



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. Requirements

1.1 Change Record

Issue	Date	Author	Description
0.1	November 2016	P Atkin	Draft for Discussion
1.0	November 2016	P Atkin	Ratified by Governors
1.1	January 2018	P Atkin	Updated to bring in line with new regulations on penalty payments
2.0	5th February 2018	P Atkin	Ratified by Governors
2.1	20th September 2019	P Atkin	Minor updates to clarify leave of absence around family events such as weddings or funerals
3.0	25th September 2019	P Atkin	Ratified by Governors

Note: All issues except those of the form 'X.0' are draft.

1.2 Equality Statement

In developing and reviewing this policy we have carefully considered its impact on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

1.3 Approval and Review

This policy was approved by the Full Governing Body on 25 September 2019. It is due for review in the Autumn Term 2021.

2. Introduction

Good attendance is essential to ensuring good progress. It underpins the continuity of a child's education and plays an important role in supporting positive social relationships as much as supporting high quality learning. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary schools.

The Government expects:

- Schools and Local Authorities to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
 - Ensure every child has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
 - Act early to address patterns of absences
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly and for each session of the school day.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

(DfE, September 2013)

3. Scope

Parents and carers are responsible for making sure that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn five between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory age on 31 March; if they

turn five between 1 April and 31 August they are of compulsory school age on 31 August; if they turn five between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December. This policy addresses the attendance requirements of children of compulsory school age.

4. Daily Procedures

Under the Education Regulations 1995, the Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that the school keeps accurate attendance registers. At Fowlmere Primary School, attendance registers record the attendance of children who are present at the start of both the morning and afternoon session each day. They also record whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. These are kept on file for a minimum of three years.

4.1 Registers

The class teacher, or member of staff acting for the class teacher, is responsible for calling an attendance register twice each day – once between 08.40 and 08.45, and again between 13.00 and 13.05. The actual procedure (eg calling names in order, self-registration) is defined by the class teacher, however all staff must have due regard to the legal nature of registers and ensure that they are always accurate.

The registration of children is recorded using Bromcom Attendance. In the case of technical difficulty the school provides a paper alternative which should be completed by the teacher and returned to the school office as soon as possible after the register has been called, and in any case within 15 minutes of the start of the session.

4.2 Recording Attendance

The registers are checked daily by the school office to identify any initial issues which may require follow-up and confirm that the correct DfE approved attendance codes have been used.

4.3 Noting Absences

Parents are expected to inform the school, either by letter, email, in person or by telephone of the reason for any absence. This reason should be recorded with the correct code on the register, either by the class teacher where they have a confirmed reason for absence, or later by the school office staff – ie if the parent telephones the office this should be added by office staff, if the parent talks to the class teacher this should be added by the class teacher during the calling of the register. If there are any doubts surrounding the absence of a child, the teacher should code the absences as 'N' so that it will be followed up by the school office.

When Foundation Stage pupils attend school part-time before compulsory school age, care should be taken that any absences are recorded only for times when the child would normally be in school.

4.4 Safeguarding

The school office will maintain a list of children for whom absence is a cause for concern. This list will be managed by the Designated Person for Child Protection and will include all children with a Child Protection Plan and any other children where there are concerns about wellbeing if a child is not in school.

The headteacher or Designated Person **must** be informed of any child's absence on the list, **whether a reason has been offered or not**, as soon as possible in the morning.

The school office will check the absence status of any child coded as 'N' by the class teacher by calling the parent if contact has not been made. The Headteacher should be informed of any unexplained absence as at 9.10am.

If there are any concerns about the whereabouts of **any** child in the school. The school office need to be informed immediately. The school will then contact the parent/carer immediately in order to check on the safety of the child.

4.5 Reporting Attendance

The school reports attendance and punctuality data to parents as part of a pupil's annual report. This record also indicates whether the attendance is above or below national averages.

5. Promoting Good Attendance

The single largest factor involved in promoting good attendance is providing high quality teaching and learning which meets the needs of pupils and helps them feel safe and valued.

In addition, the following strategies for promoting good attendance may be used by the school:

- regular sharing of pupil attendance rates with parents and carers
- ensuring that good attendance is regularly discussed in classes along with good behaviour, wearing school uniform and other aspects of belonging to our school community

5.1 Liaising with other schools

Attendance is likely to be improved if closure days for the school coincide with those of destination secondary schools. The school will attempt to work with Melbourn Village College to achieve this aim.

5.2 Making every day count

It is important that parents and children do not feel that the last week or few days of the term are somehow "less important" than the others, thus encouraging absence or leave. Teachers should ensure that core subjects are taught up to the penultimate day of term and that children understand this will be the case.

6. Managing Absences

6.1 Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

All absences must be categorised as either "authorised" or "unauthorised". The responsibility for this decision rests with the headteacher and there will be times when this decision is at odds with the belief of parents and carers.

The following absences are likely to be considered authorised:

- genuine illness where a pupil is too unwell to attend school, or their attendance may infect others
- medical appointments
- agreed leave of absence
- leave of absence for significant religious holidays or festivals

The following absences are likely to be considered unauthorised:

- leave of absence which has not been agreed
- illness where the school has reasonable cause to believe that a child is not unwell, or is well enough to attend school
- absences due to family holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, shopping trips, theatre trips, etc

- absences which have not been satisfactorily explained by parents

Lateness after 08.48 is necessarily unauthorised unless it has been caused by a medical appointment.

6.2 Illness and Medical Appointments

If a child is ill, parents/carers should notify school before 08.40 on **the first day of absence** and before 08.40 on each morning during the illness. This is the parent's responsibility. Parents/carers should leave a message, visit the school office or email stating; name of child; class; the reason for absence; name of the person leaving the message and the time. **All** absence information must go to the school office. Parents/carers may also tell the teacher on duty on the playground for information, but this should not be construed as formal notification for an absence having been provided to the school.

No child should attend school until 48 hours after they have suffered their final bout of sickness and/or diarrhoea.

If on the first day of absence a valid reason is not received, an 'N' code (No reason yet provided for absence) will be coded against the child's name. If no valid explanation is given within one week by a parent then that absence will remain as unauthorised absence and cannot be changed.

Every effort should be made to arrange dental/ medical appointments out of school hours. If this is not possible, children should be returned to school as soon as possible after the appointment. Parent/carers are required to sign their child(ren) in and out of school at the school office in the 'Signing In/Out' Folder.

6.3 Leave of Absence

Leave of Absence guidance was updated by the DfE in August 2013. Leave of Absence is granted at the discretion of the headteacher and will be in 'exceptional circumstances' only. Parents must apply on the school form and give at least two-week's notice.

At Fowlmere Primary School, we define 'exceptional circumstances' as one-off and time-limited.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- attendance at a family funeral for a close family member well known to the child (in these cases two-week's notice is not required). The school accepts that, on occasion, children may need to travel with parents who are attending a family funeral.
- attendance at the wedding or civil partnership of a member of close family

Some family events, such as weddings take place abroad. The maximum number of days a school will authorise in such circumstances is 3, ie 1 day for the wedding and 1 day either side for travel.

Exceptional circumstances does not include:

- family holidays, including where the cost of taking the holiday is a factor in choosing the dates
- family trips or visits which could reasonably take place at a later time, outside of the school term
- time off for birthdays, anniversaries, theatre trips or museum visits, etc.

Teaching staff cannot provide "catch-up" work for children who miss school due to a leave of absence whether authorised or unauthorised and parents must take this into account when requesting leave.

6.4 Long Term Absence

Occasionally, a child is absent from school due to illness or a medical reason which might be long and protracted. In this instance the school will work with the family and outside support services to secure the best attendance pattern possible.

6.5 Monitoring Attendance

All attendance and absence is monitored closely by the school; figures for whole school attendance are published by the DfE. Records of each child's attendance are kept year on year for comparison. **The national expectation for attendance is 96% or more.**

Should a child's attendance fall below 90% then this is classed as persistent absence. All absence is followed up by the school initially. Sometimes, absence may involve the support and intervention of the Education Welfare Officer.

Rates of attendance will be monitored half-termly, either by the headteacher or the school secretary. Families of children with an attendance rate of less than 95% should be contacted by the headteacher. Staff involved in attendance monitoring should also look for patterns of absences, for example, Fridays or returns from a stay with a non-resident parent. Frequent short-absences are just as disruptive to a child's education as a longer absence.

7. Challenging Poor Attendance

7.1 Cambridgeshire Three-Letter System

As a school, we follow the Cambridgeshire County Council policy 'Managing Attendance, Three Letter System (Including the use of Penalty Notices) to alert parents to the fact that there may be a problem with attendance. If a pattern of absence or regular absences emerge, Parents/Carers will receive a letter from the Headteacher (where attendance falls below 95%) outlining the concerns. Parents/Carers will be invited in to school to discuss this with the Headteacher and to agree targets. A record of this meeting will be kept on the child's file.

7.2 The Education Welfare Service

Should there be no improvement in attendance the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will become involved. The EWO is able to support and advise parent/carers on many issues including frequent lateness or regular absence from school. The EWO is also able to give guidance on the employment of children, children in entertainment and child protection. The EWO visits regularly to monitor whole school and individual attendance. Any persistent lateness or absence may be followed up, by letter, home visits and even penalties including custodial sentences or prosecution in the magistrate's court.

7.3 Term-time Holidays and Penalty Notices

Term-time holidays have a significant impact on children's attainment and social relationships. No amount of catch-up work can compensate for the experiences missed in school. Consequently, the school works with Cambridgeshire County Council to challenge pupil absences due to families taking term-time holidays. This means that the school will make a request for a penalty notice to be applied where a pupil has three or more consecutive school days absence due to family holiday in line with Cambridgeshire County Council Policy. Penalty Notices are currently £60, per child, per parent.

Families will be reminded of this policy at the beginning of the year through the school newsletter and as part of the request for leave of absence process.

7.4 Other Strategies

The following other strategies may be used by the school to challenge poor attendance:

- regular sharing of attendance data with parents and carers
- meetings with the headteacher or senior staff
- referral to Education Welfare
- rewards for improved attendance
- involvement of medical staff to improve provision
- Early Help Assessment
- Access to Breakfast Club (where available) and After-School Club

7.5 School Refusal or Reluctance

From time to time some children will experience periods of school reluctance or school refusal. In these cases the school will aim to support the child and family in the best way possible to return to good attendance. This may be through:

- ensuring high quality provision that meets the child's needs effectively
- following-up social issues or issues of bullying
- meet and greet
- alternative provision at the start of the morning
- support through school counselling, Specialist Teaching Team or Locality services
- Early Help Assessment

7.6 Special Educational Needs

All children have the right to good attendance. Some children with significant medical needs may struggle to maintain the same levels of attendance as other children, however, the school should hold the same high standards as for other pupils. Poor attendance may be indicative of a failure to meet a child's needs effectively and therefore the school's SENCo should be involved in cases involving SEN pupils. Advice from specialist services should also be sought.

8. Punctuality

Punctuality is an important life skill. Lateness can have an equally detrimental effect on a child's progress as absence. It can disrupt social relationships and can often mean that the same activity is missed each day. Lessons and activities begin in classes at 08.40 and so even minor lateness can have an effect.

The school doors open at 08.40. Children enter through the playground doors (Classes 2-4) or through the outside play area (Class 1) and proceed quickly to their classrooms to work on their marking review and corrections.

Lateness is recorded in two ways: authorised lateness is marked where a child arrives after 08.40 and before 08.48; unauthorised lateness is marked where a child arrives after 08.48. All children who arrive after 08.40 must be signed in at the school office by a parent.

The school will use the following strategies to support good punctuality:

- rigorous marking of lateness in the school register
- regular reporting of persistent lateness to parents
- using a bell to mark the beginning of the school day
- ensure that external doors are closed at or before 08.45 so that parents must sign children in at the office
- referral to Education Welfare

- Early Help Assessment
- Use of the school's Breakfast Club (where available)

9. Flexi-School

Flexi-school may be requested by parents who do not wish to formally adopt Elective Home Education but nevertheless would like to undertake some of the education of their children during school hours at home or on another site, themselves.

In a flexi-school scenario, the school retains full responsibility for the education of the child on their school roll. It is for this reason that, whilst the headteacher will consider carefully any requests for flexi-school, it is unlikely that it will be granted.

10. Appendix 1 – Three Letter System

Name and address of parent

LETTER ONE – Attendance below 95%

Dear Parent

Re: Name of pupil Dob:

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to «percentage_attendance»% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required. I would draw your attention to the school's policy on Attendance which is on the website.

I will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If possible, and again if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me. If helpful, please do speak to your child's classteacher, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely

Mr Philip Atkin
Headteacher

cc. Education Welfare Officer – *for information*

Enc.
Record of attendance
School Attendance Information

Name and address of parent

LETTER TWO – Attendance below 94%

Re: Name of pupil Dob:

Dear Parent

I am writing to inform you that «forename»'s Attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting «forename»'s progress and we need to meet with you urgently.

You are required to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss this matter further at the date and time below.

Date: Time:

Should «forename»'s attendance remain irregular; the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under **Section 444 Education Act 1996**, and a fine of up to **£2500 and/or 3 months in prison**.

Medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect. We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support our students in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve «forename»'s attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Mr Philip Atkin
Headteacher

cc. Education Welfare Officer

Enc.
Record of Attendance
School Attendance Information

LETTER THREE – PENALTY NOTICE WARNING – Attendance below 92%

Dear

Re: Child Name: DOB:

As the Headteacher for xxx, it has been brought to my attention that xxx has been absent from school for xxx sessions this school year/over the previous xxx weeks. I enclose a record of XXX's attendance.

As parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually.

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

I am therefore writing to inform you that if attendance fails to improve during the next (4) weeks, the case may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued.

I actively encourage you to meet with me so that we can work together to ensure xxx's attendance improves with immediate effect.

Yours sincerely

Mr Philip Atkin
Headteacher

cc. Education Welfare Officer

Enc.
Record of attendance
Attendance Information

Name and address of parent

REFERRAL TO EWO

Re: Name of pupil Dob:

Dear Parent

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance has not significantly improved since I last contacted you.

I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised.

I am now formally requesting the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer who will contact you in due course to arrange a meeting.

I will continue to be available to discuss this matter with you and I still actively encourage you to meet with me so that we can work together to ensure xxx's attendance improves with immediate effect. Please telephone me on the number above should you require an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Mr Philip Atkin
Headteacher

cc. Education Welfare Officer

Enc.
Record of attendance
Attendance Information