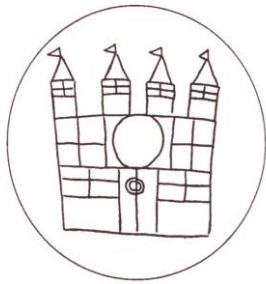


# The Bridge Partnership



**“Bringing out the best  
in everyone”**

**“Everyone matters;  
everyone is important”**

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

## **AIM STATEMENT**

The School's aims are to encourage every pupil to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance in order to take full advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

## **STATUTORY FRAMEWORK**

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are a registered pupil.

From September 2012, Milton Keynes Council's responsibility for legal interventions in response to non-school attendance came within the remit of the Head of Service for Youth Justice and will be based at the Youth Offending Team Offices at the Manor Road Centre, Oakwood Drive, Bletchley. A specialist officer has been retained to focus on this work and to be known as the Senior Attendance Officer (Legal Interventions).

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Improving pupils attendance at the School's is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – pupils, parents, governors and all staff.

## **PUPILS**

All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their class teacher, and if the need should arise, from the Headteacher, or designated member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

## **PARENTS/CARERS**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents are requested to notify the school on the first day of absence and by 9.30am. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received from the parent. Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents whose child's attendance is a cause for concern will be written to by the Headteacher or SLT member, as appropriate. Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours.

Parents whose first language is not English, or who have literacy problems, will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication.

## PROCEDURES FOR HOLIDAY ABSENCES

- Parents are strongly urged to avoid taking family holidays during term time. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday. If children have unauthorised absence recorded for holidays, for less than 10 sessions (5 days) the Headteacher will send parents a warning letter stating how many unauthorised absence they will incur along with a reminder of how many more they can incur before a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued. (Appendix A) If parents ask for the maximum 10 sessions (5 days) for one holiday, the Headteacher or SLT member will ask to meet with the parents to distinguish under what circumstances their holiday needs to be taken during term time. If there are no extenuating circumstances surrounding the holiday, it is at the discretion of the teacher as to whether a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued. If not issuing a FPN immediately, a warning letter (Appendix B) will be sent notifying parents that their child will be recorded as unauthorised and if their child should be absent for any further unauthorised reasons during the academic year, they are at risk of being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60 per child, per adult payable within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
- If the Headteacher decides to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice, the following procedure will take place:
- The Senior Attendance Officer (Legal Interventions) hereby known as the “Authorising Officer” will be contacted via email and told the name of the child, the names and addresses of both parents and the dates of unauthorised absence. S/he will authorise the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices in Milton Keynes.
- This will ensure consistent and equitable delivery, retain school-home relationships and allow cohesion with other enforcement sanctions.
- Fixed Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an on the spot action; this is to satisfy that all evidential requirements are in place and to meet Health and Safety requirements.

This request will be actioned provided that:

- All relevant information is supplied in the specified manner,
- The circumstances of the pupil’s absence meets all the requirements of this Protocol,
- The issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other enforcement sanctions already being processed. (See Appendix C - Fixed Penalty Notice Protocol)
- Occasionally, long distance holidays of more than two weeks to visit family living overseas may be planned. These will be recorded as unauthorised and a FPN issued. The Headteacher or SLT member requests parents to make an appointment to see them to discuss return dates. At this meeting the Senior member of staff will make sure that parents are aware of the need to return by the agreed date or risk the possibility of losing their place. If any exceptional circumstances should arise whilst the family are absent, they would need to contact school to inform us of the new return date in order to ensure that a place was kept for their child. If a child should be continuously absent for more than 4 weeks, the child will be taken off roll, even if school has been continually kept informed and parents will have to reapply for a place on their return.

## PROCEDURES FOR FOLLOWING UP PERSISTENT ABSENCE

- If a child is absent without an explanation being received, a member of the school's administration team will contact the parents wherever possible, on the first day of absence either by phone or text using Parentmail. If the absentee is a pupil about whom there are already concerns, the senior member of staff will make every effort to contact the parents immediately. Notes from parents will be initialled by the class teacher and senior member of staff and kept on the pupil's file. All telephone messages regarding absence/lateness are to be recorded and dated.
- The School Administrator or Clerical Assistant inputs weekly attendance data and highlights concerns of children under 95% to the Headteacher or senior member of staff on a half termly basis.
- If the pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, under 85% the Headteacher will contact the parents and the following procedures followed:
  - A log of phone calls made to the parents, following absence.
  - A copy of a letter inviting the parent in for a school meeting to discuss attendance.
  - A follow-up letter stating what has been agreed at the meeting and which informs the parent that all future absence will be unauthorised unless supported by GP or other medical notes.
- If a pupil is persistently absent-with at least 10 unauthorised sessions over a 12 week period then a warning letter (Appendix B) will be issued. The warning will detail the possibility of a FPN if there are no improvements. The warning letter is effective for twelve weeks but the FPN cannot be issued for at least three weeks after the warning to give time for attendance to improve. Copies of the warning letter should be sent to Senior Attendance Officer (Legal Interventions) who will record and monitor the number issued and have the appropriate information if there is a further requirement for an FPN to be issued or if there is non-payment of an FPN.

Prior to a Formal Warning Letter being sent the following will be expected as minimal intervention (See MK Enforcement Document for full details):

- i. Evidence of the school having written/communicated with the parent/carers and the outcome.
- ii. Evidence of at least one home visit/school meeting between the school or another service such as a Children and Family Practice Team.
- iii. Evidence of what the school has done to support the pupil's return to school e.g. first day contact, re-integration plan etc...
- iv. The consideration of a referral to the Children & Family Practice Referral Hub.

Following a Formal Warning Letter being sent with the child's attendance;

- a) The school will review the child's attendance not later than 4 school weeks.
- b) The school should advise the parent/carer that further absences will not be authorised without notes from a health care professional being provided.
- c) In the event that the child's attendance has not improved (an expectation of at least 90% attendance during the 4 week period), the school will refer the matter to the Authorised Officer by sending a copy of the attendance certificate so it is clear there has not been an improvement following the warning letter. If it is accepted, the Authorised Officer will write to the parent/carers and invite them to an Attendance Interview. This will usually be held at the child's school and a relevant member of the school staff will also be invited to attend. Other significant professionals involved with the family (if known), e.g. a child's or family's Social Worker or CFP worker should be offered the opportunity to attend the Attendance Interview. (See MK Enforcement Document for full details).

## STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

- Our School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupils' needs.
- Attendance data will be monitored regularly and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievements and support and inform policy/practice.
- Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, the school brochure, parents evenings, etc) of the importance of regular attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will, when appropriate, have work sent home to them and will be reintegrated back into school upon their return.
- Pupils who have been absent, for whatever reason, for an extended period of time will, when appropriate, have individually tailored reintegration programmes prepared for them.
- The Headteacher will make a half termly report to the schools governing body on attendance matters.
- The school sends attendance information sheets to parents at the end of each term to keep parents fully informed of their child's attendance.

SpringTerm 2016

Review date: Autumn 2017

Appendix A – Warning Letter stating Unauthorised absence taken

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear

RE:

DOB:

SCHOOL:

From 27 February 2004 Penalty Notices were introduced under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 as an additional sanction to address the problem of poor attendance.

This means that where pupils have had 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence from school (i.e. any absence where the school has not given permission) their parents/carers may be subject to a fine of £60 per child, per adult payable in 21 days rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If you take your planned holiday your child will have had \_\_\_\_ unauthorised absences. If your child has \_\_\_\_ more unauthorised absence in the next 12 week period you may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice issued by The Youth Offending Team.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please contact \_\_\_\_\_

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix B (i)–

Warning letter - Holidays

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear

RE:

DOB:

SCHOOL:

From 27 February 2004 Penalty Notices were introduced under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 as an additional sanction to address the problem of poor attendance.

This means that where pupils have unauthorised absence from school (i.e. any absence where the school has not given permission) their parents/carers may be subject to a fine of £60 per child, per adult payable in 21 days rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If you take your planned holiday your child will have \_\_\_\_ unauthorised absences from \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_.

This letter is formal warning, notifying you that should your child be recorded as absent for any further unauthorised reasons, you may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice by the Youth Offending Team.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please contact\_\_\_\_\_

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix B (ii) –

Warning letter – Persistent Absence

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Dear

RE:

DOB:

SCHOOL:

From 27 February 2004 Penalty Notices were introduced under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 as an additional sanction to address the problem of poor attendance.

This means that where pupils have unauthorised absence from school (i.e. any absence where the school has not given permission) their parents/carers may be subject to a fine of £60 per child, per adult payable in 21 days rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

Your child has had \_\_\_\_\_unauthorised absences in the period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ which is equivalent to \_\_\_\_\_% attendance.

This letter is formal warning, notifying you that should your child be recorded as absent for any further unauthorised reasons in the next 12 weeks, you will be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice by the Youth Offending Team.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix C

### Milton Keynes Council Fixed Penalty Notice Protocol

#### 1. Legal Basis:

Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated Local Authority officers, Head Teachers (& Deputy and Assistant Headteachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Fixed Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

The Education (Fixed Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 come into force on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2004.



The issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices must conform to all requirements of the Human Rights Act and all Equal Opportunities legislation.

The Local Authority has the prime responsibility for developing the protocol within which all partners named in the Act will operate

## 2. Rationale:

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

In law an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a child's attendance at a school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school. Fixed Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under Sec 444, Education Act 1996 or Sec 36, the Children's Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

Parents and pupils are supported at school and Local Authority level to overcome barriers to regular attendance through a wide continuum of assessment and intervention strategies. Sanctions of any nature are for use only where parental co-operation in this process is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem.

Sanctions are never used as a punishment, only as a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure an improvement.

## 3. Circumstances where a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued:

A Fixed Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.

Use of Fixed Penalty Notices will be restricted to one per parent per pupil per school year.

In cases where families contain more than one poor-attending pupil multiple issues may occur but this will be the subject of careful consideration and co-ordination.

There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent/carer may receive a formal warning of a possible issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice. However, once a warning is issued it will remain in place for the next twelve (12) school weeks.

The issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice is considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- The child has been absent from school for ten (10) or more unauthorised sessions in any twelve (12) week period.
- The child has been stopped during a truancy sweep (accompanied or unaccompanied)
- Excessive holidays in term-time. Criteria for excessive holidays would include those listed below;

Ten (10) unauthorised sessions.

- Persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Failure to ensure attendance at any alternative educational provision

To ensure consistent delivery of Fixed Penalty Notices the following criteria will apply:

- Ten (10) or more sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil during a twelve (12) week period.
- Other than in specific circumstances\*\* the liable parent/carer will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued and notified that should their child be absent for any unauthorised circumstances for that term then a FPN will be issued.

\*\* The deliberate taking of a holiday in term time which has created a period of unauthorised absence in the current term of ten (10) or more sessions.

Schools must consider every aspect of a pupil's case before considering whether a Fixed Penalty Notice would be appropriate. This must include strategic discussions with attendance-support staff at the school and/or Child & Family Practice Workers who have involvement with or knowledge of the pupil/family.

#### 4. Procedure for Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices:

The Senior Attendance Officer (Legal Interventions) hereby known as the "Authorising Officer" will authorise the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices in Milton Keynes.

This will ensure consistent and equitable delivery, retain school-home relationships and allow cohesion with other enforcement sanctions.

Fixed Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an on the spot action; this is to satisfy that all evidential requirements are in place and to meet Health and Safety requirements.

The Authorising Officer will receive requests to issue Fixed Penalty Notices from schools, Thames Valley Police and neighbouring Local Authorities. These requests will be actioned provided that:

- All relevant information is supplied in the specified manner,
- The circumstances of the pupil's absence meets all the requirements of this Protocol,
- The issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other enforcement sanctions already being processed.

The Authorising Officer will respond to all requests within ten (10) school days of receipt and where all criteria are met will:

- Issue a formal written warning to the parent/carer of the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.
- In the same letter set a period within which the pupil must have no unauthorised absence.
- Issue a Fixed Penalty Notice through the post if the required level of improvement has not been achieved.

#### 5. Procedure for withdrawing Fixed Penalty Notices:

Once issued, a Fixed Penalty Notice will only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- Proof has been established that the Fixed Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person.
- The use of the Fixed Penalty Notice did not conform to the terms of this Protocol.

#### 6. Payment of Fixed Penalty Notices:

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Fixed Penalty Notice.

Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice discharges the parent/carer liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Fixed Penalty Notice.

Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days and after this time it is £120 payable in 28 days.

The Local Authority retains any revenue from Fixed Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs (collection or prosecuting in the event of non-payment).

#### 7. Non-payment of Fixed Penalty Notices:

Non-payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the Notice and will trigger the prosecution process under the provisions of Sec 444, 1996 Education Act. However, the FPN can be withdrawn without a prosecution taking place where it can be shown that the FPN has been issued to the wrong person or sent to the wrong address or no offence has been committed or where the imposition of the FPN is not within the terms of the Code of Conduct. Alternatively, the Authorising Officer for Milton Keynes may deem it not to be in the public interest to prosecute a parent where the pupil is in year 11 or for other, unspecified reasons, where a prosecution would be contrary to the public interest.

#### 8. Policy & Publicity

Deployment of Fixed Penalty Notices as a sanction must be included in the School's Attendance Policy. Also, information on the deployment of Fixed Penalty Notices should be brought to the attention of all parents.

The Local Authority will include information on the use of Fixed Penalty Notices and other attendance enforcement sanctions in promotional/ public information material.

#### 9. Reporting & Review:

The Authorising Officer will review the use of Fixed Penalty Notices annually and amend the general enforcement strategy as appropriate.

The Authorising Officer will maintain a register of Fixed Penalty Notices issued, and include details of each child's school, school year, gender, ethnicity, special educational needs/disability, and publish the details at the end of each academic year.