

# ATTENDANCE POLICY



Forest Park Primary School part of  
Orchard Community Trust



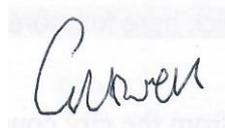
**ORCHARD**  
—Community Trust—

Last updated: September 2019

Last Reviewed: September 2019



----- Head teacher



----- Chair of governors

**Next Review Date: September 2020**

## **Attendance Policy**

National Guidance from the DfE Guidance School Attendance (2014) states that:

Schools should:

1. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
2. Ensure every child has access to full time education.
3. Act early to address patterns of absence. Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school attend regularly. All pupils must be punctual to their lessons.

### **Rationale / Statement of Intent:**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance and punctuality is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents/Carers and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and Staff of Forest Park Primary School share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

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

For children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital for them to be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

### **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 and more fun.
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training.

### **Promoting Good Attendance & Punctuality**

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 and The Local Authority; including the Code of Conduct Issuing Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence from School (2018).

It is important to remember that the vast majority of children at Forest Park Primary School arrive on time, every day. An important part of our Attendance Policy is that this good practice is commended and applauded publicly. In order to do this, we:

- Publish class attendance figures on a weekly basis in the school using class charts that are located in each classroom.
- Share attendance with families through our school newsletter.

- Award an extra 15 minutes of playtime weekly to the class with the highest attendance from Early Years/ Lower Key stage and Upper Key stage). Bertie Bear (Early Years and Lower Key stage) and Victor (Upper Key stage) are awarded to classes receiving the highest attendance.
- Reward the class with a 1-hour session of activities with the best attendance on a termly basis. This will be arranged and organised by Miss Bloor and Mrs Patten, the Family Support Team.
- Generate a termly attendance lottery - a child's name, who has 100% attendance and no lates, will be randomly selected and rewarded children with £20. There will also be a staff draw with a reward of a £20 voucher.

The level of attendance and punctuality expected from our pupils is included in our school's home-school agreement which parents must sign following their child's admission to school.

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Responsibilities of the Head teacher**

The Head teacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. They will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parent/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them 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 school.

### **Responsibilities of the School**

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote & reward good attendance.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

### **Responsibilities of Pupils, Parents and Carers**

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time and leave on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the Reception Desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence.
- Discuss with the school any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Ensure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone/text/email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by email/letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Provide medical evidence for the reason of absence.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Parents/Carers of children who are not of compulsory school age are strongly encouraged to ensure their child attends school regularly in order to establish good habits of attendance and punctuality for the future.

The school and the Local Authority together to ensure parents/carers meet their responsibility.

### **Recording absence**

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of school/lessons are used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information, and cause disruption to the lesson for others.

- The school gate opens for children from 8.45am and doors at 8.50 am with all pupils expected to be in school, in their classrooms for formal registration at 9.00am.
- Registers close at 9.10am. Children arriving in school after this time will be marked as 'late' with the code 'L'. A reason for lateness will be requested and recorded. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- If your child arrives at school after 9.30, the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence – arriving after the registers have closed with the code of 'U'. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment and arrive in time to attend the morning session, they will receive an authorised attendance code 'L'. If your child misses the whole morning session this will be recorded as an authorised absence code 'M'. Evidence of the appointment will need to be seen for this code to be used. Where possible a child should attend school prior to any morning appointments to ensure they receive a present mark and then return to school as soon as possible after the appointment. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.

Parents/Carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will initially be contacted by the Family Support Team to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend the school to meet with the Family Support Team to discuss the problem with a parental agreement, supporting the family. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 12 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 12-week period, the EWO allocated with the school will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct.

### **What to do if my child is absent?**

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required.

Please contact the school before 9.00am to report any absence (by phoning, leaving an answer phone message, telling a member of staff or the office staff). Any un-reported absences will be followed up with a phone-call from the school on the day of absence. A Family Support Worker may visit you at home on the day of absence. This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular attendance at school. You are expected to contact the school on each, individual day of absence unless you have notified us in advance that your child will not be in for a number of days (for example in the case of a sickness bug or a hospital admission). Medical evidence may be required to support the absence.

### **Third Day Absence**

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a Child Missing in Education (CME) procedure as set down by The Local Authority's Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends and wider family.

### **Fifth Day Absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 5 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **Continued or Ongoing Absence**

If your child misses 10% (3 weeks / 30 sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as persistent absentees.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 96%. 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's attendance falls below 96%, which is the school attendance target, we will contact you via letter and invite you into school for an attendance clinic to discuss the absences and set a parental support agreement.

If their attendance level falls below 90% (persistent absence) we will contact you to look at ways that we can support you to improve their attendance levels and a new parental agreement will be put into place – this will involve the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) attached to the school. If this support is not taken up, an attendance clinic will be held in your absence and you will be notified of the outcome. From this point onwards medical evidence (appointment letters, cards, texts, emails etc) will be required for any absences.

Following this if any other further unauthorised absences occur, this could result in a Penalty Notice Warning letter being issued by the school in conjunction with the Local Authority. If the attendance still fails to improve or absences cannot be authorised once the Penalty Warning letter has been sent, a statutory referral will be made by the school for a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine) to be issued by The Education Welfare Officer.

Children at this school are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

### **Leave of Absence**

#### **Request for Leave of Absence:**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: (Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If the leave in term time is not authorised and/or exceeds the 3 days that may be granted by the Head teacher, then a referral form will be completed for a fixed penalty notice (fine). This is £60 per parent, per pupil.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement

for time off in school time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office) **at least 4 weeks** in advance and before making any travel arrangements. An invitation to a meeting will be sent to anyone who makes an application. If the application is made late or the meeting is not attended and not rearranged, the meeting will be held in your absence and the information will be delivered to the home address. During the meeting a number of factors will be discussed including:

- The impact on achievement the absence could have.
- Children will be taken off role after 20 consecutive days of absence and that their position in school would need to be reapplied for.
- The reason for the request.
- The process of the request being authorised or unauthorised.
- The child's current attendance.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in the Local Authorities Code of Conduct, parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance the code.

Any leave or suspected leave in term time will be recorded as 'G' on the register.

**Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.**

For national guidance refer to:

1. 'School attendance' (2015), located at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>
2. National Association of Head teachers guidance document on 'Authorised Absence' (2014) <http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news- - and media/key-topics/parents-and-pupils/naht-issues-newguidance-on-authorised-absence/>

### **Understanding types of absence:**

Pupils are expected reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

**Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.

Examples of authorised absence include: genuine illness, unavoidable medical appointments, religious observance, death of a close relative

**Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent's request.

Examples of Unauthorised absence include: transport difficulties, being tired / having overslept, illness of a parent or carer, birthdays, the child not wanting to come to school and avoidable appointments (eg; haircut)

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

### **Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Measures:**

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

### **Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness**

Forest Park Primary School and the Local Authority will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Stoke on Trent's Legal Panels where:

- The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.
- The child has 12 or more sessions (6 days) of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

### **Legal Measures for absence taken when the Head teacher has declined parents/carers request for leave of absence**

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- Non approval of a parent/carers request for leave of absence or,
- A holiday that has been taken without permission and the unauthorised absence is for 12 or more sessions (6days) in 12 weeks.

then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce the Local Authority Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Local Authority will issue a Penalty Warning letter, which states that the parent/carers have 20 school days to improve attendance, for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 12 or more half-day sessions (six school days) of unauthorised absence during any 12 weeks – these do not need to be consecutive.
- persistently late (coded U) for up to 12 sessions (six days) after the register has closed.

During the 20-day period, a home visit or telephone contact will be made by an Education Welfare Officer. If there is no improvement and further unauthorised absences occur in the 20-day period, a fine will be issued.

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter or through the leave of absence request form. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence, the school or Local Authority will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parent/carers for each child. NB: This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one PN for each child to each parent

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid The Local Authority will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to The Local Authority and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

The matter would move to Level 4 if previous fines have not worked or if parents/carers have previous convictions for non-school attendance. Warning letters 1 and 2 are sent and an attendance review meeting is held with the Education Welfare Officer, The EWO manager, the Head teacher, Family Support Team and the parents/carers. The case will then proceed to court; this carries a heavier fine

and possible custodial sentence. If a parent/carer is found guilty it will result in a criminal conviction. Families will be advised of this during the meeting.

### **My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a 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 gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher, Family Support Worker or Head teacher to discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

### **What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?**

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you but consistency and a caring supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

### **Leavers**

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to:

1. Give the school comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing. If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

### **Record Preservation**

School Registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.