

# FULWELL JUNIOR SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Updated: March 2017**

*Next Review Date: March 2018*

### **Statement of Intent**

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

At Fulwell Junior School we believe good attendance and punctuality are important in helping pupils achieve the best that they can. We endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome, and believe every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve 100% attendance for all children and every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

To take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered at Fulwell Junior School it is vital children are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

### **Good attendance is important because:**

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as any future employer will expect in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

## **Statutory Framework**

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act a student is required to attend regularly at school and should a student fail to attend regularly legal action may be taken. A \*parent(s)\* may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice or could be fined up to £2,500 face three months in prison and receive a parenting order. An Education Supervision Order could be sought.

- The school is required to complete a register twice during the school day. We do this at the start of the school day at 8.55 am for Lower Phase (Year 3 and 4 pupils), 9.00 am for Upper Phase (Year 5 and 6 pupils), and again for the afternoon session at 1.15 pm.
- The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not itself authorise an absence. It is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

Education Law defines a \*parent\* as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child on a daily basis.

It is important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including pupils, parents, governors and staff.

### **School will:**

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence in order to act early to address patterns of absence.
- keep parents fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record and follow up unexplained absences by text, phone call or letter as necessary
- contact parents on the first day when a student fails to attend school without providing good reason, via the School's electronic messaging system or telephone
- take timely action on any problem notified to us and involve appropriate outside agencies in order to support students and their families. This may include a 'home visit' or a request to the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.
- ascertain the need or reason for a child's absence and will encourage parents/carers to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the head teacher.

### **Pupils will:**

- aim to achieve 100% attendance each academic year.
- attend school daily.
- arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.
- go to registration and lessons on time.
- take responsibility for registering at the School Office if they are late
- **not** leave or attempt to leave the school premises without being officially signed out by a parent or authorised adult.

### **Parents will:**

- notify the school on the first day of absence as early as possible and before **9.30 a.m.** This can be done by telephone or in person. The text messaging service or email may also be used which may be followed up by staff if further information is deemed necessary.
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- ensure their child attends school daily and on time - by **8.55 am** for Lower Phase, **9.00 am** Lower Phase each morning, dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, with a positive attitude to learn
- avoid taking their child **for non-urgent** medical or dental appointments during term time.
- only request leave of absence if it is for an **exceptional circumstance**
- request any planned absence well in advance
- ensure school has updated contact telephone numbers
- actively work with the school staff and relevant multi-agency staff, to solve any attendance issues if or when they occur

### **The school's attendance leader will**

- ensure attendance is recorded accurately and consistently and the attendance policy is applied consistently and fairly throughout the school
- monitor attendance and punctuality
- keep clear records
- issue letters to parents
- identify attendance concerns at an early stage and liaise with the Head Teacher to ensure appropriate action is taken
- make referrals if appropriate

### **Teachers and classroom staff will**

- act as good role models of excellent attendance and punctuality
- ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- confirm with any pupil arriving late that they have informed the office of their safe arrival

- promote good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities e.g. PSHE lessons, assemblies
- speak to parents regarding any concerns in the first instance
- liaise with the attendance leader with matters of attendance and punctuality
- communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- support pupils with longer term absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school

### **Appendix 1 Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance**

### **Appendix 2 Procedures**

## **Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.**

Under the 2006 Education Regulations **it is a legal requirement that a register is taken at the start of the day.** Not only does the process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a student checklist in respect of health and safety issues – e.g. Fire Drill of the school.

School starts at 8.55 am for Lower Phase and 9.00 am for Upper Phase when all students should be in their classroom in preparation for the register being taken. Registration closes officially at 9.10a.m.

The afternoon register is taken again at 1.15 pm. It is essential that all students are registered on both occasions.

**Any student who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.**

**1. Unauthorised absence**

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without **valid** reason.

**2. Authorised absence**

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

**3. Approved Educational Activity**

**Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities

- Link courses or approved education off site
- Work experience placements

Under the 1996 Education Act parents commit an offence if the child does not attend school regularly. If your child cannot come to school because of illness you should advise the school on the first day of absence by telephone preferably. If no message is received we will make every effort to contact you.

It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned we may make a 'home visit' or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.

The school will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. If a parent rings the school to confirm the student is unwell the school may request supporting evidence: medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence.

The school may choose not to authorise absence without this supporting evidence as it is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance and submit a copy of the appointment card. The absence may be marked unauthorised if the parent fails to submit the appointment card.

We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is cause for concern. The school undertakes a range of measures to support students where attendance is an issue. Where we fail to see an improvement in a student's attendance it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the student receives the support required it is important that parents work with the relevant external agency in order to improve their child's attendance.

If your child is experiencing difficulties you should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving the difficulties. This is nearly always successful.

If the difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service they will assess the case to determine the appropriateness of use of statutory enforcement procedures i.e. Fixed Penalty Notices, Magistrates Court or seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment a parenting order can also be imposed.

### **Punctuality/Lateness**

Students who arrive after registration **must** enter school by the main door and report immediately to the School Office. They must not go straight to lessons once the secure door system has been opened for them.

Arrival after the close of registration with no valid reason, e.g. an unavoidable medical appointment, will be marked as **unauthorised absence** and coded “U” in the register. This equates to a missed session. Parents of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to highlight the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, will be invited to attend a meeting in school and discuss the problem. If the lateness continues a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Service and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued or ultimately the parent could be prosecuted. Further information on Fixed Penalty Notices is available to parents on our website [www.fulwelljunior.co.uk](http://www.fulwelljunior.co.uk) .

**It is important to note that any student who arrives to school after 9.10 a.m. will be marked with a letter ‘U’ in the register. This means that, despite being in school, they will technically be marked absent from school for the morning sessions. It will be recorded on the register as an unauthorised absence and could result in the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notice.**

### **Holidays in term time**

Time off school for family holidays cannot be authorised. The Head Teacher has the discretion, in exceptional circumstances, to authorise short periods of absence from school.

Applications for Leave of Absence where dates can be known ahead must be made in writing as far in advance as possible of the requested date.



Consideration is given to each request before a decision is reached by the Head Teacher; on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its individual circumstances.

Any leave of absence that has been declined or the parents has not sought approval for will be recorded as unauthorised. These cases may be referred to the Local Authority and a **Fixed Penalty Notice** could be issued to **each parent for each student**.

We adhere to Sunderland City Council 'Penalty Notices – Local Code of Conduct' further details of which are available on [www.sunderland.gov.uk](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk) .

## Procedures

In order to carry out school's responsibilities in promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance, effective monitoring procedures are key.

Pupil attendance monitoring also enables early recognition of patterns of absence or lateness and is essential in supporting safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

- All staff and designated governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training which is regularly updated.

**Attendance monitoring is a key factor and source of data which we use to comply with statutory guidance including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KSIE September 2016) and Children Missing Education (September 2016)**

and other specific safeguarding issues such as:

- Domestic violence
- Bullying including cyberbullying
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Children missing education
- Mental Health
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Risk of radicalisation (The Prevent Duty)
- Runaways
- Young carers

We also comply to national and local authority requirements to account for and monitor the attendance of children who are affected by exclusions, mid-phase transfers and dual-registrations.

## Procedures for registration

Class Teachers collect their class from the school yard and are responsible for marking the register as soon as possible after **8.55a.m, Lower Phase and 9.00a.m, Upper Phase**. Registers are taken to the office and officially close at **9.10a.m.**

The second attendance register is taken at 1.15pm. *Registers must be returned to the office as soon as possible to comply with the emergency procedures in case the building had to be evacuated quickly and children accounted for.*

Where the office has been informed by parents of an absence prior to registers being distributed, this will be communicated by note or prefilled code in the register and the teacher will refer to these when completing the roll call.

Fulwell Junior School records and maintains attendance records using the Capita SIMS electronic database. All pupils present or absent will be registered into the attendance system using the School Attendance Codes using the national codes in compliance with the Department for Education regulations.

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration.

### **Procedures for recording absence**

The entries to the official attendance register are recorded onto the database at the school office.

Any student who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories, see [Appendix 1](#).

- Unauthorised absence
- Authorised absence
- Approved Educational Activity

Parents must notify school if their child is going to be absent. If a child is absent and we have had **no** contact from a parent/carer by 9.30am we will contact you using the contact details you have provided. *Please remember to inform school of any changes as soon as possible.*

If we are unable to contact you or any of your named contacts by telephone or text we will leave messages wherever possible for you to contact school. The school's responsibility for the reason for absence is then relinquished and no further investigation would be taken by us that day. If however we receive no contact or reason for absence the following day we will notify the Local Authority Attendance Team who may recommend Police Intervention if a child is considered at risk or missing.

In most cases parents contact school in a timely manner and the recognised category code of absence is recorded.

### **Procedures for recording and monitoring lateness**

Children occasionally arrive late at school for several reasons e.g. medical appointments, or because of genuine unforeseeable reasons such as sleeping in, car breakdown etc.

Registers are kept open until **9.10a.m.** and children arriving late will receive a code **L** - late. A pupil arriving late after the register is closed will receive a code **U** – unauthorised absence.

In exceptional circumstances, such as bad weather, there may be an extension in the period the register is kept open (at the discretion of the Head and not to exceed 30 minutes).

Medical appointments are recorded as authorised absence using code **M**.

Parents should avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments, see [Appendix 1](#). Where this is not possible a copy of the appointment card should be brought to school. Children must be signed out and in at reception, and returned to school promptly after their appointment.

All lateness is recorded daily and monitored weekly. Pupils who are consistently late disrupt not only their own education but also that of other pupils.

If children are regularly late a letter will be sent to parents highlighting the issue and

- reminding of the importance of regular punctuality
- inviting them to liaise with school if there is an underlying cause or if they require advice or support

If the problem persists there will be direct intervention by the Head Teacher and parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting. If you, your child or your family are experiencing difficulties we will work together to try to resolve these and offer ways to support your child's timely arrival at school. The agreed outcomes of the meeting will be recorded and improvement will be expected.

**If following intervention by the school there is no improvement in punctuality, where support is not appropriate or is declined by parent or carer and the child's punctuality remains a concern the school will make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the child receives the support required. It is important that parents work with the relevant agency in order to improve their child's punctuality.**

In line with Sunderland Council's Local Code of Conduct the current referral threshold is following 5 sessions of persistently late (coded U) within a six week period. These do not need to be consecutive.

## **Procedures for Monitoring Attendance**

In order to:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- ensure every child has access to full-time education
- act early to address patterns of absence

the school attendance leader monitors pupil attendance weekly.

Attendance issues and any causes for concern are therefore identified at an early stage and referred to the Head Teacher.

Cause for concern may include:

- attendance has suddenly slipped
- attendance is consistently lower than average
- a pattern of absence is emerging

and parents have not provided sufficient or satisfactory reason.

### **A full review of attendance is undertaken each half term.**

If a child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Schools are judged against this rate.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below

95%. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the department for Education.

If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards, or has fallen below 90%, depending on the reason for absence we will contact you by letter.

The Head Teacher will review each case taking into consideration what we know about the child, the family or other circumstances and the letter will both highlight the child's attendance and seek improvement, which will then be individually monitored, or invite parents to a meeting.

The meeting will give parents the opportunity to advise of any life events that may impact on a child's attendance i.e. bereavement, family break up, illness, drug/alcohol issues etc.

We aim to work with parents to address any difficulties and offer support in the first instance. We will investigate perceptions of any difficulties in school e.g curriculum, performance, progress, behaviour, bullying.

A school/parental agreement may be drawn up if appropriate and signed by both parties and a review date set if necessary.

If a child's attendance does not improve after intervention or if a parent is unable or unwilling to ensure the regular attendance of their child then absences may be recorded as unauthorised and a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Team will be made.

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act a criminal offence is committed if a registered pupil does not attend school regularly. Sunderland Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. School staff and the Attendance Team would much rather work to resolve poor attendance than resort to enforcement actions. Legal measures will only be considered when there is **unauthorised absence** and:

1. the child or family do not require the support from any agency e.g Strengthening Families to improve the attendance
2. the child has 20 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in the previous 10 weeks and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

## **Procedures for Leave of Absence requests**

Applications for Leave of Absence where dates can be known ahead must be made in writing as far in advance as possible of the requested date.

Consideration is given to each request before a decision is reached by the Head Teacher; on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006) taking into account:

- the effect the absence will have on the child's ability to achieve
- overall pattern of attendance and punctuality
- child's stage of education
- time of year (SATS or assessments)
- and particular family circumstances

The Head Teacher will only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If the Head Teacher grants a leave of request it will be for the Head Teacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school.

*Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday or sporting activity other than that approved and supervised by the school as a norm.*

See Appendix 1.

## **Leave of absence for child performers**

Leave of absence is sometimes requested for children to perform at events outside the scope of the school e.g. in pantomimes, films etc. Legislation sets out that a local authority licence must be obtained before a child can take part in a performance. Where a license specifies the dates a child is to be away from school to perform, then the Head Teacher will authorise those days. However where the terms of the license do not specify dates it is at the discretion of the Head teacher to authorise leave of absence.