

## Attendance Policy

### Statement of Intent:

Firfield Primary School is committed to raising attainment and attendance. We believe that good attendance is crucial in ensuring that children make the best possible progress, both academically and socially. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage which can seriously affect a child's chances in primary school, secondary school and life. A child whose attendance drops to 90% will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

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 and unlikely to meet age related expectations. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them.

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.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, teachers, the Deputy Head Teacher, Head Teacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

### Introduction:

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. Parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's

regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

The school will follow this policy to ensure that children are given the best possible chance of success, both academically and socially, at Firfield Primary School and beyond.

### **Aims and Objectives**

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

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the status quo and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate unavoidable reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

*Only the Headteacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if absence is supported by parent, an absence will be unauthorised.*

### **Unauthorised absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even if the absence is supported by the parent.

## **Procedures**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To seek the issuing of penalty notices where necessary to promote good school attendance.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Deputy Head Teacher who has the responsibility for monitoring attendance.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

## **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Taking the morning and afternoon register daily and ensuring it is accurate.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for non-attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Designated Safeguarding Leads on MyConcerns where there are concerns relating to attendance and punctuality.
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary
- Providing support - where appropriate - for the child and/or family to support good attendance.

## **Deputy Head Teacher**

The Deputy Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance and the overall strategic approach to attendance in school
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance
- Identifying trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Emphasise with the whole school community the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Provide support to children and/or families to promote good attendance and to remove barriers that may exist which could cause attendance concerns
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the EWO service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO Liaising with other professionals to

determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

### **Administration staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Promoting good attendance and punctuality
- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring that RM Integris is completed when children are late and absent.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Deputy Head Teacher.

### **SENDCo and Behaviour lead**

The school SENDCo, Lauren Trigg, and Behaviour lead & Assistant Headteacher, Rachel Tittershill, are responsible for:

- Promoting good attendance and punctuality
- Working with families on the SEND register or vulnerable pupils to support the promotion of good attendance and to remove barriers that may exist which may cause attendance concerns

### **Headteacher**

The Headteacher, James Yellop, has overall responsibility for attendance and is responsible for:

- Promoting good attendance and punctuality
- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures

- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school to attend regularly.
- Ensure their child is 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 and/or Education Welfare 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.

## **Registration**

The school day starts at 8:55am when the whistle is blown on the playground and each class line up, and enter the classroom. This gives plenty of time for all pupils to come into their classroom and be ready to learn when lessons start.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for marking the attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register on RM Integris must be completed by the class teacher by 9:05 am. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved in line with the relevant retention schedule

## **Lateness**

Children who are persistently late after close of register soon fall behind with their learning.

Any pupil who comes into school after 9:05am will be marked as late. Once the gates are closed at 9:05 am, the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9:05am will be marked as late after register closes unless children have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment, therefore requiring a medical letter or appointment card. The register officially closes at 09.30am and any pupil arriving after this time will be recorded on the register as unauthorised absence (Attendance code U) which indicates that the child arrived after the registers have closed. This is an unauthorised absence for the whole session and will affect your child's overall attendance percentage and can be used to calculate absence thresholds for legal decision making.

The afternoon sessions begins at 1.00pm (KS2) and 1.20pm (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. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).



Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9:30am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, the Deputy Headteacher will make contact with parents/carers either through a phone call, face-to-face discussion or they will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

### **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence through the school's phone line to report an absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence, it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence. All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on RM Integris. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Deputy Head Teacher and Head Teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised. Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence, then we contact the parent/carer for an explanation. If no contact can be made or if the reason for absence is not satisfactory, the school will mark the absence as unauthorised absence.

### **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any contact from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers each morning to identify those pupils who are absent without explanation and, as a safeguarding requirement, make contact with the parents of these children by telephone.

## **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work. If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

## **Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time**

In September 2013 the government introduced new regulations making it clear that Headteachers **must not** give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

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.***

Any requests for term time leave should be made on a 'Holiday request form' available from the school office and handed in at least 2 weeks school weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. (Attendance code G).

## **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns.

When the Deputy Headteacher identifies concerns regarding pupil attendance, contact will be made with the parent either through a letter or a phone call to establish contact. This will be to identify the potential barriers to good attendance, to better understand the family situation and to offer support to improve attendance. Where the pupil has identified SEND needs, the Deputy Headteacher may seek the involvement of the SENDCo and/or the Assistant Headteacher to provide further support and to help remove potential barriers.

Support may be offered - depending on the circumstances - by holding face-to-face meetings to improve attendance by removing barriers and to provide further support in school. Letters and further phone calls may be used to promote good attendance and to see what further support can be provided if appropriate.

If a child's attendance does not improve and absences are unauthorised, this may lead to consideration of parental responsibility measures which include the issue of penalty notice fines or other statutory action.

### **National framework for penalty notices**

The new national threshold for consideration of legal action is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence, including lates after close of register (Attendance code U) and unauthorised leave in term time (Attendance code G).

If your child's absence falls into this category the school will decide if further offers of support is likely to improve the situation or if a request for legal action should be submitted to the Local Authority.

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