



# Fairfield Primary School

## Attendance Policy

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# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction .....   | 2  |
| Aims and Objectives.....                                     | 2  |
| Definitions.....   | 3  |
| Authorised absence .....                                     | 3  |
| Unauthorised absence.....                                    | 3  |
| Procedures .....   | 3  |
| Responsibilities .....                                       | 4  |
| Class teacher.....   | 4  |
| Headteacher.....   | 4  |
| Administration staff .....                                   | 4  |
| Parents/Carers .....   | 5  |
| Registration.....  | 5  |
| Lateness .....   | 5  |
| ABSENCES.....  | 5  |
| First Day Contact.....                                       | 6  |
| Illness .....  | 6  |
| Term-time Holidays.....                                      | 6  |
| Reporting .....  | 6  |
| Addressing Attendance Concerns.....                          | 7  |
| Appendices.....  | 8  |
| Letter/Request for leave form including response.....        | 9  |
| Request for leave application form.....                      | 10 |
| Standard letter requesting presence at a review meeting..... | 11 |
| Standard letter explaining concerns RE attendance.....       | 12 |



# FAIRFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Attendance Policy

### Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Fairfield Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website. This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning, which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age-related learning expectations.

### Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school, which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow-up non-attendance at school.

## Definitions

### *Authorised absence*

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### *Unauthorised absence*

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason- even with the support of a parent.

## Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow-up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve an individual pupil's attendance and punctuality.

- To refer to the School Inclusion Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Cumbria LA and the DfE where requested.

## Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### *Class teacher*

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers.
- Informing the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation, which should be noted on SIMs.

### *Headteacher*

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Identifying trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the School Inclusion service.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Inclusion Officer.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

### *Administration staff*

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents/carers regarding absence.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance under the direction of the Headteacher.

## *Parents/Carers*

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist (for example, an appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised. (See below)
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

## **Registration**

All the school doors open at 8.50am until 9.00am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The SIMs register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.05am and by 1.20pm.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## **Lateness**

Once the doors are closed at 9.00am, the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9.00am will be marked as late in the attendance record.

Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of

the reason for their absence. All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer system.

It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we will attempt to contact parents to request these details. If this is not possible, or an answer is not returned by a specified date, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

### *First Day Contact*

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent.

There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

### *Illness*

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where, over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription.

### *Term-time Holidays*

With effect from September 2013, the government abolished the right of Headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied **exceptional circumstances** exist.

Any requests for holiday must be received by the school using the form attached (Appendix 1) a minimum of 7 days prior to departure. Parents must submit, through the use of the form, their exceptional circumstances to be considered. They will be informed of the outcome in writing.

## **Reporting**

A child's attendance record is published termly on our school's report cards for parents, in the end of year report to parents and sometimes at the request of staff, parents and relevant external agencies at various points throughout the year.

Pupil attendance figures are included each term in the Headteacher's report to the Local Governing Board. Aggregate attendance data is submitted to the Department for Education at the requested times each year. The results of this census, showing the school percentage for overall levels of

attendance and unauthorised absence, is then subsequently published on the internet as part of school performance tables and within the annual data for the school known as ASP.

## Addressing Attendance Concerns

The government and the school expect attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

In primary school, we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore, where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns.

|               |                                  |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 95% - 100%    | Good Attendance                  |
| 90% - 95%     | School are monitoring attendance |
| Less than 90% | Referral to attendance panel     |

If attendance is 90 – 95% the Headteacher will review the child’s attendance history and, depending on the outcome, may wish to discuss the attendance with you as parents to see how we could support you in improving it.

If attendance is <90% then the attendance will be reviewed by a panel of senior members of staff; the panel will wish to meet with parents to see how we, the school, can support improvements.

If improvements do not follow the attendance panel review, then the case will be referred to the Inclusion officer with Cumbria LA.

The Inclusion Officer can support families to improve attendance and can also seek hearing for prosecution.



## Appendices

1. Letter/Request for leave form including response
2. Standard letter requesting presence at a review meeting
3. Standard letter explaining concerns RE attendance



# FAIRFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Gallowbarrow  
Cockermouth  
Cumbria  
CA13 0DX

Head teacher: Mr C Steele  
Telephone: 01900 821133  
Fax: 01900 821132  
E-mail: [head@fairfieldprimary.co.uk](mailto:head@fairfieldprimary.co.uk)  
Web: [www.fairfieldprimary.co.uk](http://www.fairfieldprimary.co.uk)

Dear Parents/Carers,

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. The Department for Education allows a Headteacher the discretion to consider authorising a leave of absence in term time only in "exceptional circumstances".

Any absence from school will disrupt your child's learning. Please consider writing to your MP to campaign for the cost of holidays during authorised dates to be the same price as holidays taken during term time.

You may consider that a holiday will be educational but your child will still miss out on the teaching that their peers will receive whilst your child is away. Children returning from a leave of absence during term time are also unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed. Teachers then have to give more time to help individual children catch up on missed work. This poses a potential risk of the under achievement for your child and other students in the class. This is something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

Please request a leave of absence by completing the form on the reverse of this notification. If the holiday is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance, and you nevertheless take your child out of school for the leave of absence this **will be recorded as unauthorised leave**.

**All unauthorised absences, including holidays that have not been sanctioned by the headteacher, are accumulated and parents who fail to ensure regular attendance of their children at school can be referred to the Local Authority.**

All leave of absence requests must be completed on the attached form. This should be returned to the school at least 7 days before the start of the holiday. All requests must be made prior to the leave being taken. Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.

In considering the decision whether to authorise, the following will be taken into account:

- Reasons given for the holiday;
- Your child's previous attendance record; this includes attendance in the current academic year - which should be over 95% - as well as attendance in previous academic years.
- Whether your child will miss any tests/examinations (or important preparation for their tests)
- Whether your child is making good progress.

I hope you will support our efforts to raise attendance and attainment at our school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pupil Name ..... Class .....

Date of first day of absence .....am or pm

Date of return to school .....am or pm

Number of school days that your child will be absent from school .....

Please detail the exceptional circumstance for which you are requesting leave of absence

[Empty box for detailing exceptional circumstances]

***I understand that if the absence request is unauthorised the local authority may be notified of the holiday taken and a Penalty Notice may be issued.***

Name(s) of Parent/Carer (s) making application.

Dr/Mr/Mrs/ Ms Forename..... Surname .....

Dr/Mr/Mrs/ Ms Forename..... Surname .....

Signed ..... Dated .....

(Please ensure you are giving at least 7 days' notice of the proposed absence, retrospective applications cannot be authorised)

For school to complete:  AUTHORISED  UNAUTHORISED a) b) c) d) (refers to categories below)

⌘-----

This slip to be returned to parents

**Fairfield Primary School - Request for a Leave of Absence During Term Time**

Dear.....,

Child's Name..... Class.....

Your request for absence on the following dates: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ =.....days, has been

considered and is  AUTHORISED  UNAUTHORISED

- a) Their attendance is currently.....
- b) The request **does / does not** meet the criteria for 'exceptional circumstances'
- c) They are **making / not making** good progress towards their end of year targets.
- d) They **are / are not** being prepared for or taking statutory tests during the absence

Please note: An **unauthorised** absence may be reported to the Local authority and a Penalty Notice may be issued

Signed

Head Teacher

Date \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_



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## Private & Confidential

Dear Parent/Carer,

In accordance with our attendance policy, we recently held a review of attendance across the school.

During the analysis of data, we found that 'PUPIL NAME''s attendance is currently ??%.

We would like to invite you to attend a meeting in school with regards to the attendance record so we can discuss how we can work together to support and improve NAME's attendance.

Please can you attend a meeting at Fairfield Primary School (Key Stage 2 Reception) on DAY, DATE, YEAR at TIME.

If you are not available to meet at this time, please contact the school office to rearrange.

The meeting will be chaired by Mr. C. Steele (Headteacher) and/or Mr. J. Gale (Deputy Headteacher).

Yours sincerely

Mr. C. Steele



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In accordance with our attendance policy, we recently held a review of attendance across the school.

During the analysis of data, we found that 'PUPIL NAME''s attendance is currently ??%.

As stated within the school's attendance policy, children will have their attendance monitored in school should it fall below 95%. Of this absence ??% is 'authorised' and ??% is 'unauthorised'

We, as a school, are strictly monitored on procedures related to attendance and punctuality of children and are required, by law, to ensure that we provide appropriate support.

If you require any support with your child's attendance, then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Mr. C. Steele