



Attendance Policy

Firfield Primary School

Member of staff responsible	James Yellop
Governor responsible for this policy	Graham Robertson
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School Attendance

Firfield Primary School is committed to raising attainment and attendance. Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is the need for pupils to attend school regularly to receive the full benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs they may have. Firfield Primary School takes its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils seriously. We acknowledge that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the schools commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

At Firfield we are committed to:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence (including persistence absence) and raising the awareness of the importance of good attendance
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising the awareness of the importance of differentiated and relevant curriculums
- Promoting opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently
- Creating a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- Meeting the legal requirements set out by Government
- Following and developing procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- Consistently recording authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the 1995 education act
- Developing a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance
- Encouraging open communication channels between home and school
- Ensuring procedures for the reintegration of long-term absentees are effective

At Firfield we expect parents and carers to:

- Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school to attend regularly.
- Ensure their child is READY for school. This includes being punctual to school, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness.
- Keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum and only under "Exceptional / Medical circumstances".
- Try their best to arrange medical appointments out of school hours.
- Offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence

- Work closely with the school, including attending Early Help Assessment or Team Around the Family meetings to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance.
- Take family holidays during school holiday periods, be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be refused except in exceptional circumstances
- Support their child and recognise their successes and achievements.
- Parents/Carers have a legal duty to make sure that their child aged 5-16, if registered at a school, attends regularly. If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at the school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parents/carers may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority's Education Welfare Services. Education Welfare Services conduct all investigations in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984.
- If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, education welfare services and the social services where such a child's attendance is irregular.
- The local authority has the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a School Attendance Order (section 442 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

At Firfield we expect all pupils to:

- **RESPECT** themselves and others and realise that everyone is important
- Do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually and be **READY** to learn
- Be **SAFE** at all times - To inform a trusted adult if they feel unsafe or feel they are being bullied in any way
- Encourage friendship, tolerance and a sense of belonging
- To be happy and encourage others to feel happy

Strategies used at Firfield to promote good attendance and punctuality

- Staff will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
- Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports and each term on the interim reports to parents
- Positive verbal reinforcement is given to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time and an education action plan developed to help them catch up with any missed curriculum and promote future attendance.
- Attendance is discussed at parent/pupil consultations where necessary
- Weekly class certificates for the highest attendance during assembly
- Termly non uniform days for the highest attendance as a class

As a governing body the school has chosen

School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance

Recording

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school at 9:10am. Any late pupils should then enter the school through the main entrance. If any pupil arrives late the details are recorded on a late slip that records the name, class, time and reason for lateness. These are used to update a lateness spreadsheet. All staff need to be aware that any child arriving late **MUST** register at the office for purposes of fire regulations.

The register officially closes at 09.30am and any pupil arriving after this will be marked with a 'U' code which indicates that the child arrived after the registers have closed. The afternoon sessions begins at 1.00pm / 1:15 (KS2) 12:45pm (KS1) 1:30pm (EYFS) and the register is again taken at these times. Where children have a medical appointment and leave school during the day this must be recorded on the appropriate form by parents/carers situated in the school office. Any child who leaves the school for appointments before 2.00pm will be classed as absent for the afternoon session.

First day response is carried out daily for absent "vulnerable or poor attenders" only. It is the parents/carers legal responsibility to let the school know if their child is absent. A text request prompting the parents to inform the school of any absence. A phone call is made to parents on the first day of a child's absence if there has been no contact by the parents. The Assistant Headteacher will review the attendance of all pupils in the school every term.

Where there is concern that a child has or will fall below the threshold of 90% attendance, The Assistant Headteacher in the first instance will write a nudge letter to the parents/carers to make them aware of their child's attendance compared to other pupils in the school and nationally. If there is not an improvement in attendance, if appropriate, named SLT member will be identified to engage with the child and parent / carer. When a case is open it is good practice to ensure that any contact made with the child / family is recorded in a central log (MyConcern). Evidencing letters.

Monitoring of Attendance Concerns

Attendance reviewed termly and analysed by AF (Assistant Headteacher)
Letter 1 (Nudge) Where attendance falls below 90% a letter A may be issued, dependant on reasons for absence. Sent termly Medical conditions or illness will be considered. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure parent / carer is made aware of their legal responsibilities and the possible consequences of non-school attendance and that this is evidenced. This could be in a meeting or by letter. See suggested parental responsibility letter (Nudge)
Record on MyConcern
Letter 2 (Meeting request) Parent invited into school to discuss concerns about attendance. If attendance does not increase. If attendance continues to be unsatisfactory and unauthorised the following work should be undertaken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review the child's attendance in accordance with the timescales for improvement given to the parent / carer (2 to 6 weeks)
Early Help Assessment, if required completed by DSL
Further advice sought from external agencies

Monitoring

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

At Firfield we would hope to avoid issuing penalty notices, and this would be a last resort situation and the decision would have to be considered by the Headteacher and Governing Body. Whilst the Governing Body of Firfield Primary School have not entered into issuing penalty notices, this is reviewed dependent on attendance and absence rates.

It was agreed during the following Governor meetings to continue not to issue penalty notices.

- Full Governing Body 14th September 2015
- Resource Management Committee 26th June 2017
- Full Governing Body on 19th July 2017
- Full Governing Body on 2nd December 2019
- Resource Management Committee 5th October 2020

If a penalty notice does have to be issued and is not paid the local authority must consider initiating legal proceedings against the parent/carer, for the original offence of unauthorised absence from school. Section 444, Education Act 1996.

In making the decision the local authority should consider the Attorney General's Guidelines for Crown Prosecutors. The local authority will take into account the number of unauthorised sessions and any mitigating factors where it would not be in the public interest to proceed with legal action.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 Amendments have been made to the 2007 Regulations in The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

Attendance targets

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and Governors at the annual target-setting meeting. The attendance targets are then agreed with the LA link inspector as well. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

Attendance codes

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. (See updated DfE 2020 guidelines) These codes are input into the electronic register as required and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences.

Leave of absence (Term -time Holiday)

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amended) Regulations 2013. These amendments as described below came into force on 1 September 2013.

Term-time Holiday

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 used to allow Head teachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers could also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in Exceptional Circumstances. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are Exceptional Circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted under exceptional circumstances.

These changes do not mean that an application for leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday cannot be granted by the Headteacher. The Headteacher has the discretion to grant leave if he/she believes that there are Exceptional Circumstances. The dictionary definition of exceptional is "unusual" or "rare". At Firfield we believe the best practice would be to avoid implementing blanket bans which imply that the Headteacher would never authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. Such a policy could be challenged by a parent/carer, by way of judicial review. The statutory instrument gives Headteachers discretion to grant leave which should not be "fettered" by a blanket policy. At Firfield best practice should be to look at each case on its individual merits; although it will be "exceptional" to authorise leave of absence, there may be circumstances where it would be right and reasonable to do so.

Whilst there is no DfE guidance on what would constitute an exceptional circumstance, below are examples that have been given to the Derbyshire County Council where leave has been granted.

(These examples are illustrative and not meant to be exhaustive)

- ***Attending the wedding of a family member, family bereavement, prison visits. Significant family illness.***

Circumstances that **may not** be considered exceptional are:

- ***Availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements.***
- ***Days overlapping with the beginning or end of term.***
- ***Birthday of pupil or family member.***

If leave of absence is granted for the purpose of a family holiday registration code H should be used.

If leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday is not granted and then taken, registration code G should be used which could result in a penalty notice being issued if requested by the Headteacher.

Other leave of absence that is granted should be recorded as C in the attendance register. Leave not granted, but taken, should be recorded O.

At Firfield, the protocol for Parents/Carers requesting leave of absence for exceptional circumstances must make an appointment to see the Headteacher at least two weeks before the anticipated start date to discuss their situation. They must then make their request in writing. The Headteacher responds in writing to each parent/carer by name with his/her decision as soon as is practicable. Leave of absence cannot be approved retrospectively.

COVID 19 UPDATE September 2020

School attendance measures September 2020 update

What is the expectation regarding school attendance from September 2020?

The Government has made it clear that all children and young people are to attend school from September 2020 onwards. Shielding ended on 1st August 2020, and only the most clinically vulnerable have received medical advice on shielding. All children and young people were expected back in their school at the start of term.

Shielding advice was updated on 4/9/20 and is linked here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

The Department for Education has confirmed that school attendance is compulsory again from the beginning of September 2020 when schools re-open after the summer break.

This means from 1st September 2020, the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- It is a parent's duty to send their child to school regularly if they are of compulsory school age;
- It is schools' responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence
- The local authority is able to resume the use of legal sanctions, including penalty notices and processes that may lead to prosecution in court for persistent absence.

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

In light of this guidance and in accordance with DCC policy and procedures ensure that request for legal action in relation to pupil absence are accompanied by evidence that work has been undertaken with the family to remove any barriers to a pupil returning to school. Where there have been previous attendance concerns it is important that COVID-19 related concerns are addressed, where relevant, prior to renewing requests for legal action.

The Local Authority offer a range of traded Education Welfare services which can be accessed via services for schools: <http://www.services.derbyshire.gov.uk/>

Leave in term time (holidays)

There have been no changes to the term time holiday regulations. As a result of COVID-19 there may be an increased number of parents who request leave as a result of not being able to take previously planned holidays and as before each request should be considered on its own merit. Schools should continue to unauthorise leave requests unless there are exceptional circumstances, including COVID-19 related matters.

Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

For the school year 2020 to 2021, a new category has been added to record instances when a pupil is 'not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)'. See this addendum for further information, including advice on the application of code X.

Code X: not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

(This code is not counted as an absence in the school census)

This code is used to record sessions where the pupil's travel to or presence at school would conflict with:

- guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from

Public Health England or the Department of Health and Social Care or any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Children and parents will not be penalised due to medical conditions or Covid19, or due to personal circumstances related to COVID-19.