



Pupil Attendance Policy

Written by	Reviewed & Ratified by Governors	Shared with Staff	Last Updated	Review Cycle	Next Review Due
Polly Ross Headteacher	October 2025	October 2025	September 2025	Annually	September 2026

1.0 Statement of Intent

Shefford Lower School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. This draft School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school;
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

It has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers, parents, pupils. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued;
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

2.0 Legal Framework

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.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

2.2 This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance](#) and [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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 School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

The [Equality Act 2010](#)

It also refers to:

[School census guidance](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

2.3 Links with Other Policies

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Home visits Procedure
- SEND Policy and SEND Information Report
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- EYFS Policy

3.0 Roles & Responsibilities

The name of the Attendance Champion (the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school) is:

Polly Ross Headteacher and Julia Parry DSL

The governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is Sarah Grosvenor-Brown.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of governors, parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

3.1 The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils, parents and carers
- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties and comply with the law
- Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
- Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance and dedicated training for staff with specific attendance function within their role

- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Delegate monitoring of attendance to the link governor and attendance committee including 3 link monitoring visits a year
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary authorising the DHTs to do so as required
- Working with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority.

3.3 The Attendance Champion

The Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school and supporting the vulnerable pupil team with improving attendance for individual pupils
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis and meeting with the school's data manager termly
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues alongside the Family Support Worker (FSW)
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families alongside the Family Support Worker (FSW) and Vulnerable Pupil Team
- Support the use of a range of strategies including TAC (Team Around the Child) meetings and home visits for persistent absentees
- Manage the Vulnerable Pupil Team and support high standards of attendance through this team
- Promote the benefits of high attendance;
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.

3.4 The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the attendance champion and the Headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- The attendance officer can be contacted on attendance@shefford.cbeds.co.uk

3.5 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress
- Working with parents to improve attendance and highlighting patterns in attendance to the Vulnerable Pupil Team.
- Supporting a culture of high attendance within the community

3.6 School Office Staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the leadership team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Monitor ParentMail and absence reporting through ParentMail
- Ensure a system is in place for sharing our attendance data with the Department of Education and Local Authority, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law

3.7 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.50am on the first day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return

- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child. **If the child is in the Early Years Foundation Stage, provide more than 2 emergency contact numbers, where possible.**
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Request any leave of absence at least 4 weeks in advance by emailing the school office
- Engage with any support strategies put in place to improve attendance
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the school's **family support team**, who can be contacted via familysupport@shefford.cbeds.co.uk

4.0 Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

4.1 Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

4.2 Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however is counted as an absence for the session;
- Shopping trips;
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- Their own or family birthdays;
- Holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends;
- Day trips;

- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

5.0 Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent**'. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

6.0 Absence Procedures

We monitor and review all pupils' absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

6.1 If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

- If your child is ill report your child's absence via the Absence Module on Parentmail before 8.50am stating how long the absence is likely to be and the specific illness i.e. headache, sickness etc.
- Requests for other absences should be sent via the school email, schooloffice@shefford.cbeds.co.uk
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised;
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 8.50 am;
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained in the following NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

6.2 If your child is absent we will:

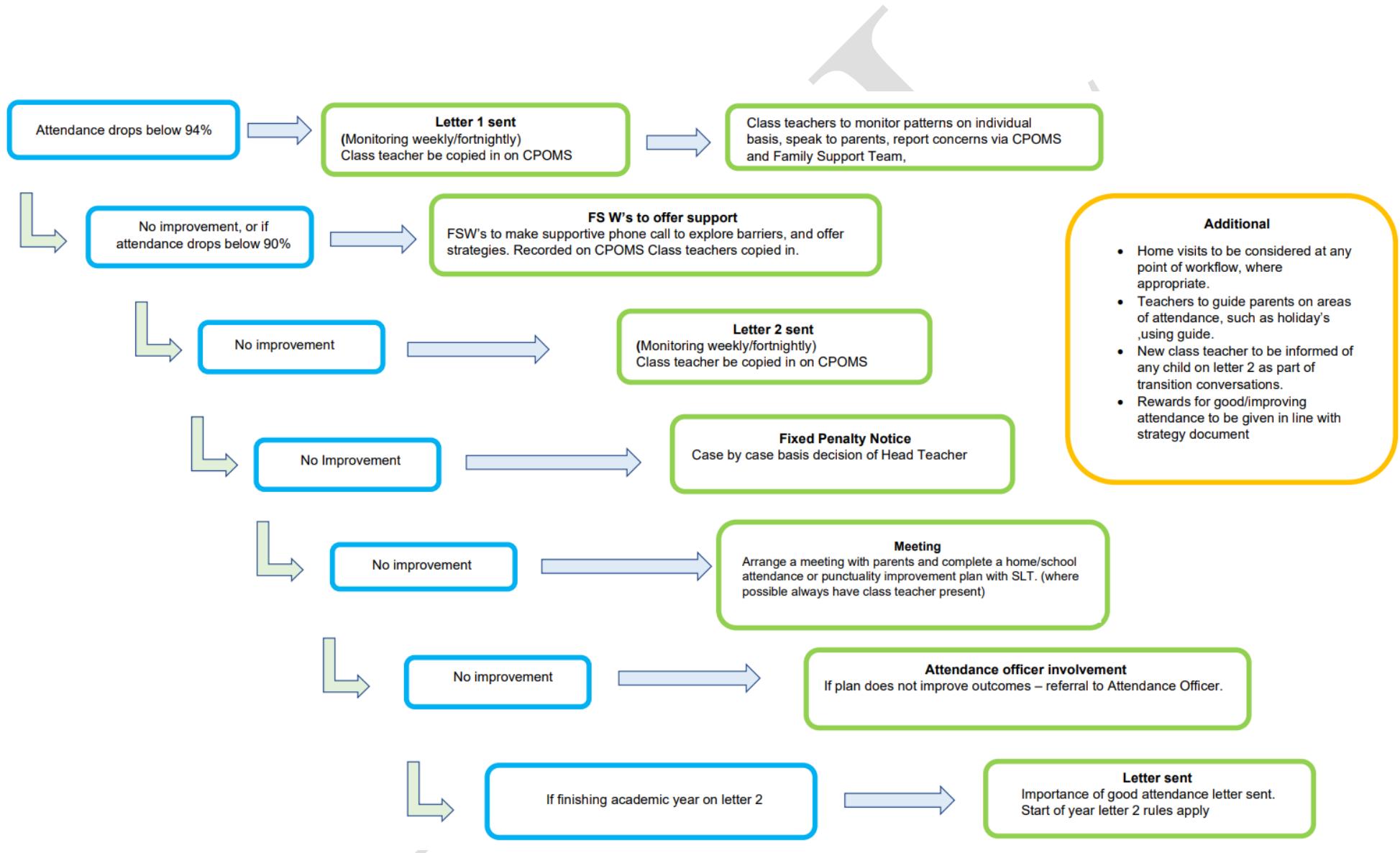
- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us;
- If we are unable to make contact with parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding
- Home visits may also be carried out if the child is reported absent, but the school has reason to believe they may be on holiday
- A referral may be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child could be considered to be "missing from education." In certain circumstances this could result in your child being removed from our school roll and you would need to reapply for a place, were one was still available

6.3 If absence continues we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%, and/or where punctuality is a concern;
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with our Senior Attendance Champion
- Create an individual attendance plan to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child;
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

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6.4 Flow Diagram: The flow chart below details the different stages and when specific letters are sent to parents. Examples of these letters can be found in Appendix A - D.



7.0 Lateness and Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

Persistent 'lates' will be followed up by the attendance team in the same way as general attendance.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Shefford Lower School are:

Gates open: 8.35am

Registration starts: 8.40am

Registration closes: 8.50am

End of the school day: 3.20pm

7.1 How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at **8.40am** when children can begin to come into school;
- Registers are taken at **8.50am**;
- Children arriving after **8.55am** are required to come into school via the school office. If accompanied by a parent/carer they must sign them into our 'Late Book' and provide a reason for their lateness, which is recorded
- At **9.20am**, in accordance with the Regulations, your child will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence;
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns;
- From time to time a member of school staff will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school.

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with our Attendance Champion – Mrs Lorraine Freeman, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

8.0 Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health Service, Early Help Worker/Social

Worker/Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Child meeting (TAC) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils, however we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

See Annex A for summary tables of responsibilities for school attendance.

9.0 Local Authority attendance support services

Local Authority School Attendance Officers work strategically by offering support to schools, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

10.0 National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance by the parent with who the child normally lives with, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Central Bedfordshire Code of Conduct for Fixed Penalty Notices, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

10.1 At Shefford Lower School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

11.0 Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Shefford Lower School, *other than at the end of year 4*, parents/carers are required to email the school office providing the school with the following information: child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all of our pupils, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for the pupil and key family members, in case of emergency.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are now **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has

been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

12.0 Absence data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit pupil attendance data to the Department for Education and Local Authority on a daily basis 'Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.' Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

13.0 Strategies for promoting attendance

We want our pupils to succeed and develop their skills. To do this, pupils need to avoid missing lessons and days of school as much as possible. As a school, we want to reward high attendance and not just penalise pupils for poor attendance.

At Shefford Lower a number of strategies are used for rewarding, incentivising and improving attendance – for example, celebrating good attendance in assemblies, with letters, postcards, assemblies and within displays. The school regularly communicates the importance of strong attendance building an attendance culture within the community. Parents receive reports on their child's attendance at least termly.

14.0 Supporting pupils with poor attendance

Our school will make use of the full range of support is available to families as well as potential sanctions to tackle poor attendance. Decision around sanctions and support will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

14.1 Family Support- The school has two family support workers who can assist in supporting families, signposting support, conducting home visits, carrying out Early Help assessments and monitoring attendance contracts.

14.2 Attendance contract

If your school and/or local authority offers parents an attendance contract, add:

We use attendance contracts as a form of attendance support.

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school to address irregular attendance at school. An attendance contract is not legally binding, but it provides a more formal route where previous support has not worked or would not have been appropriate.

Parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and the school cannot agree an attendance contract in a parent's absence.

Where an attendance contract would be an appropriate form of support, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent to discuss how we can work in partnership to improve the pupil's attendance.

Where parents fail to comply with an agreed attendance contract, the school may seek an alternative course of action. In the first instance, this will include discussions with the parents to seek explanations and determine whether the attendance contract remains useful. Where there is further non-compliance following these discussions, the school may take further action.

14.3 Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

14.3.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

If the school becomes aware of barriers that relate to the pupil's needs, we will inform the local authority.

The school will work with families, outside professionals and the local authority in working to remove barriers both in and out of school. This may include designing support, creating reasonable adjustments and a process of regular review and communication. Support will be targeted and personalized to support the pupil in reaching the expected standard of attendance.

14.3.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health

Where pupils are absent from school due to mental or physical ill health, the school will work with families, the local authority and outside professionals to design support and reasonable adjustments and a process of regular review and communication. Support will be targeted and personalized to support the pupil in reaching the expected standard of attendance.

14.3.3 Pupils absent due to other barriers to attendance

Pupils absent from school due to:

- Having SEND
- Being disadvantaged
- Being known (or previously known) to children's social care
- Having other barriers to attendance (e.g. young carers)

Will be supported by the SENDCo and Family Support Team. The school understands that for some pupils, reaching the 'expected standard' for attendance and behaviour may require reasonable adjustments and/or interventions. The school will endeavour to ensure support is timely and appropriate, well-chosen and targeted.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, the school will inform the local authority.

14.3.4 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Where a pupil has had a lengthy absence from school, the pupil will be supported to return to school and a range of reasonable adjustments will be considered to support the pupil in transitioning back into school.

14.3.5 Prolonged absence for children in the EYFS

In cases of prolonged absence, or when a child is absent without notification, we will attempt to contact the child's parents and alternative emergency contacts. When deciding whether a child's absence should be considered prolonged, we will consider the:

- Patterns and trends in the child's absences and their personal circumstances
- Vulnerability of the child and their parents, as well as the circumstances of their home life
- We will also implement our safeguarding procedures in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy which can be found on the school's website. We will conduct an home visit, refer any concerns to local children's social care and/or request a police welfare check.

13.1 The School's Attendance Strategy:



Appendix A

First Letter – Non-Statutory Age Children (Reception)

Reference: <Reference>

For the Parents of <FirstName> <Surname>
<Class> Class

Dear <AddeeSalutation>

MOMENTS MATTER, ATTENDANCE COUNTS

<FirstName> has missed more school than <his/her> classmates.

<FirstName> was absent (X) days so far this school year.

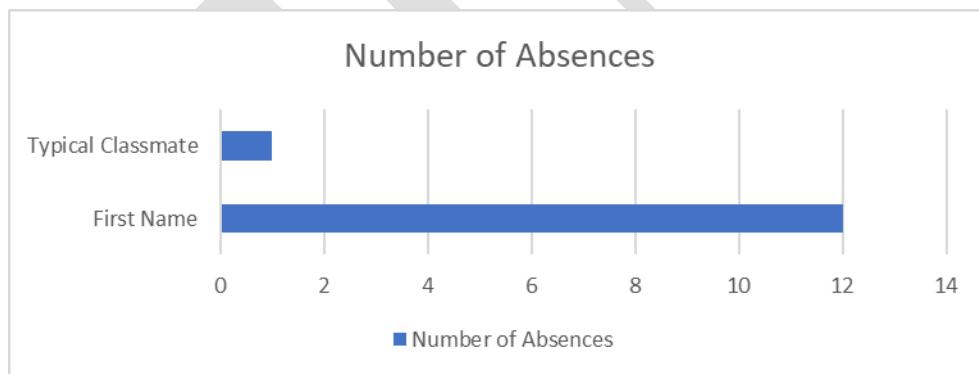
Children fall behind when they miss school – whether they are absent for authorised or unauthorised reasons.

You can have a big effect on <FirstName>'s absences this term and we appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

<FirstName> has missed more school than his classmates.



Appendix B

First Letter – Statutory School Age

Reference: <Reference>

For the Parents of <FirstName> <Surname>
<Class> Class

Dear <AddeeSalutation>

I am writing to you with reference to <FirstName>'s school attendance. The attendance register (copy enclosed) shows that <his/her> attendance to date is <PercentAttendYTD>. Whilst I am aware that absences are due to <FirstName> being unwell, we have been advised by the school's Attendance Officer to inform you that this percentage is below the school's minimum target of 97%.

If there is anything we can do to support you to help improve <FirstName>'s 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 at <http://www.sheffordlowerschool.co.uk/Policies>

Yours sincerely

Polly Ross
Headteacher

Appendix C

Second Letter – Statutory School Age

Reference: <Reference>

For the Parents of <FirstName> <Surname>
<Class> Class

Dear <AddresseeSalutation>

I writing to you with reference to <FirstName>'s attendance. The attendance register (copy enclosed) shows that <his/her> attendance currently stands at <PercentAttendYTD>. 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 97% and we would appreciate your support in ensuring that <FirstName>'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.pdf

Should <FirstName>'s 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

Polly Ross
Headteacher

Appendix D Improved Attendance Letter

Congratulations on improved attendance!

Dear XXXX

We are absolutely delighted to celebrate XXXX's fantastic achievement in improving their school attendance!

Since 17th January 2025, XXXX's attendance rate has increased from XX% to XX% – this means XX additional days of valuable learning and experiences at school. This is a significant accomplishment and a testament to yours and XXX's commitment and your ongoing support at home.

Why this matters:

Regular attendance makes a real difference to children's progress, friendships and confidence. By being in school more often, XXXX is giving themselves the best chance to succeed and enjoy everything our school has to offer.

A big thank you for encouraging and supporting XXXX to attend regularly – your partnership is so important.

Celebrating success:

To recognise XXXX's hard work and improvement, she will be entered into a prize draw for high attenders and significantly improved attenders.

Next steps:

We encourage XXXX to keep up this fantastic effort! If you need any further support or have questions about attendance, please don't hesitate to contact us at attendance@shefford.cbeds.co.uk

Once again, congratulations to XXXX and your family on this wonderful achievement.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix E

Annex A: DfE guidance Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance. From 19th August 2024

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

All pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.</p> <p>Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).</p> <p>Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.</p> <p>Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.</p>	<p>Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.</p> <p>Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.</p> <p>Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.</p> <p>Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.</p> <p>Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.</p>	<p>Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.</p> <p>Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.</p> <p>Use data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with other local schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed.</p> <p>Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.</p>	<p>Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.</p> <p>Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.</p> <p>Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.</p>

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.</p>	<p>Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence.</p> <p>Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance and act as lead practitioner if attendance is the only issue and/or the local threshold for formal early help is not met.</p> <p>If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. If a case meets the local threshold for formal early help/family support, this includes conducting the early help assessment and acting as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Hold a regular conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.</p> <p>Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance.</p> <p>If the issue persists, and there are multiple needs consider whether the threshold for early help is met and facilitate access where it is. Regardless, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner in cases where threshold is met and all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.</p>

Persistently absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.</p> <p>Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through a referral to statutory children's social care.</p> <p>Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including attendance contracts and education supervision orders.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).</p>

Severely absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision.</p> <p>Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans.</p>

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Not applicable.	<p>Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.</p> <p>Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.</p>	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.</p> <p>Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.</p> <p>Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.</p> <p>Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families.</p> <p>Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.</p>

Support for pupils with a social worker

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Know who the pupils who have, or who have had, a social worker are.</p> <p>Understand how the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced, can have an impact on attendance – whilst maintaining a culture of high aspiration for the cohort.</p> <p>Provide additional academic support and make reasonable adjustments to help them, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there can be a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the local authority at a strategic and individual level, sharing data on attendance including, at an individual level, informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Ensure that all Children's Social Care practitioners, understand the importance of good attendance for pupil's educational progress, for their welfare and their wider development – and understand their role in improving it.</p> <p>Through the work of Virtual School Heads, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake systemic monitoring and data sharing of the attendance of children with a social worker in their area: developing and implementing targeted cohort level interventions to improve attendance. • Provide advice, challenge and training to schools on how to promote and secure good attendance for children with a social worker. • Develop whole system approaches, with social care, to support the attendance of children in need.

Looked after and previously looked after children

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand the child's barriers to attendance – including the development of Personal Education Plans.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Have high expectations for the cohort – with expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the local authority Virtual School Head to develop and deliver high quality Personal Education Plans for looked-after children that support good attendance.</p> <p>Work directly with parents to develop good home-school links that support good attendance. For previously looked-after pupils this could include discussion on use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding managed by the school.</p>	<p>Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.</p> <p>Monitor and review attendance of the cohort and consider how school policies, including behaviour policies, are sensitive to their needs and support good attendance.</p>	<p>Promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children – doing everything possible to minimise disruption to education when a pupil enters care.</p> <p>(LA that looks after the child:) Appoint an expert Virtual School Head (VSH) – will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor, report on, and evaluate the education outcomes of looked after children, including their attendance, as if they attended a single school whenever they live or are educated. Ensure schools know when they have a pupil looked after by the authority on their role and that information is shared with the school on issues that may impact on their attendance. Ensure that all looked-after pupils have high quality, up to date, effective Personal Education Plans developed in partnership with schools, social workers and carers – including, where necessary, clear interventions and use of pupil premium plus funding to support good attendance. Provide expert advice and information on the education of previously looked-after pupils to schools and parents – including their attendance.

Monitoring

Parents:	Schools:	Academy trustees and governing bodies:	Local authorities:
<p>Schools regularly update parents on their child's attendance.</p> <p>(If parents feel the school and or local authority have not delivered what they are expected to they should discuss the case with the school and/or local authority's attendance support team.)</p>	<p>The school's Senior Attendance Champion will ensure all school based staff complete their attendance responsibilities in line with the school's policies and procedures.</p> <p>The governing board or academy trust will hold the headteacher or executive leadership to account for their delegated responsibilities and for compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements. They will review progress and provide challenge when required. The board will help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most and ensure that school staff receive adequate training on attendance.</p> <p>Ofsted will expect schools to do all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance as part of the behaviour and attitudes judgement. This includes, where attendance is not consistently at or above what could reasonably be expected, that schools have a strong understanding of the causes of absence (particularly for persistent and severe absence) and a clear strategy in place that takes account of those causes to improve attendance for all pupils.</p> <p>Ultimately, in cases where a school has not met expectations or statutory duties the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.</p>	<p>DfE Regions Group considers multi academy trusts' efforts on attendance as part of decision making.</p> <p>Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections.</p>	<p>DfE Regions Group monitors local authority efforts as part of regular interaction.</p> <p>Ofsted may consider the local area partnership's approach to improving attendance of children and young people with SEND as part of the SEND Area Inspection, and the local authority's approach to improving attendance for children with a social worker through inspecting local authority children's services.</p> <p>Ultimately, in cases where a local authority has not met expectations or statutory duties the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.</p>

EVERY SCHOOL DAY MATTERS



Penalty Notice Fines for absence from school are changing

From 19th August 2024 Penalty Notice fines increase to £160 for each parent, for each child.



You can be fined if your child has a total of 5 days of unauthorised absences in 10 school weeks, for things like:

- being late after the register has closed
- truancy
- taking a holiday without permission from the school
- or if a headteacher isn't satisfied for the reason for missing school

Over a rolling 3-year period the sanctions are:

- 1st offence – £160 reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days
- 2nd offence – £160
- 3rd offence – Court hearing and up to £2,500 fine, or up to 3 months in prison and a criminal record



For more information go to:
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/missing-school

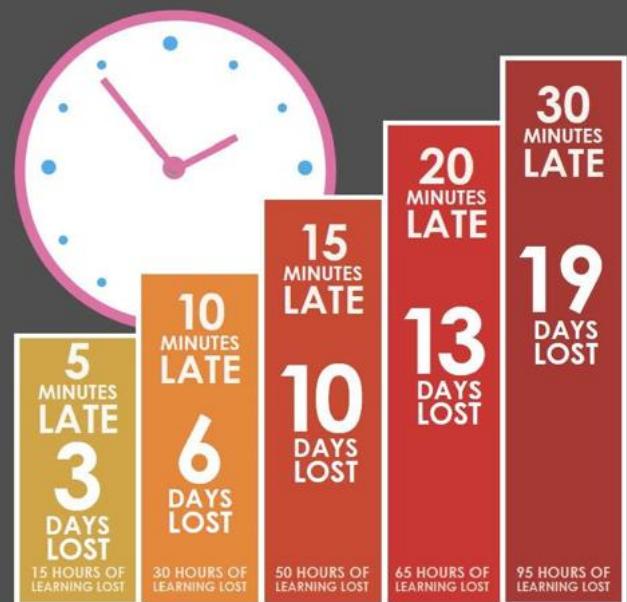
EVERY DAY COUNTS!

School and **future success** starts with good attendance!



Remember - your education is important - **don't miss out!**

DAILY LATENESS EQUATES TO...



Remember - your education is important - **don't miss out!**