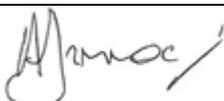




**CASTLEFIELD SCHOOL**

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**2022-2025**

Signed (HT): 	Date agreed: Term 1 2022
Signed (Chair of GB): 	Review date: Term 1 2025

# ***'Attend school every day, on time, with what you need, ready to learn'***

This policy was written to reflect the DfE's new guidance which became statutory from September 2022: Working together to improve school attendance

## **1. Expectations**

Regular school attendance is the starting point for children making good academic progress, where children do not attend school regularly or take extended leave, they miss key learning or whole units of work which and they fall behind.

The school expects:

- All pupils to *'attend school every day, on time, with what you need, ready to learn'*.
- All parents to report their child's absence from school and proactively seek support should attendance become an issue.
- All staff to work together to improve attendance rates for all children.

Parents can expect the school:

- Will work with them and their children to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.
- To be understanding and empathetic to personal circumstances, but will work with and challenge irregular attendance to ensure their children do not miss learning unnecessarily.

Pupils can expect to be:

- Rewarded for attending school regularly
- Taught the importance of attending school regularly
- Asked to catch up on missed work (if appropriate)

## **2. Who is strategically responsible for attendance at Castlefield School?**

The person(s) responsible for the strategic lead on attendance are:

The Senior Leadership Team and the Safeguarding & Welfare Officer, they are contactable via the school office on 01494 436018

## **3. How should parents inform the school about their child's absence?**

If the absence is unplanned (e.g. sickness):

- Parents are expected to report their child's absence by 9:00am to the school office on 01494 436018 (option 1) on each day of an absence and advise how long the absence might last.

If the absence is planned (e.g. unavoidable medical appointment)

- Parents are expected to advise the school office or class teacher in advance, showing proof of the appointment.

Parents should make every effort to arrange appointments outside of school time and are not expected to take siblings out of school for appointments that do not involve them.

Extended leave should be applied for on the relevant form (Available from the school office) and submitted via the office, in advance of travel.

#### **4. How can parents proactively seek support about attendance challenges**

If parents would like support from the school to improve their child's attendance, this can be sought from our Safeguarding & Welfare Officer (Mrs James), who is contactable via the main office.

We welcome and value a proactive approach to supporting regular attendance, before it becomes a bigger issue.

#### **5. Schools process on day to day basis**

- Registers are taken between 8:50am and 9:00am.
- On the first day of a child's absence, we aim to undertake 1<sup>st</sup> day calling to ascertain the whereabouts of any child absent from school, without a known reason.
- Where there are additional concerns, the school may do a home visit to check on the child's welfare and whereabouts.
- The school will follow up all unexplained absences to seek a reason for a child's absence from school.

#### **6. How school incentivises attendance**

Good attendance at school is celebrated in a number of ways i.e.

- Individually with the child (and parent if appropriate)
- As a group: Attendance is measured, celebrated and rewarded in our weekly celebration assemblies
- Reported to parents in the end of year reports
- Celebrated with the children at the end of the year

#### **7. How school monitors data and wider strategy to reduce persistent/access to external agencies**

Pupil attendance rate is monitored on a weekly basis, examining the attendance rates of pupils over a 3 weekly rolling cycle. Where pupil's attendance rate is below 90% over that period of time, the school will seek to support pupils/parents to improve attendance.

This is initially done through a 'School Support Meeting'. At this meeting, the reason for persistent absence is discussed, as well as supportive mechanisms (e.g. FSS, ISP etc). The support is targeted at supporting the pupil and/or parent(s) to improve the pupil's attendance. Whilst the initial meeting is supportive, the school is obliged to challenge the reasons for irregular attendance and make clear the DfE's expectations around pupil attendance.

Parents are expected to engage with this process and actively work to improve their child's attendance.

**Please see Appendix A for full details of the process**

#### **8. FPN and extended leave**

Fixed Penalty Notices:

Should supportive measures not secure improvements in a pupils attendance, the school will refer the matter to the county attendance team, who may issue a FPN (if appropriate).

The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

### Extended Leave in term time:

Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of extended leave and are strongly advised not to do so.

Parents requesting to take their child out of school during term time must complete and submit an 'Absence Request Form' a month in advance before arrangements are made. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school will refer the matter to the Local Authority who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If parents choose to take their child out of school for extended leave in Year 5 or 6, this may have an impact on the school's ability to support an 11+ appeal (if appropriate).

## **9. Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## **Recording Absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher of a school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note/email (office@castlefield.bucks.sch.uk) from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances: Castlefield School does not have an exhaustive list of circumstances that are considered authorised. All exceptional circumstances for authorised absences must be discussed in person and in advance (or as soon as possible) with the Headteacher. Failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence.

Late Arrival: Registration begins at 8:50am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9:20am. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. (Code M)

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry. (Code U)

Unauthorised absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the school considers the child well enough to attend school
- Extended leave taken without the authorisation of school

Religious Observance Castlefield School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and its community and recognises that some 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/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

In line with DfE guidance, 1 day will be authorised for religious observance (for each festival).

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Castlefield School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Castlefield School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

We will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

### **Deletions from the Register**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

Castlefield School will follow Buckinghamshire Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

Appendix A



# SCHOOL ATTENDANCE FLOW CHART

