



Federation of Kymbrook & Thurleigh Primary Schools

*Working in partnership with families to unlock the potential of every individual.
Together, we nurture a self-belief and a lifelong passion for learning.*

Attendance Policy

Enjoyment – Enrichment – Excellence – Equality

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Introduction

‘Our vision is to unlock the potential of each pupil and instill a lifelong passion for learning’

We believe that we can improve the life chances, well-being and attainment of all pupils by ensuring staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware of the importance of, and take responsibility for, regular attendance and punctuality.

Positive environment

We believe that children will want to attend school regularly if they are in an environment that is caring and supportive and that promotes respect for all. We also recognise the importance of our schools’ curriculum in igniting our pupil’s desire to learn, be engaged, challenged and inspired, and enjoy coming to school. Therefore, we are committed to providing a learning environment where all pupils feel safe, valued and welcome, and that our teaching inspires all our pupils to want to learn and develop.

Through promoting regular attendance, our pupils can take advantage of all the educational opportunities available to them to improve their life chances and achieve their life goals.

Good attendance is an integral part of our schools’ ethos and is paramount to children’s education and their readiness for attending secondary school and later working life. For our children to take full advantage of all of the educational opportunities, we expect them to be in school, on time, each day the school is open, unless there is an unavoidable reason for absence. By attending school each day, and being punctual, our pupils can build their confidence in interactions with peers and staff, make progress with continued learning to achieve high attainment, and have high aspirations.

Good attendance and punctuality are 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, schoolwork and friendships easier to maintain
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders find transition into the next class and when moving to secondary school easier to manage

Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school. However, we understand that sometimes barriers present themselves which prevent regular attendance or punctuality, thereby adversely affecting continuous education and learning time.

In these cases, our schools will work closely with parents to address repeated absenteeism and lateness, understand the reasons for absence, be sensitive to individual circumstances and offer appropriate and effective support to pupils and their families to help improve attendance.

Our expectations for good attendance and punctuality

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve 100% attendance for all our pupils. However, we accept that there will be genuine circumstances which prevent a child from attending.

We aspire for all pupils to achieve a **minimum** attendance of **97%** across the year.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child, in which there is a clear understanding of the role and expectations of all involved.

We will maintain a high profile on attendance and punctuality by:

- providing information on attendance and punctuality matters in our newsletters, website and direct communications to parents
- issue attendance reports alongside information about how each child is performing in school, which includes attendance and punctuality percentages
- set attendance targets for the whole school

Our schools recognise and celebrate good attendance and punctuality through various initiatives:

- the weekly Celebration Assembly, during which the class with the best attendance is awarded the Attendance Bear.
- attendance certificates are awarded to pupils who have achieved excellent attendance across the term and across the whole year. [Gold: 99+%, Silver 98+% and Bronze 97+%].

We always welcome suggestions from parents and pupils on new initiatives to further promote and encourage excellent attendance.

Registration procedures during the school day

Legally, the register must be taken twice daily (am and pm session): once at the beginning of the school day at **8:50am** and the second at the start of the afternoon at **1:00pm**.

Morning registration

- The school gates open at **8am** every school day.
- Children can access the playground immediately after the school gates are opened until **9am**. Any child arriving after this time will have to enter the school via the front entrance.
- Classroom doors are open from **8:45am** (KS2 pupils can enter their classrooms at 8:40am)
- The school day begins at **8:50am** and **all pupils are expected to be in the classroom at this time**.
- The morning registration period begins at **8:50am** and ends at **9:00am**. The class teacher will record an attendance or absence code on the register for each child during this period.

- The register is kept open between **9:00am** and **9:15am** to record any late arrivals during this period. It should be noted that any child who arrives in the classroom between **9:00am** and **9:15am** will be marked as '**L - Late before registers close**' which contributes to the overall punctuality rate for the child.
- Morning registration closes at **9:15am**.
- A child arriving at school after **9:15am** will be marked in the register as '**U - Late after registers are closed,**' which is an unauthorised absence, for the morning session. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an unauthorised absence. In these circumstances, **the parent/carers must report to the school office so that their child(ren) can be signed in with a reason for the lateness, by a member of office staff.**

Afternoon registration

- Registration commences at **1pm** and closes at **1:05pm**
- A child arriving at school after **1:05pm** will be marked in the register as '**U - Late after registers are closed,**' which is an unauthorised absence, for the afternoon session. This mark shows them to be on site but is legally recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Roles and Responsibilities

Pupils – it is expected that they will:

- Attend school regularly
- Behave appropriately
- Demonstrate our School Values
- Arrive on time and stay focused on their learning

Class Teacher – in the first instance it is the responsibility of the class teacher to monitor attendance, make early intervention and work with parents/carers where necessary. Actions may include:

- Using attendance data for their class promote and celebrate excellent attendance & punctuality with all pupils at and discuss reasons for absence with children.
- Having informal conversations with parents regarding any low level concerns about attendance ensuring they record any conversations on SIMS.
- Liaise with the **Attendance Lead** with attendance & punctuality identified issues to ensure a collaborative approach.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence to the **School Administrator** and/or **Attendance Lead**.
- Support pupils' learning following absence to help them catch-up with missed learning and provide information to parents to engage their support in catching up.
- Work with the **Attendance Lead** when forming action plans for pupils when either punctuality and/or attendance concerns are developing to ensure a collaborative approach.

School Attendance Leads will:

- Work with teachers in the monitoring and early identification of attendance issues and where necessary in agreeing appropriate targets.
- Liaise with Parents/carers to ensure open and honest communication where appropriate.
- monitor attendance and punctuality data to identify any patterns of absence or lateness.
- meet and work with parents to agree on proactive and effective strategies/support plans to ensure improved attendance and punctuality, including persistent and severe absence.
- work closely with Bedford Borough's Inclusion and Welfare Team and other agencies to support pupils and their families.
- ensure the needs of the pupil are met for successful reintegration into school following significant periods of absence.
- request medical evidence if deemed necessary depending on the reasons given for the absence.
- refer to the Education Welfare Service for further action if all other efforts and support has been unsuccessful.

School Attendance Leads (Senior Leadership Team):

Mr George Cole (Assistant Headteacher) at Thurleigh

Tel: [01234 771252](tel:01234771252)

Email: thurleigh@ktfederation.co.uk

Mrs Rachel Smith (Assistant Headteacher) at Kymbrook Primary

Tel: 01234 376266

Email: kymbrook@ktfederation.co.uk

The **School Administrator** will:

On a **daily** basis:

- check the register taken by class teachers in a timely fashion (ie by 9:30am latest)
- contact parents/carers in the event of a pupil's absence in a timely manner (by 9:30am)
- provide the data once a month to the Attendance Lead to support them in identifying any issues
- provide weekly class attendance figures for assembly on Fridays

On a **regular** basis:

- produce attendance certificates and rewards as necessary
- produce up-to-date attendance information for all children including pupil groups (e.g. disadvantaged)
- provide National and Local Authority attendance data for comparison
- produce reports for the Attendance Leads which identify pupils with attendance concerns, particularly those pupils who are persistently absent, which include any reasons given for the absence

- work in collaboration with the Attendance Leads to support action plans/strategies with parents/carers where necessary
- update weekly class attendance figures on school website
- encourage parents to access **Weduc** to view their child's school attendance regularly
- work jointly with school staff to identify pupils who have improved their attendance/ punctuality and notify parents of this achievement

The **Headteacher** will:

- ensure that this policy is consistently applied across both schools
- support the Attendance Leads with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and ensure that attendance is both recorded and analysed accurately
- monitor the impact of any implemented attendance strategies and report to Governors
- make decisions about whether to authorise an absence
- refer to the Education Welfare Service for further action if all other efforts and support have been unsuccessful

The **Governors** will:

- promote the importance of school attendance in both schools in the Federation
- ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- regularly monitor and review attendance data to identify any specific trends and question senior leaders on the impact of attendance strategies employed
- hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Parents/carers will:

- ensure their child attends school regularly, properly equipped and in a suitable condition to learn
- contact the school office by telephone on the **first** day of any absence by **9am** and provide reasons for absence. Any following days of absence, continue to update the school on the child's situation
- contact the school office by telephone by **9:15am** if the child will be late
- contact the school office to notify of any planned absence (e.g. appointments) that occur during the school day well in advance (*the school may request medical evidence at any time*)
- discuss with the Attendance Lead or Headteacher about any planned absence of more than one day (The responsibility for authorising the absence lies with the school)

Please note: if a pupil is absent and contact has not been established with any of the named contacts in the pupils

file after a day's absence, the school will begin implementing the "Child Missing in Education" procedures as set out by Bedford Borough Council. The school will make all reasonable efforts to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family members.

Parental responsibilities and procedures

Parents have a **legal responsibility to ensure their child is attending school every day and on time** (*Section 7; The Education Act 1996*).

It is important for pupils to be on time at the start of morning and afternoon registration sessions, as this time is used to give instructions & organise work. If a child is late, they can miss time with their class teacher, miss receiving important information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and this could be embarrassing for the child which may lead to possible further absences.

Parents should ensure that, whenever possible, medical or dental appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. If this is unavoidable, where feasible, the child should attend school before the appointment and return to school immediately after the appointment.

Parents also have a duty to work in collaboration with the school (either the **Class Teacher** in the first instance, the **Attendance Lead** or the **Headteacher**) to help understand the barriers to good attendance and/or punctuality and positively engage with any agreed strategies that are put in place to improve attendance and/or punctuality.

If a parent has any concerns about their child's attendance and/or punctuality, we expect the parent to contact the school as soon as possible. We will always respond positively to help resolve any issues as quickly as possible and provide appropriate support to remove any barriers. Contact with the school will be treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.

Understanding types of absence

Every absence from school must be classified by the school (not by parents/carers) as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the reason of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences cover absences for reasons of illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable reasons. Where no explanations for absence has been received by the school, then the absence cannot be authorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable (the school has not approved a parent's request for leave of absence) and for which no permission has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping pupils off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school after the register closes
- Shopping
- Looking after siblings/other children/dependants

- Day trips which have not been agreed
- Birthdays
- Holidays in term-time
- Accompanying family members to appointments

The 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.

Other codes

Illness is recorded in the register as “I” and is an authorised absence.

Medical or Dental appointments are recorded as “M” and is an authorised absence.

Lateness after 9.15am or after 1:05pm is recorded as “U” and is an unauthorised absence.

Request for leave of absence during term time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. It is important to note that the Headteacher 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 and 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.

Parents/carers should apply in writing for leave of absence at least 4 weeks in advance.

The Headteacher will consider each request on an individual basis, taking into account the following:

- the child’s previous attendance history
- the child’s stage of education and ability to catch up on missed schooling
- the time of year (SATs or tests)
- the nature of the request (e.g., exceptional circumstances)

If a parent chooses to take their child out of school during term time where the Headteacher has not granted leave of absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be incurred (*see below*).

The Headteacher holds overall responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the Leadership Team.

Parents/carers may be asked to supply documents to support the absence request and failing to provide evidence could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year (39 or more sessions). Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning which affect their attainment.

Our schools will monitor closely any child whose absence is close to or has reached 10% and will work proactively with parents/carers and the pupil to ensure attendance improves. If parents/carers do not engage with the school and/or attendance does not improve, the school may refer the situation to the Local Authority's Inclusion and Welfare Team.

Prolonged & regular absences of 10 days or more (Children Missing in Education)

Prolonged absences have a significant impact on a pupil's educational prospects and raise potential safeguarding concerns. Our schools will work with the Local Authority's Inclusion and Welfare Team and follow national guidance and Bedford Borough policies and processes for reporting Children Missing in Education. Safeguarding concerns related to attendance may be referred to the Local Authority's Early Help Assessments or to the Bedford Borough Integrated Front Door service.

Penalty Fixed Notices - *Bedford Borough Guidance*

The Education Welfare Service is responsible for the decision to issue a School Penalty Notices. A School Penalty Notice is only issued for unauthorised absences from school.

Where there is more than one pupil in a family with poor school attendance, multiple School Penalty Notices may be issued to the same parents/carers during the year. There is no restriction on the number of times a parent/carer may be given a warning of the possible issue of a School Penalty Notice.

A School Penalty Notice may be issued:

- when a pupil has taken holiday during term-time and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- following a Truancy Patrol when the school has recorded the absence of the pupil as unauthorised
- if a pupil is persistently late for school
- if a pupil's school attendance has been poor, and the parents/carers fail to attend or co-operate at pre-referral meetings

The Education Welfare Service will issue a School Penalty Notice if at least 5 school days (10 sessions) have been missed due to unauthorised absence during the last 12 school weeks. The parent/carer will normally receive a formal warning of the possibility of a School Penalty Notice being issued. They will have a maximum of 15 school days to demonstrate improvement in their child's school attendance.

Once a School Penalty Notice has been issued, there is no statutory right of appeal, although there are circumstances in which the Council may withdraw it.

A School Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The Council will not accept late or part payments and do not send reminders. If the School Penalty Notice is not paid, the parents/carers are likely to be prosecuted for the offence and could be fined up to £2,500.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on legislation as set out in The Education Act 1996 and on the statutory guidance outlined in the DfE's ***“Working together to improve school attendance”*** document (published September 2022) which states:

“The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable
a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
b) to any special educational needs, they may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age

- a) when they reach the age of five, if they reach that age on a prescribed day, and*
 - b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their reaching that age.*
- Prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March*

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Further information and resources

- Bedford Borough Council's Attendance Toolkit
- Education Welfare Service:
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/schools-education-and-childcare/education-welfare/educationwelfare-service>
- School attendance:
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/media/172/download?inline>
- Children Missing in Education Policy and Procedures
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/media/2835/download?inline>
- Penalty Notices:
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/media/174/download?inline>
- A guide to prosecutions:
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/media/173/download?inline>
- Integrated Front Door:
<https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/service.page?id=KhuF2dS2z58>