

# The Firs Lower School

## Attendance Policy



### Philosophy:

The Firs Lower School is committed to maximising attendance for all pupils to enable them to benefit fully from their education. We believe that regular attendance is vital for effective learning and poor attendance can be the indicator of other pastoral concerns, which could impact negatively on a child's well-being.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parent/carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise the importance of establishing strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is a concern about attendance.

We will identify and address, as speedily as possible, any problems affecting attendance and adopt, at all times, a clearly focused approach aimed at returning a pupil to full attendance.

### Key Principles:

1. All pupils should feel supported and valued. The school will promote positive staff attitudes to those pupils returning from absences.
2. All staff should be aware of this policy and current national guidelines. Staff will be made aware of the registration process and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law as appropriate.
3. Maintaining good attendance at The Firs Lower School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community; pupils, parent/carers and all school staff.
4. Pupils are expected to attend school and lessons regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support.
5. Parent/carers are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parent/carers are required to notify the school of the reason on the first day of absence. Parent/carers whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered support from school in matters of communication.
6. If a child is absent without explanation, the school has a responsibility to ensure they are safe. It will be impressed upon parents/carers that it is **essential** that they contact the school early on the first day of any absence.
7. School staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Staff should convey high expectations to pupils regarding attendance and punctuality. A range of strategies will be used to encourage good attendance and punctuality and staff will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parent/carers. Staff will respond to all absenteeism consistently.

### Registration

Pupils are able to come into school from 8:45 and are expected to be in school by 8.55am

1. Registers will be called promptly as soon as children have assembled in their classroom. Where a child is elsewhere in the school at this time e.g. music lesson which begins before the start of the school day, the adult responsible will send the child to their classroom to inform the teacher that they are present.
2. Registers will be called again at 1.20pm. They will be marked in red (present) or black (absent) in accordance with the list of symbols as set out in the register front sheet. Office staff must record absences, either as authorised or unauthorised, using the agreed symbols. Consistent criteria should be applied to decision making.
3. If a child is not present in school at the start of the session and the teacher is unaware of the reason for the absence, then the appropriate register space will be left blank and will be completed by the office when registers officially close.
4. Once completed, registers will be returned to the register tray near the school office. Registers will officially close at 9.10 am and at 1.35 pm.
5. Where pupils arrive late and the register is still open, they will be marked late but counted as present for the session. Where pupils arrive after registers have closed and an adequate explanation is not provided, they will be marked as late and it will be counted as an unauthorised

## The Firs Lower School Attendance Policy

- late. Where pupils miss registration but an acceptable explanation is provided, they will be marked as late but it will be counted as an authorised absence for that session.
6. Pupils who arrive late after the registers have closed should report to the school office and the parent/carer should sign the child in using the School Signing In/Out Book, which is kept at the office window. (A member of the office team will subsequently amend the register entry to read appropriately). If a child is persistently late then their parent/carers will be contacted so the matter can be discussed. (See below).
  7. The Clerical Assistant (or Office Manager) will check all the registers each day, ensuring that all reported absences are marked appropriately, telephoning parent/carers/carers to establish the reason for any unreported absences. Any concerns will be reported **immediately** to the Office Manager or Headteacher.
  8. If no contact is received from the parent/carer of the pupil on the morning of the first absence, the school will contact the parent/carer by telephone, leaving a message if the parent/carer is unavailable. If this action (including further phone calls) does not result in an explanation any other contacts on the pupil's record card will be telephoned. If a satisfactory reason is given, the register will be marked accordingly. If no satisfactory explanation is given or no contact can be made, the matter will be referred to the Inclusion Service to ensure the safety of the child.
  9. Each week the Office Manager or Clerical Assistant will enter all the information into the attendance module ensuring accurate data for the census. The Headteacher and Governors will monitor attendance data to ensure the school's high levels of attendance are maintained.

### **Requests for absence**

Parent/carers should avoid, wherever possible, making medical/dental appointments during school hours. Where this is unavoidable, parents/carers will be asked to show the appointment card / letter to a member of the office team so this can be recorded.

Parent/carers who wish to take their child out of school should complete the agreed RSP leave of absence form (which will be issued along with a copy of the Central Bedfordshire guide on attendance for parents/carers). The number of days requested will be checked by the Clerical Assistant. The Headteacher will consider this request for absence, with due regard to the LA / National guidance on the authorisation of absence in term time, and reply to the parent / carer noting whether the request is authorised, unauthorised or partly authorised.

Requests for absence will be looked at carefully and individually, although DFE guidance (September 2013) states that requests should only be authorised in 'exceptional circumstances' and precludes the authorising of absence for 'holidays'. The school recognises the importance of special family occasions such as weddings, christenings etc. and where requests from individual families are infrequent, feels it appropriate to grant up to 1 day of authorised absence for these occasions.

Procedures will allow returning absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of other pupils in the class.

### **Attendance Concerns**

1. Parent/carers will be promptly informed of any concerns over their child's attendance.
2. Registers are monitored very carefully and if there are any concerns regarding the number of absences/times late, the 'traffic light' attendance concern process will be triggered.
3. Initially, parents/carers will be contacted by phone and/or a 'green' reminder letter sent (see appendix 1). If a child's absence falls below 85%, the headteacher / Office Manager will telephone the parents/carers to discuss the matter.
4. Where there is a genuine reason for the absences, the school will work closely with the parent/carer and other agencies if appropriate, to help support the child's return to full attendance.
5. Where concerns remain regarding attendance however, the phone call will be followed up with the 'amber' attendance concern letter, making them aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance and encouraging them to discuss how to improve attendance. (See appendix 2)

The Firs Lower School  
**Attendance Policy**

6. Where a child's absence does not improve over the next 2 weeks, a 'red' continuing attendance concern letter will be sent, inviting the parent/carers to come and discuss the situation with the school and the school's attendance officer. (See appendix 3). At this meeting an agreed plan of action will be drawn up to improve the child's attendance.
7. If following this intervention there is no improvement, advice will be sought from the school's attendance officer, as to what next steps should be taken. At this point, the implementation of the Local Authority penalty notice system will be considered if appropriate.
8. In the event of a pupil returning after a long term absence, then an individual re-integration programme will be implemented.