

Swallowfield Lower School

Rationale

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 children 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 children 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.

There are key policies that are relevant to pupil attendance, registration procedures, and following up on pupil absences that are listed below:

- admissions
- anti-bullying
- safeguarding
- SEND
- teaching and learning

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
- figures from the DfE demonstrate this clearly
- **Pupils attendance of 93.5% and above, 75% achieve 5+ A*-C GCSE Grades**
- **Pupils attendance of 89% and below, 25% achieve 5+ A*-C GCSE Grades**

Irregular Attendance and lateness can have a significant impact on achievement. This includes:

- getting behind in work
- losing the thread of topics being taught
- become de-motivated
- not feeling part of the school
- losing friendships
- anxiety at returning to school

What is good attendance?

The school target for attendance is **97%**. In discussions with the attendance officer, we have introduced the following guide for parents.

100%	Outstanding
97-99%	Excellent
95-97%	Good
92-95%	Advise improvement
90 -92%	Cause for concern
Below 90%	Serious cause for concern

It should be remembered that 90% attendance is equivalent to one day absence every fortnight. Over an academic year this amounts to four weeks of absence.

Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parent/s and the child. We will work closely with parents to ensure all understands the expectations and what is needed in order for all children to achieve good attendance. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in our newsletter
- 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 giving a termly award to the year with the highest attendance and badges and medals to those children for excellent and outstanding attendance
- set attendance targets for the whole school

Roles and responsibilities

The head teacher 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 head teacher, along with the school attendance officer, will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. She 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 head teacher.

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupil's at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the headteacher 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 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 and is defined 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 headteacher 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 email on the first and subsequent days of absence, and by email/letter on the child's return

- 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.

Recording attendance

Legally the register must be taken twice daily, once at the beginning of the school at 9.00am and again in the afternoon at 1.20pm.

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/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8.45am when the school bell sounds. Morning registration is at 8.55am and it closes at 9.10am.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with the Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- 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.
- Punctuality at school is vital and registers should not be kept open for an extended period of time. Registers close in the morning at 9.10am.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness (*U* code) are unauthorised absences and **maybe be subject to legal action** (see Section 6 for further detail). Parents/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/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.

What to do if my child is absent?

A child not arriving at school where the parents haven't 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 via email or telephone and continue to do so throughout the child's absence
- send an email/letter in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already contacted the office
- Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies including both the Police and Children's Social Care. If one is available, the school may place a child who has not been collected at the appropriate time into the after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone or email 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 the head teacher and attendance officer
- 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.

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. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 39 or more sessions 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 affects attainment. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

Request 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 need to write a letter to the head teacher requesting a leave of absence and the reasons for it.

The head teacher may wish to call or a meeting. The parents/carers are then asked to fill in a leave of absence form.

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 on 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:

1 *School attendance*, 2016, located at:

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

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 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.

A school can, 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.

Legal Measures for failing to ensure regular school attendance (including penalty notices)

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 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 will be alerted about the possibility of a penalty notice being requested for unauthorised absence, via a letter to the parent/s.

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 must 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

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 class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons. 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.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school and transferring to another lower/primary school parents are asked to:

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

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *Child Missing in 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.

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

For example:

A parent can seek leave of absence from a 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 head teacher'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.

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 head teacher'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 head teacher 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

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

For example:

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. A 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 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.

Amendments to the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must 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.

Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Trigger Letter 1

Pupils Name
DOB

I am writing to you with reference to the attendance of your son/daughter. The attendance register (copy enclosed) shows that his/her attendance currently stands at XX%. I am concerned that this attendance level may seriously impact upon his/her ability to fully access the curriculum.

The school's minimum attendance target is **96%** and we would appreciate your support in ensuring that your son/daughter's attendance improves to at least our minimum school target.

If there is anything we can do to support you to help improve **XXXX** school attendance or if you would like to discuss this matter please do contact me.

The Local Authority requests that schools ensure that parents are made aware of both the definition of who is a parent and also what the law says parents must do with regards to their child's education. Please see our attendance policy [**hyperlink to schools attendance policy**](#)

Yours sincerely

Trigger Letter 2

Dear

Pupils Name
DOB

I am writing to you with reference to the attendance of your son/daughter. The attendance register (copy enclosed) shows that his/her attendance currently stands at XX% **with XX number of unauthorised absences**. I am concerned that this attendance level may seriously impact upon his/her ability to fully access the curriculum.

The school's minimum attendance target is 96% and we would appreciate your support in ensuring that your son/daughter's attendance improves to at least our minimum school target.

Unfortunately we will be unable to authorise any further absences **as illness from the date of this letter onwards unless satisfactory** medical evidence is provided to support these absences. Medical evidence can take the form of copies of prescriptions, appointments cards or sight of medication. In certain cases a letter from a GP or Consultant would be required so that extra support to help a child access their education because of a medical need can be arranged.

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/school_attendance.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachmentatachment_data/file/348221)

Should **XXXXX** level of attendance fail to improve or the school doesn't receive satisfactory evidence to support the absences, the school may need to consider requesting that you attend a joint meeting with the Head teacher and the Local Authority School attendance Officer or may request that a Penalty Notice is issued in line with Central Bedfordshire Council's Code of Conduct

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/schoolsportal/administration/inclusion/referrals.aspx>

Yours sincerely

Notification Letter

Dear

Pupils Name
DOB

I am writing to inform you that due to your child's irregular school attendance I have requested that the Local Authority issues you with a Penalty Notice
<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/schoolsportal/administration/inclusion/referrals.aspx>

OR have made a formal referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer who will be in contact with you in the near future.

Should you have further information that would support your child's level of absence then I would ask that this is shared with either myself or the School Attendance Officer.

Yours sincerely

Lateness

Dear

Pupils Name
DOB

Re: Persistent Lateness

I am writing to inform you that your child _____ is persistently late for school. Between *date* and *date* he/she was late on _____ occasions and missed _____ hours of education.

When pupils arrive late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson. This can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. Your child may also feel awkward arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled. Furthermore, when one pupil arrives late, it disrupts the entire class and the teacher – everyone’s education is compromised.

5 minutes late every day = 3 DAYS OF SCHOOL LOST A YEAR
10 minutes late every day = 6.5 DAYS OF SCHOOL LOST A YEAR
15 minutes late every day = 10 DAYS OF SCHOOL LOST A YEAR
20 minutes late every day = 13 DAYS OF SCHOOL LOST A YEAR
30 minutes late every day = 19 DAYS OF SCHOOL LOST A YEAR

Further lateness may result in you being served with a Penalty Notice. Parents have a duty to ensure their child’s regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. .

Meanwhile, if anything can be done to support _____ getting to school on time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 1

Legislation

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002

Places a duty on 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.

It is not statutory for schools to have an attendance policy.

The following pieces of legislation should be included in your attendance policy and referred to in your letters to parents

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

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/7>

Section 576 Education Act 1996

Meaning of “parent”.

(1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, “parent”, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person—

(a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or

(b) who has care of him,

(3) In subsection (1) “parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/576>

Section 23 Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

Penalty notices for parents in cases of truancy

(1) After section 444 of the Education Act 1996 (c. 56) (failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil) insert—“444A Penalty notice in respect of failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil

(1) Where an authorised officer has reason to believe—

(a) that a person has committed an offence under section 444(1), and

(b) that the school to which the offence relates is a relevant school in England,

he may give the person a penalty notice in respect of the offence.

(2) A penalty notice is a notice offering a person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for the offence under section 444(1) to which the notice relates by payment of a penalty in accordance with the notice.

(3) Where a person is given a penalty notice, proceedings for the offence to which the notice relates (or an offence under section 444(1A) arising out of the same circumstances) may not be instituted before the end of such period as may be prescribed.

(4) Where a person is given a penalty notice, he cannot be convicted of the offence to which this section shall be payable to local education authorities in England.

(6) Sums received by a local education authority under this section may be used by the authority for the purposes of any of its functions which may be specified in regulations.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/38/contents>

the notice relates (or an offence under section 444(1A) arising out of the same circumstances) if he pays a penalty in accordance with the notice.

(5) Penalties under

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996

Offence: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil.

(1) If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/444>

Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996

(1A) If in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (1) the parent knows that his child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails without reasonable justification to cause him to do so, he is guilty of an offence

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/444>