THOMAS JOHNSON LOWER SCHOOL

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Head Teacher: Mrs M Haimes

Attendance Policy

Responsibility	All staff and the Governing Body
Approved by Full Governing Body	December 2020;
Review Date	December 2022
Storage: Electronic	School website

Introduction
The term "parent" refers to an adult who acts in the role of responsible guardian to the pupil.

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/students 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.

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 clearly the impact on attendance over time

Pupils with attendance of 93.5% and above – 75% achieve 5+ A*-C GCSE grades,
However pupils with attendance of 89% and below – only 25% achieve the same grades.

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

- getting behind in work
- losing the threads of topics being taught
- becoming 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**	**95-100% represents between 0-10 days missed from school**
97-99%	**Excellent**	
95-97%	**Good**	
90-95%	**Advise improvement**	**85-95% represents between 10-30 days missed from school**
85-90%	**Cause for concern**	
Below 85%	**Serious cause for concern**	**80-85% represents between 30-40 days missed from school**

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 help ensure their child achieves good attendance. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- 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
- reward good or improving attendance through a class mascot
- set attendance targets for the whole school
- work closely with parent/s if attendance dips, and use the positive support of the school's Learning Mentors/other agencies to support the pupil.

Roles and responsibilities
The Headteacher 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 ensure that attendance is 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 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 students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils 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 the Governing Body

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt an Attendance Policy and review it at least bi-annually
- Agree targets for attendance at School

- Ensure that they receive reports from the Headteacher regarding school attendance as part of Full Governing Body meetings.
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance target, or when the Governors believe there is cause for concern, to require a review of the systems and procedures in place to promote good attendance
- To promote the strong link between attendance and educational attainment to parents and pupils where appropriate and ensure that the school attendance policy and procedures are communicated effectively
- Authorise the Headteacher to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent

Responsibilities of parents

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent'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 tutor/class teacher 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
- 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 day at 9.00am and again in the afternoon (after lunchtime play)

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 8.55am and all **pupils are expected to be lined up ready in the playground at this time**. Morning registration is at 9 am and it closes at 9.10am.
- During exceptional situations (such as a pandemic) the school may operate staggered starting and finishing times .
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

- Arrival <u>after</u> 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 unless there is a reason which school recognise is entirely unavoidable and the school have been notified in advance. Where a child is required to self-isolate, this is classed as an authorised 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 so that pupils do not miss out on any input to their learning.

Pupils who are consistently late disrupt their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated absent lates (U code) are unauthorised absences and **maybe be subject to legal action** (see later). 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.

We know that our parents celebrate their children's progress and we are proud of our record in providing support to parents to achieve good time keeping. The school offers free parenting advice and support through our Learning Mentors.

If lateness still 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.

Monitoring Attendance
Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The Attendance Officer and Head teacher monitor attendance procedures each term. Parents will be contacted either by the Head teacher or Attendance Officer as soon as concerns are identified. Parents may be invited into school for a meeting with the Head teacher. Attendance figures for individual children are provided within the Annual Report sent to all parents at the end of the year.

What to do if my child is absent? (see also *Sickness and Absence)*
If a child is absent, parents should inform the school by phone on the first day of the absence and then every day after until the child returns to school. When the child returns, a letter or email is needed to explain their absence for our records.
If no contact is received from the parent of the pupil by 10.00am of the first day of absence, the School will contact the parent by text message followed by another request via telephone or text, requesting a reason for absence.

The school's attendance target is 97%. When attendance falls below 85% (equal to 30 days missed) the school is concerned that this attendance level may seriously impact the child's ability to fully access the curriculum. We will therefore ask for medical evidence (e.g. copy of prescriptions, appointment cards or sight of medication) in order to authorise further absences due to illness. We will also look at ways in which we can support parents and pupils to achieve 97% attendance.

For national guidance refer to:
1 *School attendance*, 2016, located at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance

Authorising Absence
Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason e.g. illness, medical appointment, or another unavoidable cause. Absences can only be authorised by the Headteacher not by the Parent/Carer.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school does NOT consider reasonable for which no "leave" has been given for example,

- Absences that are not explained
- Where the level of absence due to illness/medical appointments is not supported by medical professionals
- Holidays
- Shopping/Birthday trips

Holidays in Term Time

Leave from school for the purposes of a family holiday is not a parental right. Government guidelines advise that schools should only grant leave of absence during term time if the school considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. The decision to authorise absence is at the Headteacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation.

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

Fixed 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/warned about the possibility of a penalty notice being requested for unauthorised absence, via the school's newsletter, through the leave of absence request form, or 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 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 repeatedly tried to address a pupil's unauthorised absences but the measures taken have been unsuccessful, it can then refer the matter 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. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled

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

Leavers
If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the Middle School) parents are asked to provide information in writing 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.

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.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling
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 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. For further advice and guidance on Child Employment and Performance Licenses contact Central Bedfordshire Council on 0300 300 4953

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport
Parents can seek leave of absence from school and it is 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.

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. 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. Dual registration at two schools is allowed to ensure continuity of learning. 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.

Appendix: Examples of trigger letters for absence are attached for information. The school may amend these as applicable depending on different circumstances.

Example of Trigger Letter 1

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%** (equal to **X** days missed). 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 **XXX** 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

Example of 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%** (equal to **X** days missed) **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……. 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. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/school_attendance.pd

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 Headteacher 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

Example of Notification Letter

Dear

Pupils Name
DOB

I am writing to inform you that due to **XXXXX**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 **XXXX'S** level of absence then I would ask that this is shared with either myself of the School Attendance Officer.

Yours sincerely

Example of Letter for Persistent Late Attendance

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