

# Tithe Farm Primary School



## Attendance Policy

## **Attendance target for 2024-25 97%**

Children have a legal right to education and we want pupils to develop positive attitudes to education- every day counts. Pupil Attendance is a whole school matter so all teaching and support staff will be involved in promoting excellent attendance in partnership with our parents and carers.

The school register is our official document and is inspected by the Central Bedfordshire Council. **The register opens and closes twice a day. In the morning the register opens at 08.40.a.m. and closes at 9:00.a.m. In the afternoon the register opens at 1:00 p.m. and closes at 1:20 p.m.** Once the register is closed any late arrival can be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Late arrival to school:**

The headteacher or her representative, will use discretion when a pupil arrives late to school. Deliberate/avoidable or careless lateness will be challenged and an unauthorised late code (U) will be entered on the register. Parents/Carers should know that the register is reflecting an unauthorised absence.

### **Medical and dental appointments:**

Parents/carers are asked to avoid learning-time health appointments. If there is an unavoidable or emergency appointment – we would normally expect the pupil to return to school lessons as soon as possible, after the appointment, unless the child is too unwell. Very early morning appointments can be recorded as authorised lateness if there is a swift return to school. Appointments late in the afternoon, will allow the child to fulfill most of the learning during the school day and receive the afternoon registration mark. (e.g. late morning and early afternoon appointments to be avoided).

### **Medical evidence:**

Appointment cards, medical paperwork – copy prescriptions or printed labels on medicines are all helpful supportive information that can be submitted to the school and help staff to continue to give a pupil an authorised absence. Parents/carers

may be directly requested to submit this information if there is frequent absence from school. The school does not request or require medical certificates or any report information that may be charged to the parent/carer/school. The medical details of a pupil are the property of the family who can make the decision to disclose the information.

**Religious observance:**

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. (DFE guidance October 2014)

**Critical illness:**

Pupils who have long term medical conditions or temporary disability following an accident will be educationally supported. Pupils who are unable to be in school for a number of weeks can be referred to the Long Term Medical Needs team at the Central Bedfordshire Council.

**Sanctions:**

Ongoing absences or absences that form a worrying pattern will be investigated and we will work with the family to make a change to improve learning opportunities. All cases of irregular attendance will be dealt with on an individual basis. Complex, unresolved and ongoing absences will be referred to the Central Bedfordshire Council for action by the Access and Inclusion Service.

**Fixed Penalty Action:**

Our School uses the fixed penalty process to challenge unauthorised absence. The Central Bedfordshire Council want schools to ensure that their parents/carers have absolute clarity with regard to sanctions and have produced a leaflet attached. (Appendix 1).

**Exceptional circumstances:**

Our school will authorise absence when a family has a bereavement and funeral. The Headteacher will decide if any other reason for absence can be accepted as authorised but the reason extraordinary absence will need to appear a critical circumstance.

**Removing a child from learning for a chosen absence:**

Our School will not be able to authorise absence when the circumstances are from parental choice. Parents and carers will be made aware that avoidable absence can lead to fixed penalty action. Ten half day sessions of unauthorised absence for any cumulative reasons in a twelve week period reach the criteria for a fixed penalty action request to the Local Authority.

**Bad weather/critical conditions:**

Parents/carers must refer to official information direct from our School; Local Radio or the Central Bedfordshire Council website to receive official information about school opening and closure. Parents and carers who live near the school and can walk will be expected to bring their child into the school if the building is open for registration. The school can use its discretion keeping the register open longer, so late arrival will be authorised for any exceptional bad weather or critical circumstance.

### **Celebrating Excellent and Improving Attendance:**

During the week, the headteacher will check registers and announce 'hot spot' awards. This award is given for the highest attending class at that moment. The class will receive a certificate and 10 minutes extra playtime. The class with 100% attendance for the week will receive hot chocolate and biscuits (winter) or ice lollies (summer) every Friday. A display will be used in celebration assembly weekly. The class with the highest attendance will receive a cup for that week. This incentive will be in place throughout the school year to support a positive attitude to education and a good attendance. Children who have 100% attendance across a term receive a certificate at the end of the Autumn, Spring and Summer Term in our Always Assembly; they also receive 2 raffle tickets to go into a draw at the end of the year to win an attendance prize.

Staff will compliment pupils who have good or improving attendance.

### **Governors:**

The Governor will receive regular updates from Attendance data, including information on trends and targets. The Governors will meet/receive reports from staff who have attendance related duties.

See appendix 1. Leaflet produced by Central Bedfordshire Council.

## **Appendix A**

### **Leaflet - A Guide to Non-school Attendance Penalty Notices**

#### **Information for Parents/Carers (revised September 2014) Introduction**

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that their children regularly attend the school at which they are registered. Parents can help to ensure regular attendance by:

- encouraging their children to attend school regularly and on time;
- taking an interest in their children's education and life at school;
- communicating with their children's school in order to discuss any emerging issues or problems;
- notifying their children's school on the first day of any absence;
- not arranging any family holidays during term time.

Some children, unfortunately, fail to attend school regularly. The Council has a number of legal powers which it can use to address this. Included among these powers is the authority, under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, to issue Penalty Notices (or fixed fines) to parents whose children fail to attend school regularly.

#### **When a Penalty Notice may be issued:**

In Central Bedfordshire, schools and academies may ask the local authority to issue a Penalty Notice.

A Penalty Notice may be issued when:

- a pupil is taken out of school during term time for a holiday which has not been authorised by the school;
- a child's school attendance has been poor and his/her school believe that the issuing of a Penalty Notice may lead to an improvement in the child's attendance

(for example, when a child is persistently late for school and his/her parents fail to address the situation).

When a Penalty Notice is issued it is issued on a per child/per parent basis. This means that if a mother and father have two children and take both children out of school they may be issued with a total of 4 Penalty Notices – one to each parent for each child.

### **Issuing a Penalty Notice**

A Penalty Notice can be issued:

- when the number of unauthorised absences a child has had amounts to at least 10 sessions (5 days) during a 12 school week period.

Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, there is no statutory right of appeal, although there are circumstances in which the council may withdraw the Notice.

### **Payment of Penalty Notices**

A Penalty Notice is initially for £60. If this £60 is not paid within 21 days from the date of issue it rises to £120. If after 28 days of the date of issue the £120 is not paid, the council will prosecute the parents under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This will lead to an appearance in the magistrates' court and may result in a fine of up to £1,000.

### **Parental Responsibility**

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;

- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law).

### **Contact details**

For more information about Penalty Notices or any other issues related to school attendance, please contact the Access and Inclusion Service on 0300 300 4953.

Access & Inclusion, Central Bedfordshire Council, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable, LU6 1LF.