



Stephenson Academy

School Attendance Policy

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Signed by: _____
S Clark, Chair of Governors
On behalf of Stephenson Academy Governing Body

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1. Introduction

1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 Stephenson Academy believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. This is particularly important for students with a statement of SEMH as they are more in need of these opportunities and also are less likely to have previously attended well at school.

1.3 Stephenson Academy values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

1.4 Stephenson Academy recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

2. Legal Framework

2.1 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

2.2 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. We also expect this same policy to cover students in our 6th form provision.

2.3 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

2.4 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.5 The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. Categorising absence

3.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

3.2 Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

3.3 Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

3.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

3.5 Illness In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

3.6 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

3.7 Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

3.8 Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's form tutor will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

3.9 Extended Absence Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time and it will not be authorised. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and should be made aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year. It will only be in exceptional circumstances that the Principal will authorise an absence for an extended absence, but never for a family holiday.

3.9.1 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child will lose their school place. This will only be done in extreme circumstances and we do not believe we would ever have to exercise this option.

3.9.2 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil still goes on an extended absence, the absence will be **unauthorised**. All holiday absence is unauthorised. In such cases the school may issue a Penalty Notice.

3.9.3 Only in **exceptional circumstances** will absence of more than 10 school days be agreed. In such cases, consideration will also be given to cultural needs and family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parents will be required to justify why the extended absence needs to be taken during term time.

3.10 Religious Observance Stephenson Academy acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

3.10.1 It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

3.10.2 Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

3.10.3 However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

3.11 Study Leave Study leave may be granted for Year 11 pupils approaching GCSE examinations but will not be common practice. School will offer in school study programmes during this period to reduce absence levels.

3.12 Traveller Absence The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

3.12.1 To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

3.12.2 It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

3.12.3 When in or around Milton Keynes, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

3.12.4 Stephenson Academy will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at Stephenson Academy will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

3.12.5 Stephenson Academy can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

- 3.12.6 Stephenson Academy will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.
- 3.12.7 Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:
- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
 - Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
 - The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced
- 3.12.8 Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.
- 3.13 Late Arrival Registration begins at 9.00am, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 9.30am pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.
- 3.13.1 On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.
- 3.13.2 The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.
- 3.13.3 The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry.
- 3.14 Unauthorised absence Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.
- 3.14.1 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:
- A pupil's/family member's birthday
 - Shopping for uniforms
 - Having their hair cut
 - Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
 - "Couldn't get up"
 - Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
 - Extended absence taken without the authorisation of school

4. Deletions from the Register

- 4.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:
- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
 - The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
 - The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
 - Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed

- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended absence after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

4.2 Stephenson Academy will follow Milton Keynes Council Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Stephenson Academy believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community. As such, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Hold the Deputy Principal (inclusion) to account on matters of attendance
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department of Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

5.2 The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with

- Ensure that the Deputy Principal (inclusion) to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through half termly reporting to the Governing Body via the Safeguarding committee
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a high standard required should legal proceedings be instigated

5.3 All staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

5.4 Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before. This will be supported on request by staff from the academy

- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on an extended absence during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and complete the extended absence request form and return to the Principal in advance of booking an extended absence.

6. Using Attendance Data

6.1 Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

6.2 Every week the attendance for all students will be passed onto the DP (inclusion) and shared with members of staff where appropriate.

6.3 The data will be analysed to see if attendance has improved, stayed the same or deteriorated and the possible reasons for any change discussed.

6.4 Form tutors will receive a complete set of data for their form groups.

6.5 This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

6.6 Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

6.7 Stephenson Academy will share attendance data with the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the local authority as required.

6.8 All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

7. Support Systems

7.1 School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

7.2 Stephenson Academy also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

7.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance action plans which are regularly reviewed
- Changing/reviewing transport arrangements
- Parenting contracts
- Attendance report cards

- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials
- Family learning
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages
- Assistance from the therapeutic team as directed by the Deputy Principal (therapeutic).

7.4 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. This may be facilitated by the Family Support Worker.

7.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further persistent unauthorised absence occurs, Stephenson Academy will consider the use of legal sanctions.

8. Legal Sanctions

8.1 Prosecution: Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

8.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

8.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

8.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

8.2 Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve

8.2.1 A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £50 fine is paid within 28 days or £100 if paid within 42 days of the date the Notice was issued.

8.2.2 Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

8.2.3 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Milton Keynes Council Penalty Notice Protocol.

Appendix 1

Escalation of Attendance Interventions

GREEN pupils with attendance between 100% to 90%

Parents will receive a letter home congratulating them on their child's good/excellent attendance.

Pupils will be rewarded within the school's merit system.

The form tutor will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes.

The DP (inclusion) will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

AMBER pupils with attendance between 89% and 80%

Form tutor will speak to the pupil to:

- Welcome the pupil back to school
- Confirm with the pupil the reason for absence and offer any support that may be required
- Update the pupil on other work they have missed and support any catch up required
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil using sessions rather than percentages that will see the pupil move to the band above
- Agree a review date

In addition, where unauthorised absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review with the pupil, the form tutor will discuss with home measures/support that can be put in place to improve attendance

The form tutor will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes.

The DP (inclusion) will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

RED pupils with attendance below 80%

Pupils who have attendance below 80% are considered to be persistently absent from school. To ensure that intervention is focused and meets the needs of individuals, pupils needs will be discussed between the form tutor, therapeutic staff and DP (inclusion) taking into account the following:

- Looked After Children and Children on the Child Protection Register
- Special Educational Needs
- School age parents/expectant parents
- Long term non attendance
- Parental support/needs eg parental drug use, young carers, domestic violence
- School issues eg bullying, poor teacher/pupil relationship, curriculum issues
- Offended or have an Anti Social Behaviour Order
- English as an Additional Language
- Ethnic minority
- Mid Year Admissions
- Gifted and Talented
- Other

Previous interventions will be evaluated and a plan developed using an attendance action plan. This will utilise the resources of the therapeutic and learning DPs if appropriate and will involve close co-ordination with parents. Other agencies working with the child will be contacted and if necessary a multi-agency approach will be established. Other actions include:

- Ensuring weekly contact with the parents to discuss any arising issues and to provide feedback on their child's attendance, behaviour and academic progress.
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil that will see the pupil move to the band above.
- Review existing plans and co-ordinate school resources to support the pupil's attendance and any additional needs
- Input into whole school strategies to address the needs of pupils within their group

It is the intention that these categories will change and become more rigorous as time progresses and new attendance targets are set across the school.