the absence continues, we will invite the parents to school to discuss any difficulties that are preventing the pupil from attending. We will do this as soon as possible, so that the problem is tackled early.
- If a child is repeatedly late, we will contact the parents. Repeated lateness can affect a pupil's education as much as poor attendance.
- We will update our absence records regularly to detect short but frequent absences.
- The Head teacher will meet with the Education Welfare Officer once a year to discuss pupil absence and identify where intervention is required or telephone the department on an individual basis.

Recording attendance

Information regarding attendance is recorded effectively, so we can:

- report to parents
- report to governors
- provide the LA with the information it needs to monitor the school's performance
- provide the information required by the DfE
- find out how you can improve attendance

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Raising awareness of attendance

Attendance can also be improved by making parents, pupils and staff aware of its importance and of their responsibilities.

For Parents

- Use newsletters and other communications to remind parents how they can help the school to achieve good attendance and punctuality.
- Include information in our prospectus about our expectations for attendance.
- Involve parents in meetings about attendance.
- Involve parents in initiatives to encourage attendance.
- Invite the EWO to parents' evenings to give advice on attendance and other welfare matters.

For Pupils

- Make it clear that registration is important.
- Use assemblies and give rewards for good attendance, such as certificates and stickers to individuals, groups and classes.
- Deal with poor attendance in a way that is effective and fair.

For Staff

- Discuss attendance at staff meetings if necessary.
- Arrange special meetings on attendance if pupils attendance is causing concern.
- Make attendance the special responsibility of a senior member of staff who can influence the school's decisions.
- Publish attendance rates through the year for staff to analyse

Policy Agreed by staff:	September 13
Policy Agreed by Governors:	October 13
Last Review Date:	November 15
Next Review date:	November 17
Signed:	