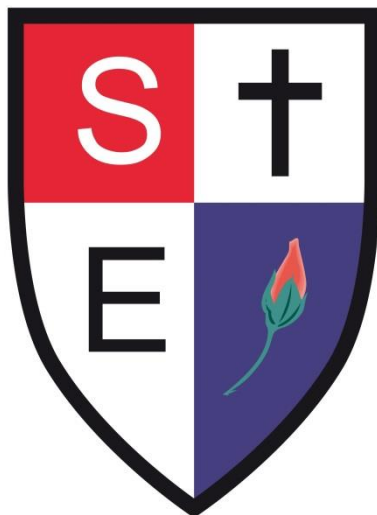



Slough and Eton Church of England Business and Enterprise College



*A Member of Slough and East Berkshire C of E
Multi Academy Trust*

Attendance Procedures Policy

Owner:	Mr Martin Culkeen
Ratified by Governing Body:	
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1. INTRODUCTION

Why do we need a policy?

Jesus said, "I have come in order that you might have life, life in all its fullness" so Slough and Eton Church of England Business and Enterprise College recognises its responsibilities to ensure students are in school and on time and therefore have access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours in order that they may live life in all its fullness. Safeguarding is constantly at the forefront of our minds and our attendance policy is stringent and thorough to ensure children's safety is always our priority. Parents must know when their child has not arrived at school and we must be sure children are being cared for when not in school.

Who does it apply to?

Our policy applies to all children and young people registered at this school and is therefore shared with parents/carers and students on admission to the school. In law, compulsory age applies to all children from the start of the term commencing on or after the child's 5th birthday, until the last Friday in June during the academic year that the young person becomes 16.

How was it developed?

It has been underpinned by the principles established in the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidelines from both the DfE and the Local Authority.

What does it do?

Although parents have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's attendance, the governors and staff work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that this happens.

Why is it important?

Every day of education and indeed every lesson matters. In a curriculum where there is built in progression, children who are persistently late or absent soon get behind with work and consequently do not understand all elements of lessons when they return. Children who miss school frequently will undoubtedly have gaps in their learning which will impede their progress and future ability to engage in lessons. This in turn will influence their ability to concentrate and often behave. Frequent absence has a profound and cumulative effect on achievement.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This policy ensures that all staff in our school are fully aware and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

What should we do to maintain good attendance and punctuality amongst our children?

- Raise awareness of attendance and punctuality issues amongst all staff, parents and students.
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and on time.
- Equip children with the skills needed to take responsibility for school attendance and punctuality appropriate to their age and development.

- Maintain clear, effective communication channels on school attendance matters.
- Develop and implement procedures for identifying, reporting and following up cases of poor attendance and lateness.
- Support students who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school, which are preventing good attendance.
- Develop and implement procedures to follow up on non-attendance in school.
- Establish a safe environment to promote good attendance which demonstrates that every student has and where children/young people can:
 - Be Healthy
 - Stay Safe
 - Enjoy and Achieve
 - Make a Positive Contribution
 - Achieve Economic Well Being

3. PROCEDURES

Our school will undertake to follow the procedures set out in this policy below:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations of the school to all staff, parents and students.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give details of any absences and lateness.
- To follow up all absences and lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the Attendance Officer on the first day of their child's absence.
- To discuss with parents what constitutes an authorised and unauthorised absence (only the school can authorise absences, not parents).
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken in term time.
- To work closely with parents/carers to improve attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Attendance Service (Slough Borough Council – the Local Authority (LA)) any child whose family fails to respond to school initiatives to improve their child's attendance.
- To report attendance statistics to the DfE and LA as required.
- All staff should be aware that they must report any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Attendance Officer.
- Advice can be sought from the LA when necessary.
- If a student on the Child Protection Register is absent without explanation the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team/safeguarding lead as necessary and social worker is notified.
- If a student is in public care (CLA) the carer, social worker, education co-ordinator and Designated Teacher for Looked After Children will be involved appropriately.

Registration

The Slough and Eton school day starts with registration at 8.30am and finishes at 3pm for Years 7 to 11 and at different times depending on timetables for Sixth Form students. The first bell will sound at 8.25am. Any student entering the school after 8.30am will be registered as late. Registers will close at 9.00am, afternoon registration is taken in the lunchtime Tutor Period.

Lateness

Any student who arrives in school after 8.30am is marked late. Individual cases of lateness will be dealt with by the Form Tutor and the Head of Year through the behaviour policy. Persistent lateness will be dealt with by the Attendance Officer in conjunction with the Head of Year and may result in a formal punctuality meeting with the Attendance Officer/Head of Year and a representative from Slough Borough Council. Ongoing lateness may be dealt with by prosecution.

Absences

Parents/Carers are expected to contact the school by 9.30am every day of their child's absence. If not available at the time, they are then expected to provide a note or email explaining the reason for absence on the student's return. The school does not have to accept the parent's/carer's reason for the student being absent. In this instance the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The school can insist on medical evidence being provided to authorise an absence. Any cost that this may incur will be borne by the parent/carer.

The Attendance Officer will contact (by 'phone, text or email) parents of students on the first day of absence once registers are completed. Any student who has been absent for more than two days without contact may be visited at home. Persistent absence will be followed up by the Attendance Officer. If the issue persists then the matter may be referred to the Attendance Service.

If a child is likely to be absent for a period of time, the parent/carer should contact the Attendance Officer to discuss the situation. Contact should be maintained until the child returns to school.

Holiday Requests/Visiting Relatives Requests

Leave of absence forms are available from Student Reception. These need to be completed and returned to the school well before the anticipated leave of absence date. Long term absences are only authorised in the most exceptional of circumstances. If the leave of absence is not authorised and is still taken, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and the LA may be informed. In this instance a fine may also be issued to the parents/carers. If a child is away from school for more than 20 days, they may be taken off roll and have to reapply for a school place on their return. Parents/carers will be notified in writing by the Headteacher of the decision as to whether or not the holiday is to be authorised.

General Information

If a parent/carer requires information regarding attendance or absence, this can be requested in the first instance from the Attendance Officer.

Attendance Issues

If a student's attendance drops below 90%, or a pattern of absence emerges over a period of weeks, this is brought to the attention of the Attendance Officer. This instigates an investigation as to why the attendance is falling. If the decrease is for unexplained or unacceptable reasons, or is enough to cause concern, parents will be contacted. If attendance still continues to deteriorate, parents and the student may be asked to attend a meeting with the Attendance Officer and Slough Borough Council Officer to initiate an Attendance Action Plan. This gives the parent/carer and the student an opportunity to discuss the reasons for absence and/or lateness and put together a plan to improve the situation. If the situation is not resolved then the student will be referred to the Local Authority Team

who may consider possible prosecution proceedings and also attendance at an Attendance Panel Meeting.

Personalised Learning Room (PLR)

Any student who is attending the PLR whether on a regular or intermittent basis will be registered in the PLR at normal registration times. Lateness and attendance issues will be dealt with as above.

Absence during the School Day

Any student that needs to leave the school with the normal school day must sign out with the Attendance Officer.

If a student has a medical/dental appointment a written note or email from their parent/carer of the appointment must be provided. The parent must collect their child from the school reception as no child will be allowed to leave the school site unaccompanied.

If a student becomes unwell during the school day, they should go to the Medical Room for assessment. If it is deemed necessary for the student to go home, the school office will contact the parent/carer. A student will not be allowed to go home during the day unless authorised both by the school and the parent/carer. The student will then be signed out by the Attendance Officer as an authorised absence and will need to be collected by a parent/carer.

If a student leaves the school premises without authorisation and/or without signing out with the Attendance Officer, their absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Action will be taken by the school regarding such truancy.

Sixth Form

Sixth Form students are expected to attend school punctually as dictated by their lessons. The school should be informed about illness and absence as outlined above. Should the attendance of a student in the Sixth Form become a significant cause for concern the school will follow the Key Stage 5 Team protocol. If a sixth form student does not attend for 20 consecutive school days without a valid reason, they will be removed from the school roll. In implementing this policy, staff will have regard to the school's safeguarding policy and procedures, the school's Child Protection policy and the school's e-Safety policy and the over-riding principles at all times will be the safety, security, enjoyment and the achievement of the students.

Record Preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

Recording Attendance

Registration Marks

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day and again for the afternoon. Teachers should mark students as present only if they have physically seen them.

AM Registration - If a student arrives between 8.30 and 9.00am the attendance will be registered as L (before register closes). If a student registers after 9.00am he/she will be registered as U (late after

register closes), in line with county and DfE guidance. This mark shows him/her to be on site, but legally recorded as an absence.

PM Registration - If a student arrives late to their lunchtime tutor period the attendance will be registered as L for that session (before register closes).

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The starts of school/lessons are used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late he/she can miss work, time with the class teacher getting vital information and cause disruption to the lesson for others. This can also be embarrassing to the student and lead to possible further absence.

If a student is late due to a medical appointment, he/she will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Parents are advised that, where possible, doctors' and dentists' appointments are to be made outside school hours or during school holidays.

Students who are consistently late before 9.00am (L) are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other students. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action the school will request a meeting to tackle persistent lateness and we will change L to U following a meeting raising punctuality concerns.

Persistent Lateness

Parents/carers of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend the school to discuss the problem and offered support. If support is ineffective, not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period identified through the use of the "U" code, Slough Borough Council will be required to issue parents/carers with a Penalty Notice. This is in accordance with Slough's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices for non-attendance.

Third Day of Absence

If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with parents/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a Child Missing in Education (CME) procedure as set down by Slough Borough Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents/carers and the child including making enquires to known friends, and wider family. The Attendance Officer/Community Liaison Worker/ Learning Mentor or Deputy Headteacher will try to establish contact. If contact is unsuccessful the school will follow Slough Borough Council Guidance ((CME) referral form).

Tenth Day of Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child has not been seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the LA is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing' his/her education. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure their contact details are up to date.

4. TYPES OF ABSENCE

Understanding types of absence

Students are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

1. **Authorised Absence:** occurs when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
2. **Unauthorised Absence:** occurs when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings.
 - Truancy before or during the school day.
 - Absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is/is not presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence that he/she has been on holiday.

Attendance codes for information;

G = Unauthorised holiday

U = Late (after registers close at 9.00am)

O = Unauthorised absence

L = Late (before registers close)

N = no reason yet provided for absence. (maximum of 5 days)

Request for Leave of Absence

If parents wish to take their child(ren) out of school they can complete an absence request form. Each request form is completed on an individual basis by the Headteacher. Parents will receive a written reply in return. We are unlikely to authorise absence in normal circumstances.

To ensure consistency across Slough schools we advise parents to inform us of any siblings for whom they are also requesting holiday so that we can discuss our decision with their other schools. It is important parents request absence well in advance so we have time to prepare our decision. If an absence triggers a Penalty Notice this action will be taken

The school is obliged to investigate any absence and will follow up on any intelligence gained that may contradict the information shared by parents. At this stage we would amend registration codes

Further Guidance

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and reinforced from September 2022 in the document Working Together to Improve School Attendance (see link on the next page). Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional

circumstances. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether the absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to write to the Headteacher in advance and before making any travel arrangements. If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised. If the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Slough's Code of Conduct then parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code. Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

For National Guidance refer to: Working Together to Improve School Attendance Issued September 2020 located at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

5. PENALTY NOTICES

The use of a Penalty Notice is an intervention to improve attendance. This is carried out in all cases below unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

Slough Schools and Slough Borough Council will: use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Slough's Attendance Legal Panel where:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve attendance
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

Slough Borough Council may issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the student has been:

- Absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days of unauthorised absence) during any 12-week period – these do not need to be consecutive.
- Persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed.
- Persistently late before the close of the register (coded U), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that it will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code U), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met.

Before Issuing Penalty Notices

Schools should take all reasonable steps to ensure good attendance without the use of Penalty Notices. When a child has become a concern, the school will issue a penalty warning and if there is no improvement the school will start the Penalty Notice process. Penalty warnings will be given in writing. Slough and Eton will do its utmost to contact parents/carers before starting the Penalty Notice process.

The Process of Penalty Notices

At Slough and Eton the authorised person who can action a Penalty Notice is;

- The Headteacher

Other appropriate adults will be involved in attendance matters and will pass necessary information to the authorised person who will then pass this on to the attendance legal panel. In cases where an authorised person has concerns about a student's attendance, he/she must ensure that contact has been made with the parents/carers in order to try to resolve any difficulties. If the issuing of a Penalty Notice is under consideration the authorised person should, in most cases, arrange for a Penalty Notice warning letter, signed by the Headteacher in the case of schools, to be sent to the parent/carer. This is completed on the Slough Borough Council Penalty Notice (and warning) proforma. The letter should include:

- Details of the student's absence (including attendance certificate)
- An offer to meet with the parent/carer to discuss the concerns and to provide advice and support in an attempt to resolve any difficulties.
- A statement of the legal responsibilities of the parent/carer regarding attendance.
- The consequences for the parent/carer in failing to ensure his/her child's regular attendance; in particular, warning that further unauthorised absences could result in a Penalty Notice or prosecution.

- An expectation that, after receipt of the warning letter, the level of attendance will significantly improve and that this improvement will be maintained.

Process to a Penalty Notice

1. Parent/carer contacted regarding attendance concerns.
2. School issues penalty warning to encourage improvement.
3. If there is no improvement, school issues Penalty Notice paperwork.
4. Slough Borough Council is informed and a Penalty Notice is issued.

Further Guidance

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Slough Borough Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Slough Borough Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Who as affected by Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance?

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child, of compulsory school age, at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

All parents/carers involved in the child's attendance are subject to the legal measures unless they do not have the capacity to change the attendance pattern. Parents/carers must inform the school immediately and access a range of support offered they feel unable to secure effective change in their child's attendance. The authorised person should consider every aspect of a student's circumstances before deciding whether to issue a Penalty Notice.

Parent/carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website.

The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned the absence (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence Slough Borough Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parents/carers for each child. N.B. This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one PN for each child to each parent/carer.

If parents/carers do not condone their child's absence they must notify the school immediately. Any adult who lives within the family home is deemed to have 'parental responsibility' and is responsible for the child and his/her absence.

In all cases involving a child in care the authorised person must also send a copy of the warning letter to the child's social worker, as well as to the Director of Children's Services for the LA which has responsibility for the child if he/she is not exempt.

6. SUPPORT WITH ATTENDANCE

Leavers

If a student is transferring to another school, parents/carers are asked to: Give the Attendance Officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and their new address and telephone numbers, their child's new education provider and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

If a student transfers and we do not have the above information, then he/she is considered to be a CME. This requires schools and LA's to carry out investigations to try to locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the police and other agencies. Through giving us the above information parents/carers can avoid these investigations.

Study Leave

We believe that students' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. No study leave will be granted during this period, therefore, and students will be expected to attend school in the usual way. A bespoke timetable will be provided for the Year 11 students to ensure they get the most from this revision period for their GCSE examinations. Study leave will only be granted to Year 11 students during the time of the GCSE examination period. Should any students wish to attend school (or should their parents/carers wish them to) on the days and at times when they are not sitting examinations, arrangements will be made for them to do so. The school will work within the following legal requirements:

- Study leave should only be granted to Year 11 students and never to those in other year groups.
- It should never exceed 15 school days in a year and is most appropriately granted during the examination period itself, i.e., not before the beginning of that period.
- It should always be granted sparingly, taking account of an individual student's/ability to manage and benefit from unsupervised study.
- Any student has the right to attend school during study leave and a parent/carer has the right to insist he/she does so.
- Any sessions given to students as study leave are classified as authorised absence (coded S as it is not an 'approved educational activity') and should be recorded and reported on by the school as such.

Teenage Pregnancy

Support will be directed by the key worker to keeping a pregnant student in school and wherever possible to securing her return to full time education as soon as possible after the birth. A student who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised and consequently could result in a penalty notice.

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

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

- [a] to his/her age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] to any special needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes, the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day-to-day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Guidance documents on Attendance

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording:

- Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities).
- Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations).

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website.

Request to authorise absence from school due to exceptional circumstances

Schools are only able to authorise absence from school in exceptional circumstances. In making a request for an authorised absence from school you will need to explain why the circumstances are exceptional.

Please note: There is no general right to authorise absence for a family holiday. If you take your child out of school without permission the absence will be unauthorised and we will consider legal action.

Persistent Absence (PA) thresholds

- The PA thresholds for academic year remain the same as previous years.
- A child is deemed a “persistent absentee” if they reach 38 sessions of absence by the end of half term 6 – this equates to a 90% or below attendance rate of the child’s possible attendances.

- In order for schools to keep track of potential PA's the following thresholds for each half term can be used to monitor and track potential PA's – if a child reaches the thresholds shown below at the end of each half term, and their absence levels continued, then it is likely they will reach PA level at the end of the academic year;

HT1	Any child who reaches 7 sessions of absence (Auth or UA)
HT2	Any child who reaches 14 sessions of absence (Auth or UA)
HT3	Any child who reaches 20 sessions of absence (Auth or UA)
HT4	Any child who reaches 25 sessions of absence (Auth or UA)
HT5	Any child who reaches 32 sessions of absence (Auth or UA)
HT6	Any child who reaches 38 sessions of absence (Auth or UA)