

Fountaindale School

Attendance Policy

Signed

Chair of Governors

Interim Executive Head Teacher

Date of Adoption: 18th December 2019

Due Review Date: Autumn 2020

Rationale

Many studies have proved the link between consistent attendance and achievement. Alongside this, parents and school have a legal duty to ensure pupils access education provided to for them.

As a special provision school, we appreciate our students' health needs and susceptibility to infection can impact on their regular attendance and ability to access education but through a strong parent / school partnership we can remove barriers and ensure pupils have access to education and maintain optimum attendance levels.

Legal Requirements

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children receive full time education. The Education Act 2002 places the responsibility for enforcing school attendance on the LA.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Roles and Responsibilities

1.1 Headteacher

To have overall responsibility for whole school attendance.

1.2 Deputy Headteacher

- To liaise with Senior Leadership Team (SLT), teachers and administration staff.
- To monitor the process for pupil attendance management
- To identify persistent absences and set individual targets
- To liaise with families, and where appropriate other professionals to develop intervention packages for pupils with persistent absences
- Publish mid-year and annual data reports
- Provide information attendance information to the governing body
- To review and up-date this policy as required

1.3 Teachers

- To keep accurate attendance registers at the beginning of each morning (any amendments for the afternoon sessions will also be recorded) using approved codes (Appendix 1).
- To indicate whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised using the agreed coding system
- To identify pupils with poor or irregular attendance and inform the Deputy Headteacher

1.4 Admin Team

- Contact parent by 10am, if the reason for absence **as not been communicated** to school.
- Record reasons for absence provided.

1.5 Parents

- To ensure that their child attends school, on time.
- Report any absence to the school before 8.45am on each day of absence or provide a return to school date on first day of absence.
- If child is not able to return on the return to school date provided, the parent will update the school on the reason for absence and indicate a new return to school date.
- If the child is returning to school following an operation or severe illness, the parent will contact the school, prior to the child's return, to arrange a return to school meeting (see Absence Management 4.2)
- Parents communicate any issue to the school (It is not unusual for children to sometimes be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child).

A dedicated absence reporting line is available to parents for reporting absence.

1.6 At Fountainsdale we take the safety of our students very seriously. We will never presume if a child is not in school they are safe at home. If we are unable to establish the reason why a child is not in school, by 1pm, we will seek advice from support or safeguarding services. If a student is absent for 10 days without a reason the school has a statutory duty to report the child, 'missing in education' and this will then trigger an investigation.

Absence Management

1.7 The school accept absences for the following reasons:

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment
- Occupational health appointments e.g. wheelchair clinics that require your child to be away from school for a fully day.
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- Term time absences for families with exceptional circumstances (see Authorised Term Time Absences)

If we are concerned about aspects of a child's attendance or punctuality we will contact the family to discuss the best way forward.

1.8 Authorised Term Time Absences

In exceptional circumstances, families may need to request permission for their child not to be in school during term time. These requests will be made directly to the Headteacher and permission will be given at their discretion following careful consideration of the child's age, the time of year, overall attendance pattern and the circumstances given. If the school considers the reason provided / event could have taken place outside of school hours or the absence does not offer any educational experience then the absence will be unauthorised.

1.9 Unauthorised Absences

Only the school can authorise an absence.

The school can request evidence of illness, appointments etc and may un-authorise any absence if evidence is not provided. Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences for which no explanation as been provided.
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed (after 9.30am)

1.10 Where absences are unauthorised parents will be required to attend a meeting with the Deputy Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team to provide help and support to improve the child's attendance.

1.11 In circumstances, where a resolution is not found, the issue would be raised with ICDS. Following investigation any unresolved issue could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

1.12 Legal action can be taken against parents, who do not support their child's attendance. The maximum penalty for parents on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or three months imprisonment

1.13 Children at risk of missing out on education

In mitigating circumstances, for example pupils experiencing significant medical concerns, pupils may attend Fountainsdale on a part time basis; this will be arranged through agreement with the Headteacher, and advice /involvement of key health professionals. This provision will be reviewed regularly by the senior leadership team. The Integrated Children's Disability Service (ICDS) will be informed of all students attending on a part-time basis.

1.14 Students returning to school following hospitalisation, operations or severe illness will be required to attend a return to school meeting. This meeting will ensure all necessary provision is in place to meet the child's health and wellbeing needs before they return to school. At this meeting a phased return to school may be agreed. A phased return would be a gradual increase in hours over a period of no-more than four weeks.

2. Holiday Absence

2.1 At Fountainsdale we recognise that due to students' medical needs, life limiting conditions and care needs it may be necessary for students to take holidays during time. Applications for holidays during term time are available from the school reception. All applications will be considered on an individual basis but will adhere to the legal requirements outlined below.

2.2 *Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013 Amendments to the 2006 regulations make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted Where the school and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is then absent from school, the absence is marked as unauthorised leaving parents at risk of receiving a penalty fine.*

2.3 Holidays taken without agreement will be unauthorised, retrospective agreement will not be given. Parents may incur penalties as outline in section 4.6 unauthorised absence.

3. Attendance targets

3.1 Fountainsdale's Attendance Target for each child is 92 -96% depending on health needs

3.2 Student's, falling below 90% will be categorised as persistent absence in data and governors reports

4. Supporting Attendance

4.1 Fountainsdale works with parents to promote attendance and remove barriers. Parents experience difficulties are encouraged to contact the school.

4.2 Parents are provided with information about their child's attendance at parents' meeting and other relevant meetings.

4.3 Parents will be invited to a support meeting if attendance issues are identified

5. Monitoring

5.1 Fountainsdale operates its own internal attendance audit procedure. Children with attendance falling below 90% are identified and an analysis takes place to identify reason(s) for absence. If appropriate, a meeting is held with parents to put a support plan in place to enable improved attendance.

6. Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and governor to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high level of attendance as possible.

Links

1. Safeguarding policy
2. Parents' Handbook

Appendix 1

Absence and Attendance Codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence.

The codes are:

Present at School

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Present in school during registration.

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by

individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question.

Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

Code W: Work experience

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils.

Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

Authorised Absence from School

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code S: Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel

are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Administrative Codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: Pupil not on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

Different Term Dates for Different Pupils

Schools and local authorities can agree to set different term dates for different year groups – e.g. for ‘staggered starts’ or ‘induction days’. Code # can be used to record the year group(s) that is not due to attend. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that those pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year.