



**Inspiring Futures  
Through Learning**

## Attendance Core Values

September 2021 to September 2022

### **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.

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<b>Policy name:</b>	IFtL Attendance Core Values (updated with Covid-19 response)
<b>Version:</b>	V3
<b>Date relevant from:</b>	September 2021
<b>Date to be reviewed:</b>	September 2022 <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>
<b>Role of reviewer:</b>	IFtL Head of Quality Assurance & Safeguarding
<b>Statutory (Y/N):</b>	Y
<b>Published on website*:</b>	1A

<b>Policy level**:</b>	2
<b>Relevant to:</b>	All employees through all IFtL schools and departments
<b>Bodies consulted:</b>	Employees Trade unions School / department governance bodies
<b>Approved by:</b>	IFtL Board of Trustees
<b>Approval date:</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2021

### 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.

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- Taking holidays during term-time, this includes attending a family wedding or travelling overseas to visit family.

## **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 <sup>[[ ]]</sup>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.

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### 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.
- 
- 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.

## Recording attendance in relation to Covid-19 during the 2021 to 2022

IFtL and all schools will continue to adhere to the DFE requirements '[school attendance: guidance for schools](#)'. The DFE have also published a new [addendum](#) on recording attendance in relation Covid-19 in 2021/22; this enables schools, in the 2021 to 2022 academic year, to continue to record where a pupil does not attend in circumstances relating to COVID-19.

This [attendance guidance](#) with the updated addition of a Changes include bringing guidance in line with Step 4 procedures in relation to track and trace, contacts and PCR tests. For example, *"Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to self-isolate. They should instead get a PCR test, and should only self-isolate if they test positive. If they do test positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school."*

Being in 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.'

It is important to note that attendance is mandatory. The usual rules on attendance continue to apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct
- the duty on local authorities to put in place arrangements for identifying, and to follow up with, children missing education (schools must notify as per requirements)

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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 be in 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 support all children attending school.

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.).

At IFtL, we will adhere to the following:

- 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.

The following, as detailed within the [addendum](#) on recording attendance in relation Covid-19 in 2021/22, will be followed by all IFtL schools:

### **‘Not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19**

This category must be used to record sessions that take place in the 2021 to 2022 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19 from Public Health England (PHE), or its successor UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19

This category must only be used to record where a pupil is not attending for the reasons set out above. It should not be used to record any other type of non-attendance or absence - for example, where a parent or pupil is anxious about attending school because of COVID-19.

The [schools COVID-19 operational guidance](#) sets out when pupils should self-isolate and when they ought to be tested in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.



## **Examples in which ‘not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19’ could apply**

In line with current legislation, and guidance from PHE (and its successor the UKHSA) and DHSC, examples are as follows.

- Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms or confirmed COVID-19
- Pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test, should self-isolate and get a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.
- If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I (illness). Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.
- If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance. Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

## **Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19**

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to self-isolate. They should instead get a PCR test and should only self-isolate if they test positive. If they do test positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

## **Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine**

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, the school should use code X in the register.

## **Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable when shielding is advised**

Clinically extremely vulnerable people are no longer advised to shield. All clinically extremely vulnerable pupils should attend their education setting unless they are one of the very small number of children and young people under paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their clinician or other specialist not to attend.

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If shielding is advised nationally or in a local area again, by DHSC, PHE or UKHSA, then pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable may be advised not to attend school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from DHSC, PHE or UKHSA should be recorded as code X. Written evidence must be provided by the parents/ carers of this requirement.

### **Pupils who are self-isolating but who have not had a PCR test**

In line with public health advice, pupils with symptoms must self-isolate and our schools will strongly encourage pupils to take a PCR test. Where the pupil is unable to take a PCR test, the school will record the pupil as code X in the register.

Schools will follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools are likely to request supporting evidence from the family as required. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they will record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes, in line with the [school attendance: guidance for schools](#).

### **Remote education**

If a pupil is not attending school because their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around COVID-19, all our schools will offer them access to remote education. IFtL Schools will keep a record of, and monitor engagement with, this activity, and unless feeling unwell, we expect our parents/ carers to support completion of the remote education provided. Any difficulties should be shared with schools who will support accordingly.

### **Promotion of attendance and maintain good attendance and punctuality.**

We expect 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.

### **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.

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In line with government recommendations, schools will be held to account for attendance levels.

## **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, Sue Martin or Sarah Bennett; within TMA ITTP, 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 and Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership requirements, including the Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire Whistleblowing Policy and procedures.

