**Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

**September 2021**



***‘Pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.’***

**School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, Department for Education, August 2016**

Civitas Academy always expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils. We support pupils and their families to ensure that good attendance and punctuality is achieved.

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| **Attendance** | **Description** | **Approx. days lost per year** | **Approx. weeks lost per year** |
| 99-100% | Excellent | 0-4 | Less than 1 |
| 97-98% | Good | 5-9 | 1-2 |
| 96% | Satisfactory | 10-13 | 2-3 |
| 90-95% | Unsatisfactory | 14-18 | 3-4 |
| Below 90% | Persistent Absence | More than 19 | More than 4 |

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| **Punctuality** | **Approx. days lost per year** |
| 5 minutes late every day | 3+ |
| 15 minutes late every day | 10 |
| 30 minutes late every day | 19 |

**Overall aims:**

* To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
* To ensure the school attendance and punctuality target is achieved, through promotion of effective strategies for good attendance and punctuality.
* To raise standards and ensure every child can reach their full educational potential through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
* To ensure all stakeholders, including governors, parents, pupils, and staff, receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
* To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance and punctuality.
* To identify causes of low attendance and/or punctuality with individuals, classes, and groups of pupils, and work collaboratively to address them.
* To work effectively with external agencies in order to address barriers to good attendance and punctuality and to overcome them.

**Legal Framework**

The Education Act 1996 states the following:

*The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable:*

*a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and*

*b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise*

N.B. a child is of compulsory school age at the start of the term following their 5th birthday.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Senior Leadership Team (SLT):**

* Be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.
* Deal with parental requests for absence from learning in line with Reading Local Authority policies and procedures
* Consider the use of Penalty Notices, in line with Reading Local Authority policies and procedures.
* Lead on and take responsibility for attendance and punctuality on a day-to-day basis, including liaising with parents and responding to parental enquiries.
* Oversee the analysis of weekly, termly, and yearly attendance data, and respond to findings.
* Meet with the Education Welfare Pastoral Lead (EWPL) and any other relevant staff to monitor the systems and structures, ensuring they are having a positive impact on pupil attendance and punctuality.
* Ensure that strategies to promote, recognise and maintain good attendance and punctuality are being consistently used.
* Work with teachers to plan for the reintegration of pupils after any long-term absence.
* Revise and amend the policy, as required.

**Admin Officer:**

* Support SLT and the EWPL with the promotion of good attendance and punctuality
* Implement the daily checking of Arbor registers after the morning and afternoon registration sessions.
* Ensure staff are following the registration systems and structures in this policy.
* Check the school answer phone and take messages from parents and carers about pupil absence.
* Record reasons for absence and update class registers
* Carry out and record the outcome of first day calls, when a child doesn’t arrive at school and no reason has been received.
* Remind parents of school procedures, when parents have failed to inform the school of reasons for absence.
* Promptly inform the EWPL if there are any concerns relating to attendance or punctuality.
* Produce attendance and punctuality data for EWPL and SLT as requested.
* A directed by SLT, contact parents/carers by letter if attendance and/or punctuality poses a concern.
* As directed by SLT, liaise with and report to outside agencies including the Local Authority
* Oversee the admission and induction of new pupils.

**Staff:**

* Complete the class attendance register twice daily with the pupils.
* Ensure quality first teaching every day with lessons that are well planned and resourced so that they challenge, inspire and meet their learners’ needs.
* Provide a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children.
* Regularly remind children and parents about the importance of good attendance and punctuality
* Follow up on pupil absence by ensuring reasons for absence are sought.
* Establish good and effective communication links with parents and carers and work collaboratively with them in meeting the child’s needs.
* Work with pupils and their families where attendance and/or punctuality is a concern, identifying barriers and working to overcome these.
* Promptly inform the SLT of pupils who persist with poor attendance and/or punctuality.
* Feedback to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality regularly and at Parents’ Evenings

**Parents:**

* In line with legal requirements, ensure their child attends regularly and arrives on time, missing as little school as possible.
* Telephone the school on the first day of any absence by (8:40), and on each and every subsequent day of absence
* Arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours, unless this cannot be avoided.
* Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their child attends school in the correct uniform and with the equipment required for lessons.
* Work in partnership with school staff and other agencies in the best interests of their child to secure good attendance and punctuality, including informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child’s life, which may impact on their attendance and/or punctuality.

**Pupils:**

* Attend all lessons on time and be ready to learn.
* Talk to their class teacher if they are experiencing difficulties with school that may affect their attendance and punctuality.

**The Local Authority (via the Educational Welfare Service):**

* Support the school in improving attendance and punctuality.
* Work with families and other agencies to remove barriers to good attendance and punctuality.
* Ensure that parents are informed of their responsibilities in relation to attendance and punctuality.
* Uphold and enforce the law in respect of attendance and child protection.

**Strategies for promoting good attendance and punctuality**

We aim to ensure that good attendance (97% and above) and punctuality is regularly promoted and supported, and that the value of good attendance and punctuality is high profile across school. The following strategies support us to achieve this.

* **Breakfast club**

Breakfast Club (led by Go Beanies, an external organisation) is available every day and offered to all children. This supports parents by allowing them to drop their children off from 8.00am, ensuring they are on time for school. Please speak to the school office for more information about availability and cost.

* **The school learning environment**

A welcoming, organised learning environment that supports and celebrates its learners are key factors in ensuring children enjoy school and attend regularly. All staff ensure that their learning environments are of a high quality. Regular, rigorous learning walks are carried out by the SLT to ensure this.

* **Staff promoting good attendance and punctuality**

It is important that teachers are regularly promoting good attendance and punctuality with their classes. Good class attendance is attributed to good teaching, and this is celebrated. Attendance and punctuality are shared with staff weekly. There will also be attendance and punctuality challenges at specific times of the year. Attendance is shared in celebration assemblies.

* **Parent/teacher consultation evenings**

This provides an opportunity for class teachers to praise and recognise good attendance and punctuality or share concerns and discuss barriers to good attendance and punctuality.

**Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school as **authorised** or **unauthorised**. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to authorise any child’s absence from school. Therefore, absences will be treated as unauthorised until the school is satisfied that it should be authorised. Parents cannot authorise absences, and should be aware that, while calling the school or providing a note for an absence complies with safeguarding procedures, it does not automatically mean an absence will be authorised.

**Authorised Absence**

There are some circumstances where the school may authorise absence, including:

* Illness

Pupils should not in school when it is not safe to do so, for example, if they are exhibiting symptoms such as high temperature, vomiting, diarrhoea. While pupils should not be sent to school if they are genuinely unwell, if their illness is not sufficient to seek medical advice then parents are advised to send their child to school in the first instance, where they can be monitored by school staff.

* Medical or dental appointments

Parent are requested to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, children should attend school for as much of the day as possible, and only be absent for school for the time of the appointment, and the transport time to and from the appointment. In order to authorise absence for a medical or dental appointment, medical evidence will be required in the form of a copy of an appointment card, letter, prescription, etc.

* Exceptional circumstances, i.e., bereavement of an immediate family member

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate, for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background to a child during times of uncertainty. In line with Reading Local Authority’s ‘Leave in Term Time Guidance’ and the 2013 Amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, the Headteacher may only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional; for example, the death of a parent, carer or sibling of the pupil, or life threatening/critical illness of a parent, carer, or sibling of the pupil. Parents experiencing what they believe to be exceptional circumstances wishing to request leave in term time for their child are required to complete an ‘Absence from Learning’ form which can be obtained from the school office. The Headteacher will then decide on whether the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional, and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

* Religious observance

We recognise that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays or weekends and will allow authorised absence for these times. Parent will be aware of these dates in advance of them occurring and are required to complete an ‘Absence from Learning’ form which can be obtained from the school office. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Unauthorised absence**

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable, and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

* Going shopping, birthdays or treats from family members.
* Looking after other family members
* Staying at home because other members in the family are disabled or unwell.
* Day trips and holidays in term time
* Haircut
* To get new shoes or uniform

**Recording and monitoring attendance and punctuality**

**Class registers**

Registers are the primary way of recording pupil attendance and must be completed accurately. These are completed using Arbor. The system ensures that no children are missed, and that pupil information can be shared quickly and securely. Completion of registers is the responsibility of whichever member of staff has been directed to take the class or group for that session. Registers can be re-submitted in the case of a mistake or a pupil arriving after submission, but they must be accurately submitted at agreed times.

**Register timings**

The gates open at 8:40 until 9:00am to welcome children into school, and class registers are open between (8:40-9:10am). At (9:10am), the register must be closed and submitted. Any children arriving to school after this time, regardless of the time of arrival, are required to sign in at the school office to ensure we have an accurate record of who is on site during the day. If arriving between (9:10-9:30am), the office staff will record children as late (L). If they arrive after (9:30am), children are recorded as unauthorised absence (U).

Afternoon registers open at (12:55) and must be completed and submitted before afternoon lessons begin.

**Emergency contacts**

Schools are required, where possible, to hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. This supports good practice in ensuring that the school has multiple options to pursue for any child who is not attending school or who poses a welfare or safeguarding concern. We ask for all parents to provide two or more emergency contact number for their child. We hold a list of any pupils for whom two or more emergency contact numbers are not able to be provided, and these children receive a priority response in our first day absence procedures to ensure any welfare or safeguarding concerns are promptly addressed.

**Responding to absence**

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent, the following process will be followed:

* Day 1: a phone call will be made to the primary parent contact number regarding the child’s absence.
* Day 2: if no response has been received from day 1, a phone call will be made to each contact number in turn regarding the child’s absence.
* Day 3: if no response has been received from day 1 and day 2, the EWPL/SLT will be informed, who will make further appropriate enquiries, including, if necessary, a home visit, and/or a referral to Social Care

The school must establish a reason for every absence. When contact with a parent or carer is successfully made, they are asked to provide a reason as to why the child is not in school. The absence reason is recorded on the child’s record on Arbor. Registers are checked every Monday morning for any absences for which a reason has not been received, and parents are contacted again to request a reason for absence. If no response is received within 2 days, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

**School attendance and punctuality monitoring**

The school monitors the attendance and punctuality of individual pupils, classes, and pupil groups. We will liaise directly with parents where their child’s attendance and/or punctuality is posing a concern, i.e., attendance below a ‘good’ level (97%), multiple unauthorised absences, repeating patterns of absence or lateness, recent decline in attendance and/or punctuality.

Attendance of non- statutory school aged pupils will still be monitored in line with the rest of the school and parents encouraged to send their child to school every day.

**Persistent absence**

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more school days across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s education and we need the fullest support and co-operation of parents to tackle this. Any child that is seen to have reached the persistent absence threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority in our monitoring processes. This will prompt immediate communication with parents and is also likely to require involvement from the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer. In extreme cases of poor attendance and/or punctuality, the Education Welfare Officer can instigate legal action against parents.

**Legal action, including Penalty Notices**

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 states: *“If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence.”* If a child is absent from school without the Headteacher’s authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken. Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007 states that penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60 per parent, per child. If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120 per parent, per child. If this is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority will prosecute under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 unless it is confirmed that the penalty notice had been issued in error. The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order. Please note that penalties and prosecutions are in respect of each parent for each child, and ‘parent’ includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child regardless of whether they live with the child. **These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in a criminal record.**

**Children Missing in Education**

In line with DfE requirements and Reading Local Authority Children Missing in Education procedures, staff will act immediately on any known welfare or safeguarding concerns where a child is missing from school, including, where necessary, a CME referral to the Educational Welfare Officer, and/or a referral to Social Care. Please click [here](http://berks.proceduresonline.com/reading/p_ch_missing_educ.html) for further information for Reading LSCB’s procedures for Children Missing in Education.