



**Inspiring Futures
Through Learning**

Attendance Core Values
(updated with Covid-19 response)

Monday 28th September 2020

Our IFtL Family

At IFtL, we are committed to developing a family of schools who inspire all of our futures through learning. Schools within our Trust share the same values and ethos; our teams are constantly in the pursuit of development and excellence everyday. We open doors to opportunity and unlock the potential of both our children and our adults so that we all develop the confidence to achieve both our independent and collective ambitions. At IFtL, we are never alone. We know we are stronger together – one united family striving for excellence for all, in everything we do.

IFTL is a trust established by educationalists, with education and improving outcomes for children at the heart of all we do.



Policy name:	IFtL Attendance Core Values (updated with Covid-19 response)
Version:	V2
Date relevant from:	September 2020
Date to be reviewed:	September 2021 <i>This policy will be reviewed every two years unless legislation dictates otherwise. Recent changes in Legislation will need to be read and used to review this Policy.</i>
Role of reviewer:	IFtL Head of Education
Statutory (Y/N):	Y
Published on website*:	1A

Policy level**:	2
Relevant to:	All employees through all IFtL schools and departments
Bodies consulted:	Employees Trade unions School / department governance bodies
Approved by:	IFtL Board of Trustees
Approval date:	20 th September 2020

Key:

* **Publication on website:**

IFtL website		School website	
1	Statutory publication	A	Statutory publication
2	Good practice	B	Good practice
3	Not required	C	Not required

** **Policy level:**

1. Trust wide:
 - This one policy is relevant to everyone and consistently applied across all schools and Trust departments with no variations.
 - o *Approved by the IFtL Board of Trustees.*
2. Trust core values:
 - This policy defines the values to be incorporated fully in all other policies on this subject across all schools and Trust departments. This policy should therefore form the basis of a localised school / department policy that in addition contains relevant information, procedures and / or processes contextualised to that school / department.
 - o *Approved by the IFtL Board of Trustees as a Trust Core Values policy.*
 - o *Approved by school / department governance bodies as a relevantly contextualised school / department policy.*
3. School / department policies
 - These are defined independently by schools / departments as appropriate
 - o *Approved by school / department governance bodies.*

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IFtL Attendance Core Values

Vision

At IFtL Trust Schools, we are relentlessly driven by our pursuit of excellence and high expectations of learning, behaviour and respect for every member of our community. We strive to promote and create responsible citizens who are punctual and who have consistently high rates of attendance.

Aspirations

We strive to promote and create responsible citizens who:

- Arrive to school on time and ready to start the day calmly and focussed prepared for learning.
- Excellent levels of attendance for all groups of pupils.

Core Values

We believe everyone within the IFtL community has the right:

1. To learn
2. To be respected
3. To be safe and supported

To achieve these things children need to be in school on time and regularly.

Success indicators

All schools within the trust will implement the following indicators:

- Average attendance for the school is above National Average.
- Persistent absence is below National Average.
- There is no difference between the attendance for any groups of pupils.
- All groups of pupils arrive punctually and ready for learning.
- Strategies and interventions in place to address any concerns with regards to attendance, absence and punctuality; these will promote attendance as a whole school approach and bespoke, personalised approaches for individual pupils and any vulnerable group(s) identified with concerns in relation to attendance and punctuality.

Promotion of Attendance and Punctuality

At IFtL and within all IFtL schools, we believe it is important to focus on the positive and promote excellent levels of attendance and punctuality using praise, recognition and rewards. The specific reward and recognition systems and the code of practice will be pertinent and bespoke to each of the schools whilst adopting the core values and principles of the IFtL.

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Principles

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence on the part of the parent that can result in legal action.

High levels of attendance are crucial for so many areas of development and gives your child the best opportunities to achieve and progress to their maximum potential. It promotes not only their learning and educational abilities but provides many life skills and long-term positive work ethics. Children who have good levels of attendance are more likely to be able to progress socially, have enhanced self-esteem and confidence, develop time management skills, have a good understanding of expectations for future life and develop a respect for the importance of punctuality and attendance.

Importantly, the more time they are in school the more time they have for learning. Even a child with 90% attendance equals $\frac{1}{2}$ day missed every week and over a school year that would equate to one month out of school, that means they are missing 100 lessons.

Every child is sometimes unhappy about attending school. Families may be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties, are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter; it may even make things worse.

Definitions

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Any information about the cause of each absence is always required, if possible in writing, evidence will be required to support some absences.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those that the staff at school do not consider reasonable, or for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence on the part of the parent and include:

- Keeping children off school without a good reason.
- Truancy from a whole session.
- Absences that have never been properly explained.
- Children arriving at school too late to get a mark.
- Taking holidays during term-time, this includes attending a family wedding.

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Parents and Carers' Responsibilities

We believe close and collaborative working relationships with parents / carers are very important and central to all children being as successful as they can be. Parents and carers are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together.

In line with government recommendations and requirements, all schools within the IFtL will not be able to authorise absences for holidays, shopping, looking after other children or adults, birthdays, day trips, tiredness, concerts and the like. Leave may, however, be granted in an emergency or exceptional circumstances, for example, for genuine pastoral reasons (e.g. after the death of close relative). Where absence is authorised, for exception circumstance only, evidence for the school records will be requested to support justification for granting authorisation for a pupil to be absent from school.

Parents / carers are required to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed in advance and given evidence for this appointment (for example, a medical letter). A 'present' mark can still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole session.

All schools within IFtL will have clear strategies for information sharing with all parents/ carers so they are fully informed about their child's attendance and punctuality including for excellent attendance in recognition of the success within these areas.

Objectives

To promote good attendance. This is vital to children's educational achievement, well-being and keeping them safe.

To convey clearly to parents and children that:

- Regular attendance is essential.
- Regular or frequent lateness at the start and end of each session is unacceptable.
- Unjustifiable absence will be investigated and may be recorded as unauthorised absence.

To keep records of attendance which:

- Clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Provide accurate information on actual attendance to enable monitoring and evaluation of ^[L]_[SEP] attendance rates.
- Show lateness so that patterns may be addressed.

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To build on existing good practice that fosters a positive attitude to good attendance by:

- Responding rapidly to children's absence.
- Recognising and celebrating children who maintain 'excellent', 'good' and 'improving' attendance.
- Sharing attendance figures with parents and carers.
- Targeting attendance where it has been an issue and putting in place strategies to support improvement.
- Targeting persistent lateness where it has been an issue and putting in place techniques to ensure improvement.
- Sharing information – each school will make its policy on attendance clear to parents and children through:
 - Sharing information and expectations prior to admission.
 - The use of standardised letters to parents addressing specific aspects of attendance or punctuality that require parental response.
 - Clear systems and procedures to address all pupil absence and lateness.

Factors affecting attendance:

The main factors affecting attendance of children are:

- Illness of the child.
- Illness of siblings or parents.
- Health Services Appointments.
- Religious observance.
- Holidays.

All staff within IFtL schools understand their safeguarding responsibilities to keep children and families protected from safeguarding and child protection issues, for example radicalisation and/or extremist behaviour (Prevent Duty) and Female Genital Mutilation, by being alert to patterns of absence. If there are safeguarding or child protection concerns about a child's non-attendance, this would result in contact with the MASH for further advice and support.

Targets and Expectations for all IFtL Schools.

- The target for attendance for each school and for all groups of pupils will be in line with or above National averages.
- Persistent absence for all groups of pupils is to be in line with or lower than National averages.
- Attendance will be regularly monitored and analysed for all groups of pupils and actions will be swiftly taken to address any concerns in relation to attendance for all pupils, including vulnerable groups such as disadvantaged and SEND.
- If a pupil falls below the school target, strategies will be implemented quickly to raise their attendance. There will be a staged approach to increasing concerns with lowering percentages of attendance and these will be stated within the school

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Attendance Policy.

- All children with attendance less than 90% (persistent absentees) will be placed upon the persistent absence register and parents/ carers formally informed and support interventions for the pupil and their family implemented. This adheres to government recommendations.
- Fixed Penalty Notices, in line with government recommendations, will be issued for parent/ carers who remove pupils from schools for unauthorised events and this includes holidays within term time for 10 or more unauthorised sessions. (Since September 2013, the Government have clearly stated that schools cannot authorize any family holiday and authorisation can only be given for 'exceptional circumstances' for example attending a funeral and the day to observe a religious festival).
- All schools will have clear procedures in place formally recorded, for example in the Attendance Policy, for pupils where there are concerns about a 'Child Missing in Education.'
- All pupils within all schools will be expected to arrive punctually to school. The expected times of arrival into each school and the process to address any 'lates' will be clearly stated within each of the school's Attendance Policy. Punctuality will be closely monitored and addressed as a whole school, group or individual level as appropriate.

Admission Registers, Attendance Registrations and In-Lesson Monitoring

All IFtL schools will ensure admission registers are completed for every child on entry into the school. Formal registration periods both in the morning and the afternoon will be completed and clear procedures to follow up pupil absence in place within each school stated within their school Attendance Policy. In-Lesson monitoring will occur within each school to ensure all pupils are accounted for at all times of the day whilst in school and under the care of the school.

All IFtL schools will ensure:

- Registers of attendance will be kept accurately, indicating clearly when a child is present or absent.
- Lateness will be recorded.

Systems to monitor attendance, absence and punctuality

All schools will ensure they have clear systems and procedures in place stated within their attendance policy to address any absence and this will include processes for a first day response for pupils with no prior explanation of their absence. The systems to promote, monitor and address attendance and punctuality will be clearly stated in each of the school's policy, in line with legislation and recommendations.



Monitoring and evaluation of attendance data

Children's attendance patterns will be regularly analysed, including all key vulnerable groups, within each school. Actions to address any gaps within groups of children will be implemented in a timely manner and any particular specific concerns for a pupil will be discussed with the parent or carer. The impact of strategies implemented will be regularly monitored to ensure they are improving the attendance or punctuality as planned. Attendance figures will be published and reported regularly to parents/ carers, staff, the Governing Body/Committee, or the owner and IFtL Trustees.

Government requirements:

The Government clearly state that all schools must adhere to their recommendations as explained within their 'School Attendance' November 2016 document. The key points are summarised below and all schools within IFtL must comply with these recommendations.

The government expects schools to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
 - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
 - act early to address patterns of absence.
 - Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
 - All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.
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- The law requires all schools to have an admission register (on first day of entry into the school) and an attendance register.
 - All schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.
 - All schools (including academies) must agree with the relevant local authority, the regular interval that the school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.
 - Home Educated Children - On receipt of written notification to home educate, schools must inform the pupil's local authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. Schools should not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding excluding the pupil or because the pupil has a poor attendance record.
 - Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session.
 - An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision.

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Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

- Codes are clearly stated to be used within the registers and these must be adhered to by all IFtL Schools.

Covid-19 Response and Additional Requirements/ Considerations (From Autumn 2020)

Government Guidance for full opening of schools' states that there is a government and a legal expectation for all pupils to return to school from the start of Autumn Term 2020.

(Guidance for full opening: schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>)

They state within this guidance:

'Returning to school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of learning and children's future ability to learn, and therefore we need to ensure all pupils can return to school sooner rather than later.

The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. We know that school is a vital point of contact for public health and safeguarding services that are critical to the wellbeing of children and families.'

To this end, the government state that from the start of Autumn Term 2020 attendance is a **mandatory** requirement (compulsory) for all children to attend school (with the only exceptions being noted below).

This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.

Exceptions for attendance:

Some pupils will be unable to attend school in line with the following guidelines:

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- unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19). Parents/ carers will be required to provide evidence of this.

- if rates of the disease rise in local areas (local spikes) and it is advised children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below). The schools will ensure they communicate this message to all parent/ carers and stated the period of time this applies for.

- Children who are clinically extremely vulnerable either due to the risk of severe infection, or the risk arising from complications of infection. There are two groups:

1. Group A lists conditions that mean a child is clinically extremely vulnerable. A child with a condition in Group A should be advised to shield, in line with government public health advice.
2. Group B lists conditions that require discussion between the clinician and the child and their family/carer to establish whether they are clinically extremely vulnerable on a case by case basis. A child in Group B should have a discussion with their clinical team to establish whether on balance of risks they should be advised to shield, in line with government public health advice. Not all children and young people with conditions listed in Group B will need to do this. If following a discussion, they are advised not to shield, the child should maintain stringent social distancing.

For those small minority of pupils who are within group A or advise to shield in group B they should not return to school and must follow medical advice. Parents/ carers must supply the school with written medical evidence that they have been advised their child must shield.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, our schools will immediately provide them access to remote education and the school will monitor engagement with this activity and maintain a supportive level of communication with the family and child.

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

(You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#))

Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school

At IFtL, we understand that some pupils and families may be anxious about returning to school. However, as stated previously attendance is mandatory.

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All our schools value the relationships with their families and children and therefore will work in close collaboration to support families and children to return to school. We are committed to provide the right support and information to reduce anxiety and to address the concerns. Whatever the reasons for concerns, all our schools will work closely in partnership with families and the children to fully explore their concerns and provide reassurance for the measures that have been put in place to reduce the risk in school. For some pupils, for example where the pupil is clinically vulnerable or lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes, we understand there may be additional concerns and therefore schools will discuss these concerns on an individual basis where appropriate and inform what steps are in place to reduce the risks. For some pupils, individual risk assessments may be put in place and agreed and shared with the families.

Although we will do everything we can to work closely with our families and children to support and reassure them, we will be clear with them that if their child is of compulsory school age they must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc.).

IFtL school expectations

At IFtL and our schools, we will work closely with all our families to secure regular school attendance from the start of term as this will be essential to help pupils catch up on missed education, make progress and promote their wellbeing and wider development.

All our schools will:

- communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families (and any other professionals who work with the family where appropriate) throughout the summer ahead of the new school year
- identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic
- use the additional catch-up funding schools will receive, as well as existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and resources and schools' pupil premium funding to put measures in place for those families who will need additional support to secure pupils' regular attendance
- work closely with other professionals as appropriate to support the return to school, including continuing to notify the child's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance

At IFtL, we will adhere to the following:

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- Advice will be given to parents/ carers re absence notification and reminders of attendance expectations, processes and procedures.
- Maintain usual processes for following up absence including first day responses and make reasonable enquiries if you believe a child is CME rather than a non-attender. Schools will continue to refer cases of concern to CME Team.

Promotion of attendance and maintain good attendance and punctuality.

We will be expecting all children to return to school and will actively encouraging and support parent/ carers to send their children to school for those who choose not to unless for the reasons stated above.

At IFtL, all our schools believe in the importance of close and collaborative working relationships with external agencies and families and the children. To this end, all our schools are committed to working together with other agencies, for example social workers and the LA, to support attendance and the families/ child as needed. All our schools will work with families and their child (ren) at an individual level carefully considering the needs and circumstances in a bespoke way to agree the best way to support. Support will also be provided to those families where attendance has been an issue previously.

In circumstances where a parent/ carer does not want to bring their child to school, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker (where appropriate) and the school will explore the reasons for this, directly with the parent/ carers. Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting the virus, the school and social worker will talk through these concerns with the parent/ carers following the advice set out by Public Health England. Schools will continue to inform social workers where children with a social worker do not attend.

Where applicable, designated safeguarding leads and/or equivalent staff will keep under regular review their lists of children who are not attending school. The schools, social workers, local authorities and other professionals will work together to ensure adequate and appropriate arrangements are in place to keep in touch with these children (whether they are attending provision, or not attending for an agreed or non-agreed reason), such as by letter, phone or visit and will work together to support parent/ carers to return their child/ children to school. As per safeguarding procedures, if the child or children are considered to be at risk a referral will be made.

Attendance Registers

All schools will take registers formally at least twice (start of the school day and after lunch) and within lesson monitoring will continue as per normal school processes and procedures. In line with government recommendations, schools will be held to account for attendance levels from Autumn 2020. All our schools are required to continue to work with the Local Authorities to monitor the welfare of children who are not attending school and will continue to monitor all children both in-school and if they are not in school for safeguarding purposes.

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Summary

Each school within the IFtL has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents/cares have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. All school staff must be committed to working closely with parents/ carers as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Each school will have their own Attendance Policy in place that:

- adheres to the IFtL expectations
- clearly state all the procedures required for attendance, absence and punctuality,
- the strategies to promote attendance and punctuality
- the steps that will be taken to address any concerns in relation to punctuality, attendance rates less than the school target, absenteeism and unauthorised absence.

Safeguarding Statement

Safeguarding is everybody's business. IFtL MAT is committed to ensuring that all our children and young people are safe and feel safe. The right to be safe for any member of the IFtL community is a non-negotiable and paramount. Safeguarding and child protection is crucial and we are fully committed to ensuring the welfare and safety of all our children and staff. IFtL and all the schools within the Trust must fully adhere to all safeguarding and child protection legislation, policy and procedures at all times and under any circumstances. Any concerns at a Trust level will be referred to IFtL safeguarding Leads, Kim Kemp or Sarah Bennett; within ITTP and/ or TS, Michelle Gardner, and to the relevant designated safeguarding officers within each school for concerns pertinent to children within the school. IFtL fully adheres to all Safeguarding and child protection legislation and MK together partnership requirements, including the Milton Keynes Whistleblowing Policy and procedures.

