Cedar Park School

Attendance Policy

Date Approved by Governing Body

Date for Review: September 2025

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1. Aims

Cedar Park School "*believes improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils wants to be there therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn." (extract from Working Together to improve school attendance, August 2024).*

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the **Working together to improve school attendance** from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. The governing body usually delegates their decision-making power to the Headteacher on the subject of whether to authorise absence or not, therefore the Headteacher has overall discretion. However, if parents are not satisfied with the decision, they may follow the school's usual complaints procedure and seek to consult the governing body. The Local Authority cannot override any decisions made by the headteacher and therefore any appeals to the Council will be redirected to the school.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The Headteacher (or delegated to a staff member responsible for attendance)

The school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with the headteacher, DSLs and teachers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, submitting this information to the school office and for flagging any potential patterns for concern they may have. They are to share any knowledge on children that may impact their attendance with the Pastoral Lead and Attendance Officer.

3.5 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school between 08:40am and 08:50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 08:50 and will be kept open until 09:00. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:00 and will be kept open until 13:05.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 08:30am.

Notification is to be made by calling the school and speaking to a member of the office or by emailing the school office

attendance@cedarpark.bucks.sch.uk or telephone: 01494 711 918

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern.

If the school has concerns the school will ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the evidence provided of the reported illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment via the appointment leave form. This is to be completed in advance and sent into the school office.

In the case of an emergency same day appointment, please make sure you speak to the school office team in the first instance using the following details: telephone: 01494 711918

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- After the register has closed at 9.00am, the student will be marked as late, using the appropriate code 'L'
- After the register has closed at 9.20am the student will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code 'U' Students are to report to the school office upon arrival.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending.

Attendance Officer or DSL to follow up any students who are not marked as present with no reason initially with a phone call home by 09.10am.

- If contact is made immediately, Attendance Officer to ascertain reason of absence, to reiterate the importance of parental responsibility for reporting absences referring to attendance policy.
- If contact cannot be made, a voicemail will be left requesting a call back to explain the pupil's absence.
- If contact is made after voicemail being left - Attendance Officer to ascertain reason of absence, to reiterate the importance of parental responsibility for reporting absences referring to attendance policy.
- If contact is not made – the Headteacher and a delegated member of staff to conduct Welfare visit to home if there is a reason for concern for welfare.
- If no visibility of the pupil upon a welfare visit the Pastoral Lead & DSL will contact 101 to report concern for pupil's welfare.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion. A Leave of Absence for term time holiday form is to be completed and handed into the school office.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as one off events which are unavoidable. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are "rare, significant, unavoidable, short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. Examples may be as follows:

- death of a close relative / family bereavement
- attendance at a funeral
- respite care of a looked after child
- a housing crisis which prevents attendance.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- Grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill – and you must leave in an emergency.
- Attending an interview for another school place
- The pupil is attending the pupil referral unit
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance

(NB:This list is by no means exhaustive)

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious Observance at Cedar Park School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R). It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/ in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.
- Mobile children without a fixed abode travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

Cedar Park School expects all students on role to maintain 100 % attendance unless for authorised reasons or unavoidable circumstances such as illness.

Lateness after the close of the school register, will be marked as 'Arrival after registration closes' ("U" code). Families will be made aware of this contributing factor to attendance data.

To support families in reducing persistent absence, the school attendance officer will monitor individual attendance, on a daily basis and on a fortnightly basis. Processes will be followed and plans made to support families in improving attendance.

In some circumstances, the PPG lead will be brought in to support specific groups that fall within the disadvantaged category, eliciting further support for these families.

If pupil attendance improves this will be celebrated, if it fails to improve, next steps will be taken to provide further support.

At all stages, the intention of Cedar Park School is to provide a supportive role in enabling children to successfully attend school regularly, maximising their learning opportunities.

Only when all efforts to engage families in improving attendance have failed will the County become involved. This may result in legal sanctions and fines being implemented.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The Local Authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. Penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices)(England) Regulations 2007, as amended and can only be issued by a headteacher or someone authorized by them (i.e. an assistant headteacher), a local authority officer or the police.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis. Every fortnight the attendance tracker is analysed to monitor who persistent latecomers or absentees are.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning by 08:30am, if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

Parents / carers are expected to call the school each day their child is ill, unless agreed otherwise with the school office or Pastoral lead.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be notified.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Cedar Park School collects and stores attendance data using the SIMS database and internal livetracking data systems, shared between the Headteacher, Attendance officer and DSL/DDSL.

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, annually (as a minimum) by the Headteacher with the support of the Attendance Officer. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

8. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Equality and Cohesion policy
- Home School Agreement
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Behaviour Policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

On each occasion the register is taken the appropriate national attendance and absence code must be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admission register at the time (with the exception

Code	Description
Code / \:	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session.
Code L:	Late arrival before the register is closed
Code K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
Code V	Attending an educational visit or trip
Code P	Participating in a sporting activity
Code W	Attending work experience
Code B	Attending any other approved educational activity
Code D	Dual registered at another school
Code E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
Code I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
Code C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
Code C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated
Code C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
Code M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
Code J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for
Code R	Religious observance
Code Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Code S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
Code T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
Code X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Code Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Code Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Code Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Code Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Code Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Code Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Code Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
Code G	Holiday not granted by the school

Code N	Reason for absence not yet established
Code O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
Code U	Arrived in school after registration closed
Code Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
Code #	Planned whole school closure

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