

Flanderwell Primary School Attendance and Punctuality Policy 2022-2024



Date of Policy: September 2022
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Attendance and Punctuality Policy

This policy has been developed in conjunction with DfE and LA Guidance.

(Reference to Parent/Carer throughout this document also includes any person who has parental responsibility or who cares for children)

Good attendance and punctuality are vital if pupils are to achieve their maximum potential. We are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils to ensure that each pupil benefits from the academic, personal and social opportunities available to them during their years with us. Children who miss out on education are at an immediate disadvantage relative to their peers and at a great cost to themselves and the community as a whole. By working together, with families, we can keep absence from school to the lowest possible figure. This will ensure that children get the most from their education at school. The young child, however, is dependent upon the adults in his/her life to get them to school regularly and on time. At Flanderwell Primary School we continue to work with parent/carers and start to develop 'self' responsibility in the children. We are, therefore, committed to ensuring good attendance and partnerships with parent/carers.

Aims

- Ensure that our school maintains good standards of work and behaviour in a positive, welcoming environment to ensure that our pupils wish to attend regularly.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are the norm.
- Maintain an effective partnership between home and school, the Early Help team, Local Authority, police, social services and other agencies in addressing attendance issues.
- Recognise and reward pupils who achieve attendance and punctuality targets throughout the academic year.
- Ensure all staff and governors understand the procedures and promote and monitor good attendance with support from the Senior Leadership Team, our Attendance Officer, and our Education Welfare Officer
- Ensure parent/carers and pupils are informed about the procedures for attendance and encourage them to take an active role in promoting good attendance and punctuality.
- School will take appropriate action to promote and encourage good attendance.

School Attendance Target: 96%

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act of 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable: -

- (a) To age, ability and aptitude and
 - (b) To any special education needs he/she may have
- Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Expectations

What the school expects of the pupils:

- † To attend regularly.

- † To arrive on time, appropriately prepared for the day including equipment e.g. PE kit and reading diaries
- † To report to the office when late
- † To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school

What the school expects of the parents/carers:

- † To fulfil their *legal* responsibility by ensuring their children attend school regularly and on time. For parents to inform the school office of any reason that will prevent their children from attending.
- † To ensure that they contact the school on the first day their child is unable to attend and give a valid reason for absence (01709 546771).
- † To ensure their child arrives on time and is well prepared for the school day.
- † To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.
- † To inform the school of any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, arrange appointments outside of the school day.
- † To provide medical evidence for absences more than 4 days.
- † Where appointments are booked for after 11 a.m. pupils must attend school first.
- † For any appointments before 1:30p.m. the pupil needs to return to school A.S.A.P, where possible.
- † All absences should be reported via phone call to the school office by 8:55am.
If a pupil leaves the school premises for any reason during the school day, staff will ensure that this is recorded, (together with signing back in if they return) to comply with Health & Safety Regulations.
- † To ensure the continuity of all children's education, taking holidays during the school holiday period is expected. Only in exceptional circumstances will a request for leave in term time be granted and will require a completed planned application request 20 days in advance of the leave of absence.

What Parents and pupils can expect of the school

- † A broad and balanced education that is dependent on regular attendance at school.
- † The encouragement and celebration of good attendance through certificates, letters home and prizes.
- † Efficient and accurate recordings of attendances and punctuality.
- † First day contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school and hasn't given valid reason for absence
- † Any barriers to attendance, dealt with efficiently.
- † Close liaison with the attendance team to assist and support families where needed along with Early Help
- † When a pupil's attendance falls below 96% during a half term, parents will be sent a letter saying that their child's attendance is of concern and support will be offered to improve attendance, also saying that failure to attend school regularly and on time could result in prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act and Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. If there is no improvement parents/carers will be required to attend Attendance Meetings.
- † Notification to parents/carers of attendance through a system of letters and reports home. A tiered letter system for attendance will operate.
- † The issuing of penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children'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. Amendments to 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

The Role of Class teachers

This is an important role within the school and requires the class teacher to:

- Complete registers accurately on Arbor and submit as soon as possible
- Have regular discussions with pupils about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
- Liaise regarding any queries surrounding absence, e.g. odd reasons etc.

The Role of the Attendance Officer and School Administration Officer

- Telephoning parents/carers on the first day of absence when pupils are absent without notification
- Communicating the reason for absence to the relevant member of staff
- Completing the statistical returns for the LA & DfES
- Monitor individuals, as well as whole class attendance, in line with the school's procedures
- Identify trends in the attendance of individual pupils and respond appropriately
- Liaising with the Local Authority Attendance Lead, where appropriate
- Produce and distribute Attendance information for parents/carers
- Collate attendance data for the DfES, LA and Governors
- Liaise with the LA over attendance targets and school strategy
- Identify individual pupils with known punctuality/attendance problems and ensuring these pupils are monitored closely
- Referring pupils to the relevant office when attendance gives severe cause for concern, and be aware of strategies being used with these pupils and their families, and ensuring support for these strategies within school

The Role of the Local School Board

- Receives information from the Headteacher on attendance
- Will be involved in setting school targets on attendance
- Will contribute to plans in response to where attendance is a cause for concern
- Support the school in its efforts to raise attendance
- May wish to contribute to the school's strategies to improve attendance

Understanding Different Types of Absence

Only school can authorise absence as authorised or unauthorised, not parents. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required to ensure a pupil's attendance is correctly categorised.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for an acceptable reason, for example: illness and/or medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in the school day, emergencies or other unavoidable reasons.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider to be reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to fixed penalty notices and/or prosecution. This includes:

- † Parents keeping children away from school unnecessarily
- † Truancy during the school day
- † Absence that has never been properly explained
- † Pupils who arrive in school too late to receive their mark
- † Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays

† Day trips and holidays in term time

Please remember it is the responsibility of parents or carers to ensure the attendance of a child. Any child may be off school because they are ill; sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Whilst most pupils will be away from school because of illness, some individuals can be reluctant to attend. Any such problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school the child and the family. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we encourage the family to work with all involved to understand the root problem. When necessary we engage the support of other agencies such as the School Nurse and Early Help Team.

- † Each day counts for two (a.m./p.m.) marks of attendance or absence.
- † The fact that a parent has sent a note or other notification (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a child's absence does not mean that the absence is automatically coded as authorised.
- † If your child has a medical appointment within the school day medical evidence is needed e.g. appointment letter/ card or confirmation appointment on parents' mobile phone.

Term-time holidays

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Examples of Exceptional circumstances Agreed:

Visits to parents working abroad

- Holiday with terminally ill close family member – mother, father, brother, sister or grandparent
- Holidays where school has supported an application – generally vulnerable families

Examples of exceptional Circumstances Not Agreed:

- Works shut down weeks
- Rearranged holiday due to COVID / illness
- Holidays requested in the first two weeks of September or SATs weeks regardless of the exceptional circumstance.

When issuing a fine, school will consider the length of the holiday and the child's attendance figure for the 12 months preceding the holiday return date. School will be expected to explain authorised holidays to Ofsted.

Request for leave of absences

Headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence to pupils in exceptional circumstances. Department for Education guidelines are clear that taking term-time holidays will not be considered as an exceptional circumstance.

If leave of absences is declined by the school yet parents or carers still remove their child then this would be classed as unauthorised absence for which a fixed penalty notice and/or prosecution could be pursued. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

All applications for leave of absence must be made 20 days in advance. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually. Parents/carers who do not request term time leave and take their child on 'unauthorised leave', could be liable for a fixed penalty notice and/or prosecution and even potentially lose their place at their school.

Requests for exceptional term time leave must be made at least 20 school days in advance of any arrangement being made. This will allow sufficient time for the request to be considered by the school. The request must be made in writing (letter or email) by the parent/carer using Request for Exceptional Leave form that can be collected from the school office or from our website. One form per child per request should be completed.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) less than 90% attendance

A pupil is classified as a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school will monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. All our PA pupils and their parents have regular meetings with the school and participate in an action plan. The plan may include allocation of additional support.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Registration Procedure

- **GATES WILL BE OPEN AT 8.40am and WILL CLOSE AT 8.50am**

- † Registration begins at 8:45am and closes at 9.00am each morning and at 1:00/1.15pm in the afternoon
- † Staff should be on the yard from 8:40. This is to allow parents and carers an opportunity to speak to staff. All children must be in school to start the day at 8:45am
- † If pupils arrive after 9.00am they will be deemed to be late and will have to report to the school office to register attendance.
- † The morning register closes at 10:00am. If a child arrives after this time it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. If this lateness is due to a medical appointment, a medical mark will be recorded (this is recorded as an authorised absence).
- † Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.00am on 01708 546771.

We will text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you and could invite you in to discuss the situation.

Responding to Lateness (Punctuality)

- † Pupils arriving after morning registration will report to the school office, where the late records will be completed with the time and reason for the lateness if given. After 5 recordings of

lateness, letter 1 from the punctuality section will be sent; after a further 5 recordings of lateness in a half term a 2nd letter will be sent; after a further 5 recordings of lateness, a letter requesting a meeting with school will be sent. If there is still no improvement, parents/carers will then be invited to an attendance panel meeting with Early Help.

- † When pupils are late for school they are late for learning. Late arriving pupils may disrupt lessons, cause embarrassment and that may also encourage absence.
- † Pupils who are late at school will have this logged and the class teacher may discuss this at parent's evening. Early Help will become involved where there are constant issues around lateness.

Response to Attendance Issues

- † The Developing Excellence Plan to improve attendance will be reviewed each term
- † The school will identify and monitor pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. This being the school target of 96% or less. A tiered letter system will operate for any child whose absence falls below 96%.
- † Records on persistent absences will be monitored by Governors and the Academy Trust.
- † Appropriate strategies will be employed in order to address the attendance of individuals.
- † Attendance data will be collected, analysed and monitored. The school will respond to any areas of concern identified.

Responding to absence – criteria for requesting support from the Education Welfare Officer/ Early Help Team

- † Home/school contact has not prompted an improvement in attendance
- † Poor overall attendance (e.g. below 90%) and no mitigating circumstances or acceptable reasons for absence provided to school
- † If attendance continues to give cause for concern strategies will be considered and steps taken in an attempt to improve attendance and punctuality. This could include home visits from school staff, (EWO), meetings in school with other professionals if deemed appropriate

	Attendance Percentage	Action(s)
Stage 1 - monitoring	>96%	Parents will receive a phone call followed by an informal letter, advising them that their child's attendance has dropped below school target. School will monitor attendance for three weeks. If attendance drops further, move to stage 2.
Stage 2 – formal meeting		Parents will receive a second letter informing them their child's attendance has dropped further and inviting them in for a meeting to discuss. The Signs of Safety model will be followed. If attendance continues to fall, move to stage 3.
Stage 3 – referral to Local Authority Pathway	>92%	School refer to the Local Authority Pathway (Appendix 1). Early Help is offered to the family as part of the pathway.

Improvements and Recognition of Good Attendance

As a school, we recognise the importance of celebrating good attendance and recognising where improvements have been made. We aim to do this in a variety of ways, including both the children and their parents, to ensure the profile of good attendance remains high and giving the children an incentive for attending regularly.

The following is not an exhaustive list of ways, but rather the minimum of what school will offer:

- † Weekly – every week in our Celebration Assembly, the best class for attendance will be announced, with a treat given if they secure 100% attendance
- † Weekly - Children with 100% and on time, in each class, their names will be entered into a prize draw for a reward
- † Class attendance percentages are shown on Dojo
- † Monthly – Children with 100% attendance and on time, in each class, their names will be entered into a prize draw for a reward
- † Half-termly – Attendance figures will be shared with parents and families on Dojo
- † Termly – Certificates are given to those children with good attendance, with those children securing 100% receiving a Bronze/Silver/Gold certificate
- † Yearly – All children with 100% attendance at the end of the year will receive a certificate and a prize
- † Improvements – Where attendance shows improvements over a set period of time, school will send a letter home recognising this achievement

As a school, we are committed to working with families to secure good attendance and will utilise bespoke plans and rewards for the children who are most vulnerable to attendance.

Safeguarding

When a pupil has not attended for 2 days, and the school has not been contacted with an acceptable reason, the Educational Welfare Officer will make a home visit on the 3rd day and contact the Safeguarding Team if there is still no contact or if concerns emerge.

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. Within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

Attendance
Behaviour Management
Health and Safety
Access to the Curriculum
Anti-bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis is considered to be a safeguarding matter.

Children Missing from Education

The Attendance Officer is the nominated member of school staff to liaise with the children and Young People's Directorate Children Missing from Education Team. Children / Students who cannot be located will be considered missing. The Children Missing from Education Team will be informed and will pursue the matter in accordance with Local Authority procedures.

Children Looked After

The nominated 'Looked After' member of school staff liaises with the children and Young People's Directorate Children Looked After Team. Looked After Children will be set up as a discrete attendance group on the school motoring system and individual attendance checked daily.

Elective Home Education

Elective Home Education (EHE) is a right for all parents to provide education for their children at home, or elsewhere, which does not involve them being registered on a school's roll. This is different to home tuition provided by a Local Authority or education provided by a Local Authority other than at a school.

What process should schools follow when a parent elects to home educate their child(ren)?

Schools must notify the local authority when a parent withdraws their child from school to provide EHE. In this circumstance a parent should write to the Head Teacher requesting that their child is de-registered and confirming that it is their intention to home educate their child. Parents must include in their letter that they are 'taking responsibility for their child's education' and the school will need to complete the checklist sent to them by the Admissions Team.

Parent and Carers Telephone Numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact and an alternative number at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date record of contact details.

The School Attendance Officer:

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. We will always try to resolve the attendance issues by agreement, however if efforts to improve trying to improve the child's attendance fail and unauthorised absences persist, sanctions such as fixed penalty notices and or prosecutions will have to be pursued.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

The Headteacher, or staff delegated by him / her will be responsible for the analysis of attendance data and for the administration of procedures deemed necessary following any unusual trends in attendance. If possible, data should be used in a positive way to help form, class or whole school targets. Wherever possible positive action will be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to the Local Authority.