

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy has been compiled in accordance with the Local Authority guidelines and DFE regulations regarding pupil attendance.

Aims and Objectives of the Policy:

- To ensure there is a robust system of attendance recording and monitoring in place in school;
- To ensure we are an inclusive environment and all children have the opportunity to access mainstream education;
- To ensure safeguarding protocols are upheld and that there is a formal system of tracking children with poor attendance;
- To uphold the Statutory regulations as deemed fit by the Local Authority and DFE.
- To implement and support initiatives that promotes good attendance.

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Registration of Pupils:

The Statutory Requirements

Parents, schools and the LA's share legal responsibilities in respect of school attendance. Parents of children of compulsory school age must ensure that they receive an efficient and suitable full-time education (Section 7 Education Act 1996).

All schools (other than independent schools for boarders only) must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, a pupil should be marked present or absent. (Pupils Registration Regulations 1995).

Local Authority's must ensure that parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations as to their children's education including, where necessary, by action through the Courts. (Sections 437-448 Education Act 1996).

Schools are required to collect and publish data on their rates of unauthorised absence for the preceding year. (Education [Pupils Attendance Records] Regulations 1991).

Schools must maintain an admission register/school roll.

(Education [Pupil Registration] Regulations 1995). This should be updated annually. A child that is on the Admission register should also be on the Attendance register.

Children's names may be deleted as follows:-

1. When the child 'has been registered' at another school. Children should not be removed from the register on a 'promise' by parents, only when the school is informed by another school that they have actually admitted the child (or after four weeks if they have moved away but no subsequent school has been in contact - see below).
2. When parents have given written notification to the school that they are educating the child 'otherwise' than at school. The school must then inform the LA's Attendance Team who will advise on exactly when the child's name should be deleted.
3. When the child has stopped attending and no longer 'ordinarily resides' at a place which is a reasonable distance from the current school. This does not give the school power to remove the name of a child who has stopped attending but who is still living at the same address. It only covers children who have physically moved their home address, if there is no contact from any other school.
4. After four week's continuous absence and 'both the proprietor of the school and the local authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil'. The school cannot act without consultation with the Local Authority first to make a joint decision.
5. At the end of the exclusion process regarding permanent exclusion.

Fulwell Infant School Academy Academy use the SIMS system for recording numbers present every day, incorporating the electronic registration system.

Class Teachers are responsible for marking the register as soon as possible after 8.50am when school session commences, and again at 1.15pm after the lunch break. If the school Office receives a call from a parent notifying the school of an absence, the pupil's record will be marked accordingly.

- **All pupils present or absent are to be electronically logged.** This should be recorded if the child is not in school by **9.10am** or **1.20pm**:-

Registers are closed at this time unless exceptional circumstances, such as bad weather, result in an extension of this period (at the discretion of the Head Teacher and not to exceed 30 minutes).

If a child is late, (i.e. after registration) they will already have been marked absent. The school office will subsequently change the register to show lateness.

Absence Recording & Monitoring:

Children may arrive late to school for several reasons, be it after an early medical appointment, if they have genuinely been late through 'sleeping in' etc or for our Looked After Children it may be they have been collected late or stuck in traffic in their school transport on the way in.

Medical appointments are classed as approved absence and will be coded as such within the attendance database.

Late children, with no approved reason for their lateness other than the fact that they are genuinely late, will be recorded as late.

If children are persistently late:-

- i) a record of the time of arrival will be kept by the school - through the parent signing their child into school
- ii) a phonecall will be made to parents/carers and a letter will be sent
- iii) If the problem persists there will be direct intervention by the Head Teacher or her representative, where parents will be asked to attend a school meeting to discuss the reasons for lateness. Further decline in punctuality will lead to the pupil being placed on Tier 1 of the non-school attendance procedures.

A Late Registration Record is kept in the Office, this information is also requested on a weekly basis by the attendance team.

Electronic registers are viewable by the office at all times to comply with the emergency procedures in case the building has to be evacuated quickly and children have to be accounted for.

Children leaving school in school hours must be signed off the premises by their parent/carer for purposes of ensuring an accurate record in case of emergency evacuation. This is done at the office. Only named contacts only may collect a child unless we have been advised by the parent/carer otherwise.

To keep our children safe, we request all parents/carers support our systems for informing us of pupil absence.

If parents/carers know a child is poorly and will not be attending school or are going to a medical appointment first thing that morning, we advise parents/carers they **MUST** telephone the school office before **9.00am** to inform us of the absence.

If the school has had no contact from a parent/carer by 9.00, we **WILL** proceed to contact the responsible adult via the Contact information sheets held in school to establish a reason for the absence. The contacts will be worked through in order of priority, so for instance if we cannot reach the first contact we will try second contact and so on. For any Looked After Children we will endeavour to contact the main carer in the first instance. Should we be unable to make contact with the carer then a call will be logged with Social Care.

If the school has **not** managed to contact the child's main carer, we will leave messages with other contacts informing them of the absence and it will then be **their** responsibility to inform the parent. The school's responsibility for the absence would then be relinquished and **no further investigation would be taken by us that day.**

In the event that we have been unable contact **anyone** listed on a child's contact form, we will log the fact we have tried to make contact in our own records and **no further action will be taken by us.** This follows advice sought from the Children's Services Attendance Team, as children are not considered officially 'missing' until a reasonable time period has elapsed. This is the situation that concerns us the most and the reasons why we request parents are pro-active in contacting us. It is also important that the names and telephone numbers held in our records for all children are complete and up to date. Contact forms are always available from the school office in the event of a change of number etc. and parents/carers are regularly reminded of the procedures in place.

If we still have not heard from either the parent or another nominated carer regarding the reason for absence by the second day of that absence, an Attendance Officer may be asked to make a home visit to try to establish why the child has been absent from school and to ensure they are safe. There would be the possibility of Police intervention as the absence would have passed the 24 hour cut-off period and the child would be considered officially 'missing'.

Absence is monitored closely in school to enable us to:

- identify trends and patterns of absence
- identify our vulnerable and Looked After Children/ those with a Child Protection plan are attending and any pattern of absence
- identify those children who are persistently late with no good reason
- identify children whose general attendance is very poor

Where such cases are identified, a system is in place for contacting parents and flagging the levels of absence/punctuality concerns. This maybe a phone call, or, if regular school absence monitoring continues to identify a concern, a letter will be sent to parents. In the majority of cases, the pattern will improve but it may be necessary to closely monitor certain children given their family background or historic data.

Where the school feels that the internal monitoring system has not been appropriately acknowledged by a parent/carers and a satisfactory impact on improving attendance or punctuality not achieved, the matter will be moved through the non-attendance procedures (Tier1) to allow the school to work with the family and explore reasons for absence. At this point it may be viable to offer a CAF depending upon the family circumstances. Should there be further decline in attendance the Senior Attendance Officer will make a referral to the Local Authority (Tier 2) for their support and the case will pass over to them. They will aim to work with the family for 6-8 weeks and should there be any further decline they will move the child to (Tier 3) and arrange a Formal Attendance Review Meeting where parents will be informed further decline will lead to the Local Authority taking legal action against them in the Magistrates Court and conviction of an offence under section 444 (1) may result in a fine of £1000. Under section 444 (1A) convictions may result in a fine of £2,500 or a prison sentence.

Leave of Absence Requests:

Head Teachers no longer have the discretionary authority to approve holiday leave during term time. This practice changed in September 2013 and only extreme circumstances will now be considered for approved leave. Any parent who wishes to take their child out of school during term time, irrespective of the circumstances, must put it in writing to the Head Teacher as there is now a formal framework in place for the monitoring of attendance an unauthorised absence.

Genuine medical appointments are exempt from this process but parents should still provide copy of any appointment letter etc. as clarification that the appointment is genuine.

Fixed Penalty Notices

City of Sunderland will be enforcing Fixed Penalty Notices for instances where 20 consecutive school sessions or 10 consecutive school days have been missed due to unauthorised circumstances. Penalty notices are issued to **each** parent for **each** child and set at £60.00 for each referral. Payment if not paid within 28 days of a notice increases to £120.

By clicking the link below, you will be able to access the formal information issued by City of Sunderland from the Council website:-

<https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/12821/Penalty-notices>

The school will build respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance. Parents will be expected to:

- Treat staff with respect.
- Actively support the work of the school.
- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

Unauthorised Absence:

The majority of absences from school can be explained easily and the school try to be proactive in recording and tracking absences. If a child is absent for a period of time for which no reasonable explanation has been derived, we will write to the parent/carer requesting appropriate clarification of the absence. If there is still no reasonable explanation, the absence will be logged as unauthorised against the pupil's record and the (Tier 1) non-attendance procedures will commence.

Children Privately Fostered or involved with Social Care

We may at times have a number of children that are involved with Social Care or in Private Fostering whose attendance gives us cause for concern. This may include pupils who are vulnerable such as LAC, pupil's subject of a Protection Plan, subject of a Child in Need Plan or a CAF (whilst maintaining confidentiality) the Senior Attendance Officer will be aware of who these pupils are at all times.

If poor attendance occurs our priority is to always inform Children's Services Social Care and the appropriate persons working with the child and make the DP in school aware of the circumstances and in her absence what action has been taken by the Senior Attendance Officer. Pupils who are absent from school without a valid reason for a period deemed to be extreme and who school or the local authority have been unable to make contact with will be referred to Social Care by the Designated Person.

Children Missing From Education

As part of the Every Child Matters agenda the Government imposed a statutory requirement on all local authorities to identify children missing from education.

In Sunderland, we are concerned about any child or young person who is missing out on their educational entitlement, as it may not only be their attainment that is at risk, but their safety and welfare too.

We will proactively encourage parents and staff to share any information they may have regarding children that they think or know is missing education, to ensure we can make sure they are safe, and registered at school or an alternative educational setting as soon as possible.

Who are children missing from education?

These are children and young people of compulsory school age (age 5-16) who are not on a school roll: being otherwise educated in alternative provision at home, or in private education, and who have been out of education for a substantial period of time.

Why do children go missing from education?

There are a number of reasons, including:

- they don't start school at the appropriate time and so they do not enter the educational system
- they are removed by their parents due to disinterest, problems at school or poor attendance
- they cease to attend due to exclusion, illness or bullying
- they fail to find a suitable school place after moving to a new area
- the family move home regularly.

If a member of staff has a concern about a child that they know that may fall into this category, or is approached by a parent who may know of a child in this position, it is important that the Attendance Team are informed as soon as possible. By doing so, we are ensuring the safety and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable members of our community. The more a child misses their education, the more likely those problems are of becoming entrenched. The Head Teacher or his representative should be informed in the first instance where such occurrences are identified.

Attendance Targets and Reporting:

Statutory Instrument no 2261 (The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007) came into force in September 2007, requiring the Governing Body of every maintained primary and secondary school to set and submit to the Local Authority a target for overall absence for the academic year.

The targets are reviewed annually; the DFE guidance suggests that targets should be realistic but aspirational. The annual school target is the total number of absences, which the Governing Body intends that the pupils at the school will not exceed in the school year, expressed as a percentage of the total possible attendances by pupils at the school.

The purpose of target setting is to assist the school in:

- reducing levels of absence for children in particular groups
- to reduce levels of absence for a particular reason
- to reduce levels of persistent absence

Fulwell Infant School Academy are proactive in setting realistic targets with a view to reducing pupil absence, which in the main fall into the categories of annual family holiday and genuine illness.

Whilst truancy and children missing from education is an extremely rare matter at this school, we will always endeavour to track those children who may meet the criteria of most need and support.

Annual Attendance targets are communicated to parents every year in the School Prospectus and we welcome their support in ensuring good attendance is observed whilst their children are with us.

Coding Attendance

Pupils who are not eligible to attend - should be recorded as **code X** (not required to be in school). (Temporarily, code X can be used for compulsory school age children - usually it is only used where non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.)

Pupils who are eligible to attend a session but do not:

- where a pupil is shielding, self-isolating or the pupil has an education, health and care plan (EHCP) and their risk assessment says that their needs cannot be safely met in school, they should be recorded as **code Y** (unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances). This will include children waiting for a test result.
- where a pupil cannot attend school due to illness, as would normally be the case, the pupil should be recorded as **code I** (illness). To help you to complete the educational setting status form, you should note whether the illness involves coronavirus symptoms
- where a pupil does not attend school - despite being eligible and is not shielding, self- isolating, unable to attend due to illness, nor has an EHCP risk assessment saying their needs cannot be safely met at school, the pupil should be recorded as **code C** (leave of absence authorised by the school) where no other authorised absence code is appropriate. If a child fails to attend and no communication is received from parents to establish their plans then school should contact parents and follow their existing safeguarding procedures should they have any concerns.