



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Document Control Table

Title	Forest Hills Primary School Attendance Policy
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Document History

Date	Author	Note of Revisions
June 24	Sarah Powell	Complete policy review. Trust template adapted to include school processes and procedures

Introduction:

As an Academy, and as a school, we do our utmost to develop a partnership with parents and value the relationship between school and home. We work with the community to drive the school forward and ensure the children in our care are the very best that they can be. You and your child/ren play an important role in making our school successful. Our aim is to ensure that every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled and as a result succeed and thrive.

This policy reflects our responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and their educational attainment and achievement and sets out how we wish to achieve this.

Why is regular attendance important?

Learning:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Good attendance is learnt behavior. It is proven that children with the highest attendance achieve highest attainment and have wider life chances.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education your child should be at school on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is important that you make sure that your child attends regularly.

The school target for attendance is 96% and above. This is equivalent of a child having no more than 7 school days absence in the whole academic year.

Personal Growth & Experience:

It is important to consider that the benefits of school are much more than purely academic. Regular attendance helps to instil good habits and behaviour while promoting the development of a positive attitude towards school. Regular attendance helps a child to form social relationships and build friendship groups while providing an opportunity for inclusion. Our informative school years often provide us with experiences that can stay with us through life and add to our childhood memories. In this fast-paced world in which primary years fly by and childhoods are all too fleeting, help us to afford them the time and the opportunity to simply be *children*.

Legislation and guidance:

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(19th August 2024\)](#)
- [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(19th August 2024\)](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#))
- [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance.](#)

- [Keeping children safe in education \(September 2024\) statutory guidance for schools and colleges.](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

The law requires all schools to record the attendance of each pupil at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Schools should follow up on absences to:

- Ascertain the reason.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

The Government expects:

- Parents/carers to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children attend school regularly and arrive to school on time.
- Schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Schools to ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Schools to act early to address patterns of absence.

The Law relating to attendance:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is the registered parent/carer responsibility. If a child fails to attend school regularly the parent/carer can be held accountable and be prosecuted as per legislation set out under the Education act 1996. The two offences are:

- Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 - a fine of up to £1,000.
- Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996 - a fine of up to £2500 and imprisonment for up to 3 months for an aggravated offence.

The Local Authority can also issue sanctions for general absence and leave of absence by issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine).

Please note that from September 2024 there are new guidelines with regards to the issuing of FIXED PENALTY NOTICES for unauthorised holidays, general unauthorised attendance and unauthorised punctuality issues.

£80 fines and Improvement Notices:

Absence fines charged to parents will **rise from £60 to £80, or £160 if not paid within 21 days**. It is the school who will decide whether they issue a fine, but it will be the local council who will issue the fines to parents/carers.

From Autumn term 2024, **only two fines can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year rolling period**. Any notice thereafter will **automatically be charged at £160**. Parents will also receive "**improvement notices**", where they are informed that this is their last opportunity to engage with education and improve their child's attendance before a fine is issued.

National fine thresholds:

From September, schools will **have to consider a fine if a pupil misses 10 sessions** (half days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of **10 school weeks**. The threshold can be met with “any combination of unauthorised absence”. For example, four sessions in term time plus six instances of arriving late. These codes are:

‘O’ unauthorised absence.

‘G’ unauthorised holiday in term time.

‘U’ unauthorised late arrival.

Holidays in term time/leave of absence:

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday and the government made an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 to reflect this.

Therefore, it is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances, irrespective of the child’s overall attendance. Only the head teacher (not the Local Authority) or his/her designate may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing/on an application form provided by the school. Where a parent takes a leave of absence to which the application was refused or takes a leave of absence where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty fine (upon a return from such leave) by the Local Authority may be requested.

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless –

- (a) an application has been made in advance to the proprietor by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides: and
- (b) the proprietor, or a person authorised by the proprietor in accordance with paragraph (1), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

All applications must be made in writing to the Head Teacher at least 5 school days prior to the requested leave date.

Where the decision is made not to authorise leave in term time, school will inform parent/carers in writing. A general guide for parent’s, is leave for any holiday, activity or event that could be arranged during the annual 13-week holiday time would not be authorised.

On any occasion that school refuses a request for leave in term time, should parent/carers proceed with the leave it will be recorded as a (G) (family holiday not agreed or in excess of agreement), on schools register.

Failure to notify and/or request leave of absence in term time, providing at least 5 day notice will result in all absence being recorded as (O) (unauthorised absence not covered by any other description).

If a pupil does not return to school after the leave of absence date, school will:

- Investigate the reasons surrounding the absence.
- Refer to the Local Authority and under Regulation 8, 1 (f) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

School may also consider removal from the school register.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we kindly ask parents not to take children away in school time.

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.

School Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Support Officer and/or a member of the senior management team if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to our Attendance Support Officer and/or the Local Authority if attendance moves below 95%.

Safeguarding:

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 and within the context of this school, we will adhere to 'Working together to Safeguard Children' (Dec 2023) Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2024) and the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which incorporates:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children have the best outcomes.
- Detecting early support through school's support strategies or an Early Help Assessment.

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.

Failing to attend school on a regular basis and unexplained absence may be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Attendance procedures and types of absence:

Every half-day absence (either morning or afternoon) from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

The school may grant an authorised absence for reasons such as genuine illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after class register has closed).
- Shopping, looking after other children, oversleeping, or birthdays.
- Unauthorised leave of absence/holiday or day trips in term time.

- Absences of children whose attendance is a concern and parents have been requested to supply medical evidence.

Whilst any child may be absent because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. 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 can often make your child feel more anxious over time and make matters worse.

If there are any problems with regular attendance, please contact school to discuss these matters as early as possible so we can support you and your child.

If your child has been identified as having **attendance below 93%**, they may have all further absence **unauthorised** on school's register. However, should parent(s) provide evidence from a medical practitioner advising that the period of absence was necessary, proof of a medical appointment, or show examples of prescriptions the absence for the evidenced period will be authorised.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is 'everybody's business' parents, pupils, all members of school staff and the LA. To achieve excellent attendance school will follow the DfE guidance '*Working together to improve attendance*' DfE (August 2024)

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular class dojo posts.
- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates, and outings/events.
- Contact and work with you if we have concerns about your child's attendance.
- Support parents, when necessary, with collecting children for school.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information from September 2024:

Attending the school	
/ \	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered at another school
Absent – Leave of absence	
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

Absent – other authorised reasons	
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes	
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
Absent – unauthorised absence	
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Arrived in school after registration closed
Administrative Codes	
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure

Punctuality and late after registration

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Regular attendance and punctuality help to instil good habits and promote the development of a positive attitude towards school. Arriving late to school is stressful for both parent and child and is not a good start to the day. Children who arrive late miss essential learning time, instructions for the lesson, disrupt the routine of the classroom and the work/progress of others.

Children should arrive between 8:35 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. and the class register closes at 8:55 a.m. If your child arrives late after the gates close, they must come through the main reception, sign in and will receive a 'L' late mark. Any child arriving after this time will be marked as a 'U' which is classified as an unauthorised late absence. **If unauthorised lateness persists it could result in a referral to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or enforcement proceedings against you.**

Attendance/Absence procedures for Parent/Carer:

- Ensure your child/ren attend school every day the school is open.
- Notify school each day when your child is absent giving reason for absence. (School will decide to authorise or unauthorise the absence)
- Notify School of any changes to emergency contact details or medical issues that may have an impact on your child's attendance.
- Avoid taking holidays/leave of absence in term time unless there is exceptional circumstance. Parent/carers must notify the school at least 5 days prior to travel via a school leave of absence/holiday form. There have been occasions where parents have taken holiday without notifying school or said their child is off due to illness. We politely request parents are honest with school as this causes a large amount of time wasted, undertaking calls, home visits and even referrals to children missing education.
- Book routine medical appointments outside of school (where possible) or bring your child in for part of the school day when possible.
- Engage with school, attendance support and the Local Authority if your child's attendance

starts to deteriorate.

- Engage with further support offered, such as attendance support and family liaison visits, Early help, parenting contracts and the Local Authority to prevent further legal action.

Early Years, Nursery & Reception:

Early years foundations provide valuable opportunities for children to experience learning and development whilst having fun. It aids their social skills, independence, self-esteem and initiates good habits and routine.

If your child has a place in school nursery/preschool or reception, they also must attend regularly. School follows the same safeguarding procedures of those children who are of statutory school age. Parent/carer's are expected to contact school if they are unable to attend through unavoidable cause as failure to do so may instigate safeguarding procedures or may risk losing their place.

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. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, the school may discuss matters with our Education Welfare Officer. They will discuss matters and try to resolve the situation by agreement or may use other strategies:

Attendance strategies:

- School Attendance Strategy Support Meeting.
- First day absence calls / messages.
- Phone call parents to discuss attendance concerns.
- Home visits/safe and well visits.
- Attendance certificates, badges etc.
- Attendance assemblies.
- Interventions (mentor/meet and greet).
- Maintaining positive communication (school refuser/long term illness).
- Unexplained absence letters.
- Suspected holiday in term time letter.
- General attendance letters (i.e. below 95%, below 93%, below 90%).
- Punctuality concern letters.
- Invitations to attend a meeting in school.
- Attendance Support Plans.
- Reduced or Part Time timetables.
- Registration Extensions (for exceptional circumstances only).
- Attendance clinics.
- Late gates.
- Local Authority Referrals.

Persistent Absence (P.A.)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Severely absent pupils are classified as those missing 50% or more of school. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

P.A. pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

If your child reaches P.A., you will be informed of this. Any case that is seen to have reached the

P.A. mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority through targeted support via school and with partners to try to remove the barriers of poor school attendance.

Statutory Referrals to the Local Authority

If your child's attendance does not improve and unauthorised absences persist, school may refer the case to the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service. They are a statutory service for the enforcement of school attendance and other education related legal interventions for children in employment, children in entertainment, children missing education and elective home education. They have the legal power to issue:

- a Parenting Order
- an Education Supervision Order
- a School Attendance Order
- **a fine (known as a 'penalty notice') of £80, which rises to £160 each if you do not pay within 21 days. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted.**
- Prosecution in court of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence of up to 3 months. The court also gives you a Parenting Order.

Parents can contact the Local authority themselves to ask for guidance on their procedures. Their telephone number is 01785 278836 For general information regarding school absence, visit: <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Education-welfare/Education-Welfare-Home.aspx>

Children Missing Education:

"A pupil's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006" (DFE 2022).

If you move out of area and the distance is too far to travel to School, **please notify us immediately and fill in a removal from roll form (obtained from school)**. We advise you contact the admissions department (of the Local Authority where you now reside) as quickly as possible to obtain a new school place, as often places are limited.

All schools must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register. If your child ceases to attend school and we have had no contact from parent, we will deem this as a safeguarding issue. We will try to contact you and may undertake a home visit. We will then follow the Local Authority referral procedure for a child missing education before removal from roll.

Those responsible for school attendance:

Mrs S Powell: Head teacher – who has overall responsibility for attendance at Forest Hills Primary School is responsible for the strategic management of attendance according to this Attendance Policy and any resulting decisions that have to be made. Attendance lead – who is responsible for making referrals to the Local Authority. Plus, in conjunction with the Education Welfare Officer, conduct Home Visits, Chair attendance meetings, & implement Attendance Support Plans.

Mrs R Hogg: School Office – who is responsible for maintaining the pupil registers with accurate information and for implementing first day absence communications on a daily basis.

Mr P Weston: Education Welfare Officer – who is responsible for the planning, development, design, organisation and monitoring of whole school and academy focus on pupils' attendance. Plus, in conjunction with the school attendance lead, conduct Home Visits, chair attendance meetings, & implement Attendance Support Plans.

Those responsible for Safeguarding within school:

Name: Mrs S Powell

Role: Designated Safeguarding Lead

Name: Mrs J Cross

Role: Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Name: Mrs A Kelly

Role: Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Governors – who are responsible for the ratification of this Attendance Policy and ensuring that it is rigorously implemented.

Summary:

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to guarantee as high a level of attendance as possible and that through good attendance ensure every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted. Our aim is to motivate the children within our school and promote a positive work ethic and learning mentality.