

FAIRFIELD ENDOWED CE (C) JUNIOR SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

Our school aims to keep attendance at 96% or above.

The Department for Education expects schools and local authorities to promote good attendance and reduce absences, including persistent absence. This is because we know that missing out on lessons leaves children/young people vulnerable to falling behind. Children/young people with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary schools.

As a school we work incredibly hard to support all children/young people and their families to ensure that all children/young people have good attendance.

Statutory Duties

The Government made amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into force on 1st September 2013. This policy adheres to these amendments.

Our school takes account of

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which requires that “The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive fulltime education suitable : to his age, ability and aptitude; and to any special educational needs he may have: by either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”
- The Education (Student’s attendance records) Regulations 1991
- The Education (Student registration) Regulations 1995 (amended 1997)
- Social Inclusion: Student Support, DFES Circular 10/99, which explains the law and good practice on reducing the risk of disaffection, school attendance and registration, and the proper use of exclusion.

Aims

- To encourage, support and promote good attendance
- To challenge absence
- To operate a whole school policy on collecting and monitoring attendance information
- To follow up non-attendance to ensure children’s safety.

Objectives

We aim to achieve the above by

- Setting realistic targets for attendance each year
- Working in partnership with staff, children, parents and EWO to achieve good attendance

- Fostering good attendance and prompt arrival from Year 3 onwards
- Recognising and rewarding good attendance
- Providing clear expectations and guidelines for parents
- Collecting, monitoring and acting on attendance information

Responsibilities

Teachers are responsible for keeping registers (using Integris) in line with school policy and alerting the Headteacher to any pattern or concerns that may have regarding attendance. The school clerk is responsible for inputting data, following up absence and alerting the head to any issues. Office staff text all parents by 9.15am.

The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring data, conducting attendance meetings and making referrals through The Early Help Offer. **The Family Liaison Worker works with families to improve attendance and punctuality. The Family Liaison Worker will make early morning calls to vulnerable families after 9.15am but before 10am.**

Working Partnerships

Our Education Welfare Team is based locally. They follow up referrals, supports families and children, and advises school on further actions. Concerns about children's absence may also be referred on to Social Care.

School supports parents/carers and children by

- a. Providing a comprehensive induction programme for new entrants and parents to help children come to school willingly with a positive attitude
- b. Encouraging parents to discuss any attendance related problems with the class teacher/ head teacher
- c. Aiming to ensure that the school is bright, clean, warm and welcoming
- d. Ensuring school is accessible to all
- e. Teachers/classroom assistants available from 08.50am in classroom/cloakroom areas to greet/help settle the children
- f. Informing parents of any changes in the school routine by newsletter e.g. school trips
- g. Rewarding good and improved attendance

In the rare cases of exclusion, we work in partnership with behaviour support, the EWO and social care to support successful reintegration into school.

Procedures

Registration

- Registration takes place at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions, i.e. 9.00am and 1.30pm

- The close of registration is 9.15am. After this time, a child arriving late will receive an unauthorised absence mark. A child arriving between 9.05am and 9.15 will receive a LATE mark.
- Staff mark the register using the Integris system. Children are marked present or absent
- All absence must be coded according to procedure.
- Returns are immediately accessible by the office staff.
- Absences are to be reported by telephone by 8.50am, the office staff are available from 8.30am to take phone calls. Verbal messages can be left but text messages are not accepted for safeguarding reasons.
- If the absence has not been reported this will automatically be recorded as an unauthorised.

Absence

The Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence for holidays during the term time unless there are exceptional circumstances; in these cases it is the Headteacher who determines the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Requests for leave of absence will not be approved for reasons that are not considered to be special or exceptional such as:

- Availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements

There may be a possibility for allowances to be made when a holiday is taken during a school holiday but a day or 2 is required at either side of the holiday. The larger part of the holiday must be during the school holiday and an 'exceptional circumstances' form must still be completed.

Parents needing leave of absence for **exceptional circumstances** should complete a form at least one month before the anticipated start date. The reason for the request should be given in detail. Applications should be made before the leave is arranged as absences will not be granted retrospectively.

Government policy states that parents who take their children on holiday without permission will incur unauthorised absences for their child. These remain on the child's record and will be monitored for further action by the Education Welfare Service. Parents could be issued with a fixed penalty notice and/or court action.

All absence must be marked as authorised or unauthorised.

- **Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments** – If the school is satisfied that a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness then the absence will be treated as authorised. Parents are asked to ring school on the first day of absence. Leave for medical or dental appointments may be given (i.e. the absence may be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parents

(either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or on production of an appointments card.

- **Lateness** – The school policy is to encourage punctuality but to actively discourage lateness as it can seriously disrupt learning. If a child is late and misses registration, a late mark will be recorded. Obviously the school will be sympathetic if this is for a good reason. If however a pattern of lateness starts to emerge, parents will be invited to discuss the matter with the class teacher/Headteacher in order to reach a satisfactory solution. **Late is after 9.05am**. Children who arrive after 9.15am do not get their mark for the session unless there is a valid medical reason and their absence will be logged as unauthorised.
- **Exceptional Circumstances/ Special Occasions** – It is for schools to determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not: much will depend on the circumstances of the particular case. Generally the rule is that only truly exceptional occasions should be sanctioned through authorised absence after discussion with the Headteacher.
- **Family Bereavements** – The death of a family member can be particularly traumatic event in any young person's life. We will authorise absence to attend funerals or associated events.

Follow-up

- After registration, the school clerk will send a text to the contact details held in school file for each child that is absent without explanation. Children on the Vulnerability Register will be followed up before 9.15 with a phone call. Social Services will be informed should we have difficulty contacting parents and we are concerned for that child.
- All letters from parents relating to absence are kept in the registers
- Staff will ask for explanations of all absence and details of illnesses are logged.
- If no explanation is given to an absence after a term has ended, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- Absence is monitored regularly, and the Headteacher talks with parents of children whose attendance is causing concern. Monitoring may result in a meeting being arranged with yourselves and the Headteacher. Failure to attend such meetings may result in referrals being made to social care through our Early Help Offer.
- Further action is taken if absence continues.

Monitoring

If a child's absence falls below 90% a concern will be raised by the Headteacher who will then investigate reasons behind the absences. The Headteacher will invite the parents to discuss absence concerns. Targets for improvement will be set. The child's attendance will continue to be closely monitored.

If attendance does not improve after meeting the Headteacher, then the EWO will be notified, reminding them of their legal obligations. If attendance improves above 90%, the family will receive a letter of recognition, thanking them for their efforts.

If a child's attendance falls between 90% and 95%, a monitoring letter will be issued to the family. A target for improvement will be set. Letters to recognise efforts to improve attendance will be sent to families. If there are no improvements the family will be invited into school to meet with the Headteacher.

Strategies to reduce absence

- Daily phone calls/texts by 9.15am in some cases made by office staff or Family Liaison Worker
- Home visits by Family Liaison Worker
- Clear guidelines on acceptable/unacceptable absence
- Frank discussion re how absence harms children's progress
- Graduated letters
- Leaflets
- Referral to social care through the Early Help Offer
- Working with school nurse/doctor
- Working with behaviour support teacher
- Promoting healthy living in school
- Partnership with Sure Start/Home Start
- Multi agency meetings

All of these alongside positive reinforcement and charts/rewards for attendance with the child in the classroom

Strategies to promote attendance and punctuality

- Positive reinforcement from staff
- To ensure school is enjoyable and welcoming
- Attendance Award given weekly for the class with the highest attendance (presented in weekly assembly)
- Certificates for 95% + and 100% are given out each term at special assembly
- Rewards after each term/monitoring period from EWO/Headteacher for improved attendance
- End of year 100% achievement award
- Regular newsletter items about attendance/punctuality and "Attendance Matters" document sent to parents
- Letters home in recognition of improvement

Monitoring for vulnerable groups

Where pupils have been identified as vulnerable, for example on the Child Protection Register, the school office will contact parents/carers immediately after the close of register if the child is not in school on time. If we are concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child the appropriate agencies will be contacted such as Social Care. Attendance targets may be set as part of a family's individual support plan. Also see Safeguarding Policy.

Reporting

- The school clerk provides regular summary reports to the Headteacher
- The Headteacher reports in attendance each term to the governing body
- All attendance records are retained in line with county guidelines

ATTENDANCE AGREEMENT

We expect the following from parents:-

- To ensure their child/children attend school regularly and on time
- To ensure they contact school as soon as reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend school
- To ensure their child/children arrive well prepared for the school day
- To contact the school office whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school

Parents and pupils should expect the following:-

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend without providing a good reason
- Immediate action on any problem notified to us
- Referral or specific issues to supporting agencies where appropriate

Prepared by: Mrs J Mercer
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- Definition of vulnerable

Those children exposed to the possibility of being harmed, either physically or emotionally. Those children who are experiencing severe hardship as a child [financially or otherwise] and whose home circumstances lead the school to implement additional measures to support that child.