



Pitsford School

School Policy Document

Name of Policy: Attendance Policy Sept 2024

Audience: Public

Date for Next Review: Summer 2025

SLT Member(s) Responsible for Reviewing and Updating the Policy: FMK/CGW

Pitsford School students are expected to attend school regularly and on time and this policy aims to make clear the importance of maximum attendance at school to enable students to take full advantage of their educational opportunities. This is every child's fundamental right and every effort will be made to help students engage in their education in a positive and rewarding way.

In order to achieve this aim, school and home need to work together so that:

- Students are committed to their education and understand the importance of good attendance
- Parents instil in their child the expectation to attend school daily and support school if it becomes necessary to monitor attendance as is their legal duty.
- School has clear lines of responsibility for dealing with attendance and are consistent in the implementation of the policy, including a wide range of positive intervention strategies if concerns continue and, very importantly, rewarding and celebrating good and improving attendance. At Pitsford we have outstanding attendance and we have outstanding exam results and it is important to recognise the link between the two.

The vast majority of our students achieve over 96% attendance and this is what we expect from all students as a minimum. On September 1st 2013 the Government brought in new regulations giving no entitlement to parents to take their child on a family holiday during term time and to do so could result in the Local Authority issuing a fixed penalty notice. Pitsford School wants to take every care to maintain the positive relationship we have with parents and ensure that you feel able to communicate honestly with us. This will be our position:

- No request for holiday absence will be authorised. You may choose to take your child out of school but this will be recorded on your child's attendance record as unauthorised absence.
- If you take your child out of school for an accumulative total of 5 days or more (10 sessions) over a period of six weeks Pitsford School are obliged to refer this to the LA and you will be at risk of incurring a Penalty Notice. This risk increases if there are existing concerns relating to your child's attendance and intervention programmes have been in place.
- If your child's attendance rate falls below 96%, all absences will be monitored.

Parents asking for consideration for absence where special circumstances apply will be informed by the Headmaster if this will be authorised.

N.B. Parents can be fined by West Northamptonshire County Council (the Local Authority) for taking their child on holiday during term time without the consent of the school. This could be in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice

Where Pitsford School has to make a referral to West Northamptonshire County Council about an unauthorised absence, parents will be informed by letter that this referral is being made. This excludes periods of illness or absence authorised by the Head Teacher for special circumstances.

Authorised Absences

Pitsford School follows the Department for Education (DfE) guidelines (and codes) detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention
- Days of religious observance *notified in advance*
- Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness)

There are other events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised. If the absence is foreseen however, a request should be made in writing to the headmaster at least two weeks in advance.

The school acknowledges that allowing students to take part in extra-curricular activities during the school year gives the opportunity to enhance their learning experiences. In these circumstances it is possible to grant absence of up to 10 school sessions in any academic year.

Please note a school day is made-up of 2 sessions (morning and afternoon) therefore a maximum of 5 full days or a combination of full days and half days can be taken. In any circumstance attendance must be above 96%. We ask parents to notify the school well in advance - a minimum of four weeks' notice. Permission will always be at the discretion of the Headmaster.

All absences for illness should be reported through our absence reporting line on 01604880306 or by email to office@pitsfordschool.com with the tutor copied in. Pitsford School expects absences to be kept to a minimum and routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible, and family planned engagements should take place during school holidays wherever possible. The school should be notified of any unavoidable medical appointments in writing, and in advance of the appointments, so that a note can be made on your child's file.

No absences except those stated, are deemed acceptable reasons for missing School. The School advises that parents do not take their child out of School for any other reason.

The above also applies to those days during the year where attendance or availability is compulsory:

1. Speech Day
2. Open Days
3. Open Evenings
4. Curriculum visits
5. Sports fixtures
6. Concerts and performances, as required.

Unauthorised Absences

Absences will be unauthorised if:

- no reason or acceptable explanation is provided by a parent
- the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.
- When monitored absence falls below 90%

It is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not within the guidelines that have been set for us. A note or telephone call from home therefore does not automatically make an absence valid, justified or authorised. ***You will likely be required to provide evidence of an appointment or from a medical professional.***

Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. Pitsford School asks for parents support to:

- (i) Do all they can to ensure their child arrives on time for morning and afternoon school. Morning registration is at 8.40am and students should be in their classrooms by 8.40am. Afternoon registration is at 2pm for Seniors and Juniors at 1pm. It is a parental duty to ensure that children are at school on time and expects parents' support in encouraging this. Students failing to arrive on time will incur a late mark on the register and monitored for future punctuality.
- (ii) Notify the school of their child's absence by calling the school office on 01604880306 or emailing office@pitsfordschool.com (with a copy to the tutor)
- (iii) Keep school informed on a daily basis where absence extends to two days or more again by calling or emailing office@pitsfordschool.com.
- (iv) Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude to school. Failing to attend school can be indicative of underlying stresses or concerns and it is important to try to resolve these before a pattern of poor attendance develops.
- (v) Where absence is unavoidable the onus is on the parent/child to ensure that work is caught up and thus minimise disruption to the teaching and learning in the classroom.

Please contact your child's tutor in the first instance.

In return the school will:

- a. Make daily contact with a parent where a reason for their child's absence has not been provided.
- b. Contact home regarding any outstanding unexplained absences if point a has not been followed.
- c. Follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of well-being in school.
- d. Work to help students re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances.
- e. Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- f. Reward good or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

- g. Work with parents to identify other agencies who may be able to support the child and family. This may involve implementing an Early Help Assessment.

The SASS - School Attendance Support Service

Pitsford School is supported by the SASS, part of West Northamptonshire County Council. The school works with the SASS where students' attendance or welfare is giving cause for concern. The school has a SASO (School Attendance Support Officer) who meets regularly with us to advise and support the school in maintaining our excellent attendance. This can lead to legal action if parents fail to fulfil their responsibility of getting their children to school. We will engage with families to do what we can to prevent this happening.

Supporting Good Attendance

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance, the school summarises attendance figures on reports and grade cards, and attendance can be reviewed by parents on firefly or by contacting the school office. Good and outstanding attendance is celebrated in Achievement Assemblies twice a year. Rewards for attendance are incorporated in the rewards system issuing electronic points to students.

The following procedures will apply when a pupil's attendance pattern is of concern. However, please note that we recognise that the % thresholds will be disproportionately affected in the first half of the Autumn term, therefore we will exercise judgement when reviewing pupils who have been absent during this first 6 week period. It is important that parents take note of the % attendance on the first and subsequent grade-cards/reports.

Roles and responsibilities:

Role of the Form Tutor - Target Group 94%- 96%

- Mark registers in tutor time.
- Notify their tutor group of their % attendance/sessions if they are concerning (ie the 94-96% group)
- It may be necessary to email or phone parents to open up discussion about the absence and reasons that may be behind the absence
- Praise and set informal verbal targets to encourage improvement.
- Inform Head of Section of any students giving cause for concern.

Role of Head of Section/Deputy Head

- Discuss patterns of absence/individual student concerns with form tutors.
- Reinforce message in assemblies.

- Meet with the attendance Team to target those students with below 94% attendance and send out monitoring letters as outlined below.
- Hold meetings with parents and students, where attendance has been monitored and is below 90%. If necessary, put Parenting Contracts in place.
- Attendance support and advice for staff.
- Produce annual reports for senior staff and Governors.
- Intervene in serious cases of poor attendance.

Role of Attendance Team

- Receive all information regarding student absences
- Record student lateness
- Contacting parents/carers: - Phone or email to determine reasons for absence – Raise Punctuality concerns and Truancy concerns
- Attendance Information sharing with staff and parents through half termly reports and grade cards
- Attendance Monitoring letters (target group below 93%)

Amber 1 letter: Sent to parent/carer where a student's attendance falls to 93% or below to highlight the school's concern and request information/support from parents.

Email follow up for individual cases

Red 1 letter: Follow-up letter if 96% target not achieved during monitoring period (Request medical evidence).

Red 2 letter: Invitation to parent/child to attend Parenting Contract meeting with Section Lead/Deputy Head

Failure to improve after monitoring could result in a referral to the SASS and a Penalty Notice being issued. Low attendance at the end of the academic year will result in further monitoring at the start of the new academic year.

Children Missing From Education CME

The law requires all schools to have an admission register and an attendance register. All pupils who attend Pitsford School are placed on both registers. Pitsford School will remove a pupil from our register where the pupil:

- has been taken out of school by their parents and the school has received written notification from the parent they are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education;

- has been taken out of school by their parents and the school has received written notification from the parent they are being educated in another setting and we have received confirmation from the setting that the child has started.
- has ceased to attend school and no longer lives within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- has been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
- has been permanently excluded.

We will notify West Northamptonshire when we remove a pupil from our register for any of the grounds above. This should be done as soon as these grounds for removal from the register are met, and in any event no later than removing the pupil's name from the register, so that local authorities can, as part of their duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education and follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.

- Pitsford school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or
- fails to return to school for ten school days after an authorised absence, or
- has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 20 school days.

Please see the procedure for CME:

Day 1 - Phone call. A staff member trained to do so, will telephone the child's home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent or carer that the child is safe.

Day 2 – Follow up phone call. A subsequent telephone call will be made.

Day 3 – Write/email parents. Write or email to the parent in plain English, asking for contact to be made with the school immediately. If we are aware that English may not be the parent's first language we will endeavour to copy the letter into a language that may be more accessible.

Day 5/6 - Home visit. We will arrange a visit to the home address ensuring that appropriate school procedures for home visits are in place.

Once we have completed these checks, Pitsford School will report the child as missing from education (CME).

Pitsford School will report to West Northamptonshire Council via the online form or via West Northants Council - email cmetracking.ncc@westnorthants.gov.uk who will refer the case to one of the CME Tracking Officers who will complete further investigations

and feedback to our school. West Northamptonshire CME Tracking Officer will let Pitsford School know (usually within 10 working days) if the child can be removed from the school roll.