

Fern Hill Primary School	
Attendance Policy	
Approved by	Fern Hill Local Academy Committee
Date	20 September 2023
Next Review	September 2026
School Lead	Senior leader responsible for attendance

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1. Aims

Pupil attendance is of the utmost importance. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people and pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and may lead to disadvantage and lower attainment.

We promote a whole-school culture and ethos that values and drives good attendance, including by:

- promoting and celebrating good attendance;
- reducing absence, including persistent absence;
- ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- acting early to address patterns of absence;
- building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

This policy applies to all children registered at this school.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working together to improve school attendance](#) 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](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

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

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Fern Hill Local Academy Committee

The Local Academy Committee is responsible for:

- promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos;
- ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;

- regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data;
- monitoring attendance figures for the whole school;
- holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- implementation of this policy at the school;
- monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Local Academy Committee;
- supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils;
- monitoring the impact of attendance strategies;
- ensuring staff receive adequate training on attendance as required;
- making the decision when to issue a fixed-penalty notice and notifying the local authority Education Welfare Officer, who issues a fixed-penalty notice, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- leading attendance across the school;
- offering a clear vision for attendance improvement;
- evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes;
- having an oversight of data analysis;
- devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data;
- arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues;
- delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Sam Stephenson and can be contacted via telephone number: 02082470300 or email: attendance@fernhillprimary.org

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the head teacher
- working alongside the senior leader overseeing attendance and the Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Nicola Dwyer and can be contacted via telephone number: 02082470300 or email: attendance@fernhillprimary.org.

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, marking pupils present or absent

3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers and monitor emails about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on SIMs, using the correct absence code once parent contact has been confirmed.
- Notify class teachers of absence reasons. so that they may provide parents/carers with more detailed support on attendance where needed.

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- make sure their child attends every school day and on time, properly attired and ready to learn;
- inform the school office either by email at:
attendance@fernhillprimary.org or by telephone on 020 8247 0300
by 8.30 am on the morning of the first day of their child's absence and every day of absence thereafter. Where a child is ill, the school should be informed of the nature of their illness and advised when they are expected to return;
- provide the school with at least 2 emergency contact numbers for their child;
- ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- present
- attending an approved off-site educational activity
- absent

- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (see section 5)

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- the original entry
- the amended entry
- the reason for the amendment
- the date on which the amendment was made
- the name of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- for pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not;
- the nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity;
- the nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances;

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school ready for Registration at:

- 8.50am for Reception and Years 1 and 2 (KS1); or
- 8.50am for Years 3,4,5 and 6 (KS2); or
- 8.45am for the Nursery (or at 12.25pm if they attend only the afternoon Nursery session)

The gates in the Key Stage1 and 2 Playgrounds open at 8.40am.

The register for the first session will be taken at the times set out above and will be kept open until 30 minutes after the session begins, after which pupils will be marked as absent. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:00pm for Reception and KS1 and 1:30pm for KS2 and kept open for 5 minutes.

The Nursery register is taken at 8.45am and at 12.25pm and kept open for 30 minutes after the start of both sessions.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carers must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day and every subsequent day of an unplanned absence by 8.30am or as soon as practically possible by calling or emailing the school office.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness or the pupil's attendance has fallen below 90%.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, or attendance has dropped below 90%, before the school records the absence as authorised it will ask the pupil's parent/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

Where irregular attendance of a registered pupil is causing concern, the Education Welfare Officer will be informed

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and produces evidence of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must request other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible, including sitting entrance examinations, using the Request for School Absence for Exceptional Circumstances or Examinations forms (available to download from the attendance page on the school website or as a paper copy from the school office). Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the headteacher can authorise.

School entrance examinations: Absence prior to entrance examinations will be unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided. Pupils must return to school after the examination is completed.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils arriving late may seriously disrupt not only their continuity of learning but also that of others.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (see section 4.1)will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

If a child is genuinely unavoidably late because of difficulties at home or other circumstances the class teacher or headteacher must be informed in writing.

Punctuality is reviewed on a regular basis, at a school level to identify trends and also at an individual pupil level. We work with families to identify any barriers to children arriving on time and provide support, such as a soft start club and working with our Education Welfare Officer.

Once a pupil has had 3 late marks over a half term period the Attendance Officer will send a formal monitoring letter. Should punctuality remain a concern parents will be asked to attend an initial meeting with the Attendance Officer. If the punctuality concerns persist, a meeting will be scheduled with a member of senior leadership present.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend and we have not heard from their parent or carer by 8.30 am the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may arrange for a home visit to ensure the safety of the pupil ;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not;
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session;
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Where the school is monitoring a pupil's attendance, it regularly informs parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. All parents/carers receive details of their child's overall attendance in the end of year report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher can only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Leaves of absence must be requested as far in advance as possible, using the Request for School Absence for Exceptional Circumstances form (available to download from the attendance page on the school website or as a paper copy from the School Office). Parents/carers should provide as much information as possible, including any supporting documents.

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

When considering if there are 'exceptional circumstances' the headteacher will decide each case on an individual basis taking into account all of the circumstances (including whether the child's attendance is more than 97% at the time of the request) and may require evidence to support the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- **Illness and medical/dental appointments** (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- **School entrance examinations** - the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary: for a morning exam the pupil must come into school straight after the exam and for an afternoon exam the pupil should attend the morning session.
- **Religious observance** – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Family bereavements We understand that the death of a close family member can be a particularly traumatic event in any young person's life and any request for a leave of absence will be treated sympathetically.

Family holidays are not considered to be exceptional circumstances and cannot be authorised by the headteacher.

Any absence from school will disrupt your child's learning. Children returning from a term time holiday are also unprepared for the lessons which build upon the teaching they have missed, and teachers have to give more time to help individual children catch up on missed work. This poses a risk of the underachievement of other children in the class. This is something we all have a responsibility in the school community to avoid.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 for each child within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices are issued by either the local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Pupils are rewarded with certificates for 100% attendance and punctuality at the end of each term. Pupils achieving this award are celebrated at an assembly.

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the Local Academy Committee.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Once a pupil's attendance falls below 95% (after the first half term) the monitoring process will begin. Parents will receive a letter detailing this. A meeting with the Attendance Officer may be requested.
- Once a pupil's attendance is below 90% a second stage letter will be sent and a meeting with parents, the Attendance Officer and a member of the Senior Leadership will take place. The local authority's Education Welfare Officer(EWO) will be informed and should unauthorised absence persist the EWO will begin their process for involvement with families.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 3 years by the senior leader responsible for attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Academy Committee.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Dated: 20 September 2023 [Copy signed by the Head teacher and Committee Chair is held by the Head of Governance]

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made

H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend

Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day