



Attendance Policy

Firfield Primary School

Member of staff responsible	Adam Thurgood
Governor responsible for this policy	
Date of policy approval	17/11/2022

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

School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance

Recording

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school at **9:05am**. 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 (KS2) and at 1:20 (EYFS and KS1) 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 Deputy 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 Deputy 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)
<p>Letter 1 (Nudge) Where attendance falls below 90% a letter may be issued, dependant on reasons for absence, along with a copy of 'School attendance - the law' DCC leaflet. These letters will be sent termly. Medical conditions or illness will be considered.</p> <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
<p>Letter 2 (Meeting request) Parent invited into school to discuss concerns about attendance if attendance does not increase.</p> <p>If attendance continues to be unsatisfactory and unauthorised, the following work should be undertaken:</p> <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
A Penalty Notice fine may be sent to the parent of a child who has unauthorised absences from school

Issuing a penalty notice warning letter

Consider the length of the monitoring period you wish to state in the penalty notice warning letter. The minimum is 15 school days, the maximum is 30 days. It is recommended that 15 school days should only be used in limited circumstances, for example, a child in Year 6 from term 3 onwards.

- Issue an individual penalty notice warning letter to each parent / carer liable for the child's attendance together with an attendance printout and penalty notice advice leaflet included with this (appendix 4)
- Ensure the parent / carer is named and the letter dated and addressed to their current address.
- Record whether the letter is posted by first class or hand delivered.
- Monitor the child's attendance over the stipulated number of days (allowing 2 days for postal delivery not including Sunday)

Legal consideration

The review of attendance over the stated monitoring period must be calculated on the basis of unauthorised absence only.

When attendance is at or below 90%, a request for a penalty notice fine can be made unless information is received to show that legal action is not in the best interests of the child / family. If this is the case, a penalty notice should not be requested and the family should be offered and / or signposted to other agencies.

Requesting the issue of a Penalty Notice Fine:

Requests should be made using Penalty Notice form (see appendix). Where a request is made all represented documents should be submitted with the form, via Perspective Lite. The school can issue a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996.

Children missing from education are referred to the local Authority following two school weeks of absence with no explanation and inability by school to make contact via phone, letter or home visit. (The school follows the DCC Missing in Education Policy and Procedures. This system also applies to those children who the school were advised by DCC would be arriving to take a place and did not arrive. In the cases of vulnerable children (children with a child protection plan, TAF, CAF) the contact with Social Care (or Family Resources Worker whichever is applicable) would be made immediately.

Attendance codes

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. (See updated DfE 2022 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.

Parents who remove their child from the school for the purpose of a family holiday without seeking prior approval will result in unauthorised absence being incurred on their child's record. If the Headteacher has compelling evidence that absences were for the purpose of a family holiday, registration code G should be used. 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 each year dependent on attendance and absence rates. 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.

The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent/carer who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents had to pay £60 per child, if they paid within 28 days; or £120 if they paid within 42 days.

Amendments to 2007 regulations have reduced the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Each Parent/Carer must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows the local authority to act faster on prosecutions.

Reviewed November 2022

To be reviewed November 2024