



# Fairfield Primary School

## Attendance policy

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By:	Miss Nixon
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Approved by Governing Body:	

## **STATEMENT OF INTENT**

At Fairfield Primary School we believe that the positive benefit of regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is vital to a good education. Securing it must therefore be a high priority of the school, governors, parents and pupils themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils lessen the impact of the education provided for them. Pupil absence may seriously disrupt the continuity of teaching and learning for themselves and others. It may also seriously disrupt a child's ability to make and maintain positive friendships with their peers. There are many reasons why children miss days of education and we support children and families to enable them to overcome barriers to attending school.

The aim of the school is to facilitate our pupils' regular and sustained attendance by providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils, enabling them to reach their academic potential and feel safe and happy in school.

Parents have a vital role to play and there is a strong emphasis on maintaining home-school links and good communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

## **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE – THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK**

All pupils of statutory school age who are registered at a school must attend regularly, in line with the relevant legislation (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013).

Any absence from school can have a detrimental effect on a child's future progress and continuity of learning. Regular absence for such reasons as holidays taken in term time can have a significant impact on achievement.

## **REGISTRATION**

There is a legal requirement upon schools to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. The Education Regulations 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised. This is shown on our computer records.

Staff, pupils and parents should see the taking of the register as an integral part of the day, as was indeed intended in law. Particular attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers.

Monitoring and encouraging attendance is an integral part of Fairfield Primary School's Head Teacher's role. The Head Teacher has the primary responsibility for monitoring the attendance of pupils in the classes and for contacting home with concerns about attendance and punctuality, also ensuring notes explaining absences are collected and maintain an accurate register of attendance. At Fairfield Primary School the Head Teacher has overall responsibility; however, this is delegated to our Attendance Officer / PSA (Miss Nixon), our office staff (Mrs Robinson and Mrs Simcox), Local Authority Senior caseworker (Dorothy Nelson), and class teachers. All of whom have their part to play in being responsible for ensuring attendance is a key priority in their day to day work.

In accordance with current legislation, each class in the School has an electronic attendance register. It is School's policy that registers be completed by 9:00 and 13:10 when they will be saved and closed so that the office staff and Attendance Officer can access them.

It is our policy to record a late mark (L) for children who arrive at school after class registration has taken place.

### **ABSENCE**

It is the parent's responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence. We would like to receive notification as soon as the child is absent from school. We ask that the parent telephones the school office before 9.00 am each morning their child is absent to discuss the reason for the absence. Although it is good practice to receive information when the child returns to school, in the form of a note and any medical evidence such as prescription, or medication, or appointment card, we do not insist on this as we acknowledge that this is not always practical or necessary (e.g. in the case of an absence due to sickness and/or diarrhoea it is highly unlikely that a child will have visited their GP). However, if we have a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of an illness/injury then we may request medical evidence.

It is a fact that parentally-condoned unjustified absence (e.g. term time holidays) is a serious problem in some schools. This can be every bit as damaging as the more traditional forms of truancy.

We understand there can be many reasons why a parent finds it difficult to get a child into school and want to work with them, and with outside agencies, such as Early Help, to support, with the consent of the parent/carer. In these instances, we would want to work with the families concerned as soon as they became aware that their child's future attendance might begin to be problematic (e.g. if parents identify a growing anxiety about school attendance, we would encourage parents to talk to us about this as early as possible, so that we can put supportive measures in place to avoid the problem becoming worse).

Only the Head Teacher of the School, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or where no explanation is forthcoming at all, the absence must be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally-condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil, school will involve the School's Attendance Officer at the earliest opportunity.

An excessive amount of authorised absence can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection. We must be alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence. We may authorise absence retrospectively where we are satisfied as to the explanation offered. Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided will be treated as unauthorised and attendance procedures will be followed.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1992 provides that no offence is committed where a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness. If school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence will be treated as authorised.

Where we have a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of an illness or injury, further information may be requested by the School's Attendance Officer, from the child's parents. If the school continues to be dissatisfied then the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

### **REPORTING ABSENCE**

Once we receive a reason for an absence, we may authorise that absence by inserting the correct symbol on the computer records.

Reporting reasons for absence by telephone, verbally to a member of the Office Team/Attendance officer or a note are all acceptable. We expect parents will contact the school and report the reason for absence on the first day of the absence and subsequent days thereafter before 9am. Fairfield Primary School operates a first day calling system. If we have not received a reason for absence by 9:00am on the first day of absence a member of the Office Team will contact the parent/carer to try and ascertain the reason for absence. If no contact by phone is made, the school office will also send an email to the parent/carer to request they contact school. If the absence continues to the second day then all contact information will be used to attempt to discuss the absence with the parent/carer. If, however the absence continues these will be followed up by the School's Attendance Officer. If we are unable to contact a family for 48 hours, we will seek to make a home visit and may also make a request to the Police to make a welfare visit if we have concerns about a child's safety and well-being.

Where concerns continue and/or a pupil has had 10 consecutive days or more of unauthorised absence from school and no contact is made, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service under Children Missing Education Education/attendance procedures. Where it is suspected that a pupil may be at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), sexual exploitation, radicalisation, or is a runaway or young carer, safeguarding procedures will be followed.

Local Authority attendance procedures will be followed in relation to school transfers, exclusions and pupils' who are dual registered and attending alternative educational provision.

The Attendance Team will keep all notes and notes of telephone messages and any verbal explanations. These will all be dated.

Where a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment, the School need take no action beyond the staff in school recording the fact on the InVentry system for the purpose of emergency evacuation. The pupil although registered is not physically present. Similarly, the School must note the presence of a pupil (again for emergency evacuation) who was not there when the register was being taken but returns later from an appointment.

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME INCLUDING FAMILY HOLIDAY**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 state that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The legislation makes it clear that parents do not have an automatic right to take their child out of school for holidays in term time.

Parents are strongly urged to avoid making requests for leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time due to the disruption and impact of the missed education on the child.

For your information, leave of absence in term time for a family holiday is not considered exceptional circumstances.

Any leave of absence request that is declined by the Head Teacher may result in the school Attendance Officer issuing a warning letter and subsequent unauthorised absence may result in a referral to the Local Authority for the issue of a Penalty Notice.

Decisions made in relation to leave of absence, whether granted or not, will be applied equitably and consistently.

If parents wish to take their child out of school in term time, then they should complete a Leave of Absence form and must state in full their reasons for the absence, why they feel it is essential that it takes place during term time and if appropriate accompanied by evidence. An example of evidence in the case of a family holiday being a signed letter from an employer on letter headed paper, which states the reason why the applicant is unable to take a Leave of Absence for a family holiday during school holiday. The evidence will be taken into consideration when a decision is made. However, applicants must be aware that the submission of evidence does not automatically guarantee that the absence will be authorised or that penalty notice procedures will not be followed.

The leave of Absence application form can be obtained from the main office. It should be completed and returned to the office at least four school weeks prior to the first day of the leave been taken, it must also be signed by both parents, if they both have parental responsibility and marked for the attention of the Head Teacher for individual consideration. The Head Teacher will inform the parent of their decision.

At Fairfield Primary School, exceptional circumstances have been determined as:

- Any exceptional circumstance arising, at the Head Teacher's discretion.

Parents have been made aware that the Local Authority will decide to issue penalty notice fines to parents. If the reasons given for a child's absence from school are not satisfactory, then the Local Authority may take legal proceedings for failure to comply with the law. This may result in:

- For a first offence within a rolling three-year period a Penalty Notice requiring the payment of up to £160, failure to pay the penalty due will result in prosecution before Cleveland Magistrates Court. No more than 2 penalty notices will be issued to the same

parent for the same child in a rolling three-year period, should a third offence occur this will result in direct prosecution in the magistrate court.

- Prosecution under Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted a parent may be fined up to £1,000.
- Prosecution under Section 444 (1a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted a parent may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Late submissions of leave of absence forms and/or leave of absence taken without school's prior knowledge and permission may also be subject to penalty notice procedures.

Pupils who have 20 consecutive school days of unauthorised absence may be at risk of losing their school place.

### **CATEGORISING ABSENCE**

Our policy in general with the categories of absence and cannot cover every eventuality. It will be necessary on occasion to exercise reasonable discretion when investigating some absences.

Some Key Points:

- Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school.
- Whilst it is right that schools should recognise that individual pupils and families have problems the aim should always be to expect regular attendance.
- Lateness should be actively discouraged.
- Where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming (for whatever reason) it must be treated as unauthorised and the register recorded accordingly.
- Schools are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered.
- Explanations such as minding the house, birthdays, looking after other children, or shopping trips within school hours will not normally be acceptable reasons for absence.
- Even when an absence is authorised, schools should be alerted to emerging patterns of absence which may seriously disrupt continuity of learning.
- In promoting regular attendance, schools should work closely with appropriate education department staff.

### **PUNCTUALITY**

School doors open at 8:40 for children to come into class, then school starts promptly at 8:45am. It is Fairfield Primary School's policy to actively discourage late arrival. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather), we may keep registers open for a reasonable period.

For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line must be taken on late arrivals. To do otherwise undermines the whole purpose of registration and may serve to encourage other pupils to arrive late. Particular attention will be paid to emerging patterns of late arrival.

Where a pupil does arrive late and misses registration, his or her presence on site will still need to be noted. Anyone arriving late must report to the office and children must be signed in on our InVentry system. This links to our registers and reasons provided by parents for lateness will be recorded (along with the numbers of minutes late).

In responding to lateness, we will of course need to take account of the individual circumstances of each case. In some instances, enquires may reveal that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances.

Late letters are sent out periodically to alert parents of the number of times their child has been late and to highlight the impact this has.

The School's Attendance Officer may need to seek an early meeting with parents of pupils who persistently fail to arrive on time without valid reason whilst keeping the Head Teacher informed. If the parents do not have any valid reason for the child's persistent lateness the School's Attendance Officer will consult with the Local Authority.

### **ROLE OF THE ATTENDANCE OFFICER**

The role of our designated Attendance Officer is to:

- Liaise, where appropriate, between home and school.
- After discussion with parents/carers, help school to identify possible barriers to attendance (so that the school can identify ways of supporting the child/family)
- Investigate irregular attendance or lateness which may rise to concerns that a child may be at risk.
- Complete a regular register check.
- Provide advice and support to parents through the initiation of attendance procedures.
- Work with children who are experiencing problems with attendance and/or punctuality, especially those who are preparing to transfer to secondary school.
- Assist school in setting attendance targets.
- Follow Local Authority attendance procedures through to prosecution and possible court action.

### **ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

This section describes the role of school in relation to improving attendance. Pupil's attendance is monitored by the School's Attendance Officer.

As part of the monitoring process the attendance officer has implemented a traffic light system. Parents receive an email either once a term, or once a half term highlighting their child's attendance.

Example Letters;

Red – Danger Zone - **Below 90%**

We will be monitoring your child's attendance for the next 4 school weeks. In order for your child to improve their attendance we need to work together.

Please work with us to:

- Making sure your child goes to school and arrives on time, at 8.40 am
- Avoiding taking holidays in term time.
- Arranging non-urgent medical and dental appointments for after school.
- Ensuring children return to school as soon as possible following an illness

If attendance doesn't improve you will be invited in to school to meet with school staff to discuss any concerns and any support you may need. If your child is experiencing difficulties which affect school attendance please do not hesitate to contact the office, your child's class teacher, or the Parent Support Advisor. Thank you for your support in this matter and I hope we can work together to get your child in the green, safety zone.

**Amber – At Risk Zone – 90% - 95.9%**

In order for your child to improve their attendance we need to work together.

Please work with us to:

- Making sure your child goes to school and arrives on time, at 8.40 am
- Avoiding taking holidays in term time.
- Arranging non-urgent medical and dental appointments for after school.
- Ensuring children return to school as soon as possible following an illness

If, however, your child is experiencing difficulties which affect school attendance please do not hesitate to contact the office, your child's class teacher, or the Parent Support Advisor. Thank you for your support in this matter and I hope we can work together to get your child in the green, safety zone.

**Green – Safety Zone – 96% - 100%**

We are delighted to inform you your child's attendance is in the Green Zone. This is an excellent achievement in which you and your child should be proud of. Thank you for your continued support in ensuring your child has excellent attendance.



## **ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for monitoring attendance of the pupils in the class group and for collecting notes explaining absence, maintaining an accurate register and informing the Head Teacher/Deputy Head Teacher and/or the attendance officer with concerns about attendance and punctuality.

Fairfield Primary School follows the Local Authorities pupil attendance and absence Management policy this follows a three-tier system.

### TIER 1 – School Level Intervention

This could include;

- Contact home to discuss attendance either by letter or phone. If contacted by phone or in person areas of concern should be discussed with the parent and appropriate advice and support offered. For example, if the parent reports absence to be due to a recurring medical condition such as asthma the school could offer assistance by putting the parent in touch with the School Health Service and suggesting a referral be made.
- Regular home visits, regular (and more than 1) meetings to discuss concerns and identify support measures with a formalised attendance improvement plan with SMART targets that include parent and pupil views. Reasonable adjustments academic and pastoral to support the pupil should be included in the plan, along with support relating to any SEND need,
- Escalation to the school senior leader responsible for attendance (SLT).
- Agreed attendance plans

### TIER 2 – Support from other agencies

- School will seek advice and guidance from the School Support team, support from Family Support teams for children who have an active early help assessment and a family worker.
- School can request for outreach support for SEND needs e.g. SEMH One Point Panel, specialist support from other agencies e.g. mental health, 0-19 nursing service,
- School can ask for EHCP interim reviews where necessary
- Support from Social Care teams for children who are CIN / CP / CYPIOC,
- Safeguarding agency referrals e.g. CHUB, if children are in need of intervention due to neglect, abuse, radicalisation, or any form of exploitation.

### TIER 3 - Referral to the Locality Team

When school have completed Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions and unauthorised absences continue there will be a referral to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service which may result in a Penalty Notice or legal action under the Act. The Local Authority will decide to issue penalty notice fines to parents.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ANY MONIES COLLECTED FROM PENALTY NOTICE FINES ISSUED IN RELATION TO POOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REAMIN WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY.

The attendance Officer will prioritise the list of pupils to be referred to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service. These circumstances include:

- When the school, despite several attempts by phone and also by letter is unable to contact the parent.
- If attendance continues to cause concern and the absence is unauthorised.
- When the school has offered all support available but attendance fails to improve.
- When the school has reason not to accept the parents' justification for absence on a regular basis.

### **REWARDING GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY**

As well as taking appropriate action against parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their children, we will take steps to celebrate good attendance and punctuality. Attendance is discussed with the whole school through the Celebration Assembly every Friday and on the display board in the main school entrance corridor. Classes whose attendance is affected by a child's/children's persistent absence due to medical needs etc. are still celebrated for their attendance. Children who have specific needs can still have their attendance celebrated and school will acknowledge positive steps that children make towards achieving attendance that is good for their unique situations.

Attendance and punctuality are actively promoted to parents and children at our school by:

- Celebration of attendance in school assemblies
- Positive messages home to reflect improved attendance
- Green traffic light letters
- Class celebrations for weekly attendance
- 100% attendance pupils individually celebrated

Date: November 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. P. ...', written over a light blue vertical line.

Agreed by governors:

Date for review: