



## PORTFIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date	Review Date	Co-ordinator
September 2024	September 2025	Kelly Rae

### **Introduction**

We are a successful primary school and your child plays their part in making it so. We create an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to strive for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they are punctual and attend school regularly, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

This policy is a guide to attendance matters and sets out how we will endeavour to achieve improvements in attendance working in partnership with our parents.

This policy follows the changes in Law, reflected in the school statutory guidance: [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) 2024. We have used the Milton Keynes attendance guidance to write this policy.

### **The importance of regular attendance**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Children who frequently miss school often fall behind. There is a strong link between regular school attendance and achieving good grades at GCSE - having an attendance rate of 80% is equivalent to missing a day a week.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility. If your child fails to attend school regularly you may be guilty of a criminal offence, and this could result in a prosecution.

### **Promoting regular attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility; parents, pupils and the school.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- report to you annually on how your child is performing in school and raise concerns at parental consultation meetings where attendance and punctuality is affecting attainment and progress
- send parents a 'Notice to Improve' letters where attendance is causing a concern
- hold Notice to Improve meetings and draw up an Attendance Contract to improve attendance

## **Absence procedures**

If your child is absent you must:

- contact school by 8.50am on each day of absence by email, Parentmail or phone (01908 616060)
- if you do not inform the school of your child's absence, we will attempt to contact you by phone. In line with our safeguarding responsibilities, in the event that we are unable to reach you, we may carry out a home visit and / or contact the Police.

Please use the NHS guidance 'if your child is too ill for school' to support your decision whether or not to send your child to school. [NHS Guidance](#)

## **Medical appointments**

Please try to arrange medical appointments during school holidays, at weekends or after school hours. Naturally, there will be times when this is not possible, but you must try to give as much advance warning as possible and take the appointment letter, card or text message into school to ensure they are aware of the absence and the reasons for it.

## **Holidays in term time**

We do not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you feel that you have 'exceptional circumstances' then a written submission must be made to the Headteacher (Leave of Absence request form). The DfE state that anything to do with "relaxation and leisure" is not exceptional circumstances. This will include visiting relatives, or a holiday due to mental or physical illness issues unless supported by medical evidence.

## **Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school with a good reason.

Examples of authorised absences include:

- illness
- medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time
- educational appointments off-site e.g. attending examinations
- emergencies or other unavoidable incidents

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable, and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the school and Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Examples of unauthorised absences include:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unreasonably
- truancy
- absences which have not been properly explained
- extended visits to see family without exceptional circumstances
- looking after others
- day trips and holidays in term time

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never advisable to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse. As a school, we have a number of strategies to support children and families who may be experiencing problems of this nature.

### **Religious festivals**

Please complete an absence form in advance for time off for religious reasons. Only the day of the actual religious festival/celebration will be "authorised".

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child is late at the start of the morning or afternoon session they will miss valuable time with their class teacher and important information as well as part of a lesson.

The school day begins promptly at 8.40am for EYFS, 8.45am for Year 1 and 2 and 8.50am for Year 3, 4, 5 and 6, when morning registration takes place. Any child arriving after this time must report to reception, with parent/carer (unless your child has walked to school on their own).

If your child arrives late, without an adult present, you will be informed of this within the school day. If this continues to occur, you may need to seek alternative arrangements to ensure your child arrives at school safely and on time.

If a child arrives late, before 9.20am, they will be recorded as late ('L' code used in the register).

If your child arrives after 9.20am they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. ('U' code used)

Afternoon registration takes place at 12.45pm for EYFS / Key Stage 1 and 1.15pm for Key Stage 2.

## **Persistent Absence**

If a child has 10 unauthorised sessions (1 day counts as 2 sessions, am and pm) in 10 school weeks, then we will send a Notice to Improve letter, this will warn you that we may refer the matter to the Local Authority for the issue of a Penalty Notice.

The Notice to Improve Letter will invite you to a Notice to Improve Meeting to agree to an Attendance Contract in which you will be given a chance to tell us what you perceive are the barriers to your child's attendance. The Attendance Meeting will be a discussion by all parties about the best ways to resolve your child's attendance and will be supportive. We may also make a referral to Early Help where we can signpost you to other agencies for support.

Following this Notice to Improve meeting, if there is no improvement in attendance and/or poor engagement then a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued.

There is now a new category of Severely Absent (50% attendance or below). In these cases, the DfE expects multi-agency meetings to take place to resolve the barriers to school attendance. This may include Social Services, Health, Police and other Local Authority professionals.

## **Fixed Penalty Notice**

A Fixed Penalty Notice can now be issued if there are 10 unauthorised sessions in 10 school weeks. The time taken doesn't need to be consecutive as was previously the case.

The Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued between 3 to 6 school weeks, following the Notice to Improve Meeting, if there is no improvement and/or no engagement in your child's attendance.

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued to each parent and per child. A FPN is £80 if paid within 21 days, and £160 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, you will be prosecuted in the magistrates' court and could receive a fine of up to £1000 (per parent) and a criminal record.

If a second period of leave is taken within 3 years (same parent/child) then the fine will start at £160 payable in 28 days.

If there is a third offence in 3 years (same parent/child) then the matter will be prosecuted in the magistrate's court.

### **Taking a child off the school register**

If we are unable to establish the reason for absence or make contact with parents/carers, we will take a child off the school register following 20 consecutive days of unauthorised absence. You will be informed in writing before the removal takes place. Any child removed from the register in this way will be classed as a 'missing child'. The Local Authority and the Police will be informed immediately when we suspect a child is missing.

Please find further information on Milton Keynes Attendance here:

<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-parents/school-attendance>