



Fulbourn Primary School

Attendance Policy

Aims

- To promote and achieve regular, punctual attendance for our children.
- To satisfy the statutory (legal) requirements set out in The Education Act 1996, The Education (Pupil Registration (England) Regulations 2006 and subsequent amendments.
- To fulfil our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- To set out the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance.

Principles

It is a legal requirement that children of compulsory school age receive full time education. Regular and punctual school attendance is an essential foundation to achieving positive outcomes for children. Put simply: absence means missed learning and causes the learning process to become fragmented. This affects both the individual child and the other children in their class.

We take the issue of attendance very seriously. We want every child in our school to fulfil their potential and thrive. Our community is aspirational: we are ambitious for all our children and give the same level of attention to attendance as to other matters concerning their wellbeing and achievement. This is a whole school-community endeavour.

Statutory expectations

- Attendance is a national priority.
- All schools must submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term.
- Attendance is a key indicator of an effective school and will be scrutinised by OFSTED.

School expectations

- At Fulbourn Primary School, we strive to secure 100% attendance and expect a minimum attendance of 96%. The vast majority of our children achieve this.
- We understand that absence is sometimes unavoidable, especially due to illness, which usually comes in a block of time over a continuous period.
- Children should not, however, have more than one or two broken weeks in an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be investigated.

Registration

- Classroom doors open at 8.40 a.m.
- All children must be in their classroom by 8.45 a.m. when doors are closed.
- Once doors have been closed, entry to the school is via the main entrance.
- Registers close at 9.00 a.m. Pupils who arrive at school after this time will be recorded as late (L) on the register.
- Pupils who arrive at school after 9.15 a.m. will have their lateness recorded as unauthorised late (U) which then impacts on their overall attendance level.
- Registers are **legal** documents designed to ensure accurate record keeping, facilitate data analysis and enable an expeditious response to address concerns.
- The register must be completed twice daily with each child marked as present, absent or late. Accuracy is of paramount importance.
- If the electronic register cannot be completed, a paper register should be used instead and sent to the school office for the data to be uploaded electronically.
- Any child who fails to attend school should be recorded as an unauthorised absence (N) unless a valid reason is provided.

Lateness

Pupils who arrive after the registration period and up to 9.00 a.m. will be marked as late (L). Any pupil who arrives after 9.15 a.m. will be marked as an unauthorised late (U). Children who are persistently late to school will miss a significant amount of their education.

1. If a child receives three or more late marks in a term, the attendance officer will notify the pastoral team who will offer informal support to overcome barriers to punctual arrival.
2. Where pupils show a persistent pattern of lateness, Parents/Carers will receive a letter informing them of the school's concerns. They will be invited to work regularly with the pastoral team to address the issue.
3. Should the lateness continue, Parents/Carers will be invited to meet with a senior leader to discuss their child's lateness.

If there is no improvement, despite the school's attempts to address unauthorised absences, a referral could be made to the Local Authority Attendance officer (LAAO) for pupils who are of statutory school age.

Reporting a Pupil Absence

Parents/Carers must contact school by 9.00 a.m. on each day of absence. This can be by phone, completion of an online form on the website or by sending an email to office@fulbourn.cambs.sch.uk

For any pupil not present at the close of registration, and the reason is still unknown, the attendance officer will attempt to make contact with the Parent/Carers.

The Attendance Officer will ring every contact, starting with the priority contact, until a reason for absence is known. Any unexplained absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence if there is no response from a Parent/Carers to an enquiry regarding their child's absence from school. A record of these calls is noted on the school's MIS system, Bromcom.

For absences relating to a medical appointment, supporting evidence may be requested to authorise this absence. This can be a text message which clearly identifies who the appointment is for, a letter that is headed from the medical professional or an appointment card. A period of absences will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment. Children who fail to return to school within a reasonable time following their medical appointment could result in an a.m./p.m. session being unauthorised.

First day response

We operate a robust policy of first day response in relation to all absences. This is an effective strategy for improving attendance rates and for safeguarding.

The steps are as follows:

1. Attendance Officer contacts Parents/Carers:

The Attendance Officer will call home on the first day of absence (by no later than 9:30), and on each subsequent day of absence, if the parents have not initiated contact. The office staff will record the reason for absence on Bromcom. In line with the school's Safeguarding practices, phone calls for absentee children will be made in the following order:

- Children identified as MyConcern Category 4 and those with SEND.
- Year 6 & Year 5 (many children walk to school without adult supervision).
- Other year groups.

2. Attendance Officer to notify Designated Safeguarding Lead:

If the office staff are unable to contact a child's parents on day one OR in the event that no reason, or adequate reason, is provided for the absence, the attendance officer shall inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a deputy DSL by no later than 10:30am.

3. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL, shall make a further effort to contact the child's parents and keep a record of the attempt and potential outcome.

4. If no contact has been made with the child's parents and the child has not returned to school after three consecutive school days, the school office shall log a report on My Concern and visit the child's home to check on their wellbeing. If children are subject to a Child in Need Plan or Child Protection Plan, Social Care will be contacted on the first day of unexplained absence.

Definitions of Leave:

Authorised leave:

The school can only authorise absence in **exceptional circumstances**.

- When a pupil has been away from school to receive medical attention or is too unwell to attend. We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours. If this is not possible, confirmation of the appointment should be provided – preferably in advance – and absence limited to the time required to attend the appointment.
- Religious Observance - this must be on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.
- The leave of absence has been authorised by the headteacher due to a short and exceptional, unavoidable circumstance.
- Where families have already received two formal attendance letters, in cases where children's attendance is persistently or regularly below 90%, absences will be automatically recorded as unauthorised until evidence is provided to demonstrate ill-health or another reason for absence.

Unauthorised leave:

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school, even with the support of the Parent/Carers, such as shopping, hair appointments, visiting family or birthdays.
- Medical appointments where supporting evidence of appointment details have not been provided when asked for.
- There has been no reason provided by the Parent/Carers to support an absence.
- Failure to follow school procedures or inform the school when taking a pupil out of school during term time.
- A leave of absence that has not been authorised due to not being considered an exceptional circumstance.

Illness

We understand that absence is sometimes unavoidable due to illness, which usually comes in a block of time over a continuous period. Children should not, however, have more than one or two broken weeks in an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be investigated. Children with mild coughs, colds, sore throats, sneezing and runny noses who are otherwise well can continue to attend school. However, if they develop a high temperature they should stay at home until their temperature has reduced and are well enough to return to school.

Children who are unable to attend school due to diarrhoea and/or vomiting can return after they have been clear of symptoms for 48 hours.

Parent/Carers Responsibilities

Parent/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that children of statutory school age (term after the child turns five) attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting an absence from school without good reason is an offence. A pupil whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed the equivalent of two whole terms of learning.

Parent/Carers must:

- Ensure all children registered at Fulbourn Primary School attend regularly and punctually everyday unless prevented from doing so by illness or medical appointment.
- Inform school in advance of any medical appointments during school time. Parents may on occasion be asked to provide supporting evidence from the hospital, doctor or dentist, such as appointment details card/letter/text message in relation to the time requested.
- Ensure their child arrives at school in time for registration. Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as unauthorised.
- Inform the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that any problem can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Follow application procedures regarding a request for leave of absence during term time, which should only be taken if absolutely necessary. Leave is not automatically authorised unless considered an exceptional circumstance. Any leave taken during term time, that has been unauthorised, could be subject to a penalty notice/fine.
- Report any changes to your contact details to the School Office to ensure the school has the most up to date contact information.

School Responsibilities

High attendance levels are achieved when staff work together, understand their responsibilities and act accordingly. A robust system depends on everyone playing their part.

All members of school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness; with the Headteacher having overall responsibility in the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil. Where there are concerns, parents will always be informed by letter and or telephone conversation and given an opportunity to come into school to meet with designated staff.

The school has a graduated approach to managing attendance.

1. Early Intervention

The school is vigilant about attendance rates and undertakes continuous monitoring of the attendance and punctuality data to identify any child who is persistently absent or late and provide support to them and their family.

Steps that may be taken include:

- The school attendance officer will develop positive relationships with families and be relentless in the aim of getting all children to attend school every day;
- Attendance will be monitored weekly by the Attendance Officer;
- Letters will be sent to parents raising concerns in accordance with the Local Authority's guidance;
- Parents may be invited to discuss the situation with any or all of the following: their child's class teacher, the Pastoral leads, SENDCO or another member of the Senior Leadership Team;
- Referrals may be made for Early Help support;
- Home visits may be undertaken.

2. Parent Contract Meeting (PCM)

If a child's attendance or punctuality does not improve, or adequately improve, the parents may be invited to attend a parent contract meeting with the Headteacher (or another Designated Safeguarding Lead) to discuss the situation, review existing arrangements and identify appropriate support. The parents and school will enter into a formal written agreement setting out how they will work together to improve the child's attendance, over an initial time period of 6 weeks. This will be subject to regular review.

Here are examples of targets that may be set during this meeting:

- 95% or above attendance target over the next 6 school weeks monitoring period (insert dates).
- For a child frequently absent due to a medical reason, medical evidence will be required.
- Prompt communication when [child's name] will be absent. Parents should contact the school by 9:00am as per the School Attendance Policy.

A reference to the school and parents' legal obligations regarding child attendance will be included in target setting communication and documentation.

3. Referral for legal intervention

The following information is stipulated in the Cambridgeshire County Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (September 2021):

If a child's attendance does not improve and: (i) meets the threshold for persistent absence (90%); or (ii) includes eight unauthorised absences over an eight week period the case may be referred to the Local Authority's Attendance Team for the instigation of legal action.

This could lead to:

- an education supervision order;
- a parenting order;
- a fixed penalty notice fine;
- Prosecution

School Attendance Officer

Lateness and attendance are monitored daily by the school attendance officer:

- Ensure class registers are received in a timely manner
- Ensure children who arrive late up to 9am have an L mark recorded
- Ensure that children who arrive after 9am have a U mark recorded and record time of arrival
- Ensure accurate use of attendance codes
- On the first, and each subsequent day of absence, contact the child's parents by no later than 9:30 and log the details of the call/email exchange on Bromcom.

- On the first day of absence, if contact has not been made with the child's parents or the reason provided for absence is inadequate, inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or, in their absence, a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)) by no later than 10.30 am.
- On the third consecutive day of absence, if no contact has been made with the child's parents log the matter on My Concern.
- Keep a record of all communications with parents about attendance/punctuality/absence and upload to Bromcom.
- Forward any online requests for leave, or formal queries about attendance issues, to the Headteacher.
- Raise concerns about identified patterns of lateness with the Pastoral Team who will make informal contact with parents/carers.
- Raise concerns about ongoing patterns of lateness with the Headteacher and send late letters.
- Complete the weekly attendance spreadsheet, scrutinise attendance patterns and conduct monthly attendance meetings with the Pastoral team/Headteacher.
- Send attendance letters
- Liaise with other external organisations in relation to a pupil's attendance and/or lateness.
- Monitor pupils and follow procedures for pupils 'Child Missing in Education'.
- Follow reporting procedures for parents who have requested to Home Educated their child(ren)
- Follow procedures when deleting a pupil from roll
- Meet with LAAO on the allocated visits to school, who will also monitor the registers and follow up any identified concerns.
- Monitor absences for illness and requests for leave to attend medical appointments.
- Complete a Medical Needs Assessment on pupils with absences of 15 days during the school year
- Monitor and act upon requests for term time leave of absence and ensure Parent/Carers are informed of procedures in relation to authorised/unauthorised leave

Children leaving school during the school day

During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the children are during the school day.

- Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside school time.
- Parents are requested to confirm the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time.
- When a child is being collected from the school, parents must report to the office before the child is allowed to leave the site.
- Children must be signed out by an adult on leaving school and be signed back in by an adult on their return.
- If a child leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted and then the police if the child is not quickly found, unless the child is deemed to be at risk of harm, in which case the police will be called first.

Term Time Leave

Parents do not have the right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term time holiday. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted before the leave is taken. Parents must complete a Term Time Leave Request form and provide any supporting evidence, if applicable, with their request. This also applies to parents requesting to take their child out of school during the school day.

If the school suspect Term Time Leave has been taken but the parent/carers have not completed a Term Time Leave Request Form, we will write to all parent/carers giving them an opportunity to clarify the reason for absence and provide supporting evidence. Failure to respond to or provide supporting evidence will result in a referral to the Local Authority for unauthorised leave from school.

Exceptional circumstance (*definition of exceptional: rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis, such as up to two days absence from school to visit a dying relative, death of a family member, attendance at a funeral or any unavoidable one off event, but the following examples of requests for leave of absence that do not meet the criteria of an exceptional circumstance. These will not be authorised and could be subject to a penalty notice/fine for pupils of statutory school age:

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term
- Trip of a lifetime
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad
- Relatives coming to visit
- Extension of leave if a pupil has not returned to school after an agreed absence it does not meet grounds for an exceptional circumstance

Penalty Notice

The fine for a penalty notice is £60 per child, per parent/carer, increasing to £120 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child (ren) this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent.

Parent/Carers who take unauthorised leave during term time or whose child has a pattern of unauthorised absence over any 4 week period could be subject to the issue of a penalty notice or prosecution.

The definition of parent in relation to a Penalty Notice includes Step-parent and the partner of a parent who lives in the same household.

Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances – A Guidance for Parents

The information below is designed to help parents understand how and when leave of absence in exceptional circumstances may be granted.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Head teachers will rightly prioritise attendance. Generally, absences **will not** be granted during term time and will only be authorised by the head teacher in exceptional circumstances.

Penalty Notices for term time leave are issued based on information and referrals received by the Local Authority from schools. The Local Authority cannot override the decision made by the Headteacher to unauthorise the absence. If you have any reasons to believe the Penalty Notice should not have been issued, please contact the school within 10 working days. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are exceptional circumstances?

Exceptional circumstances are one off events which are unavoidable, examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

I explained my exceptional circumstances to the school yet I was still issued with a PN fine. Can this be reviewed by the Council?

No. Only the head teacher of a school can authorise any absence under exceptional circumstances. The County Council cannot override any decisions made by the head teacher. If a request is sent to the Council then a Penalty Notice fine will be issued based on the information received.

My child's attendance record is generally good, can I still be issued a fine for short time unauthorised holiday?

The Cambridgeshire Penalty Notice Code of Conduct allows a Penalty Notice fine to be issued for holiday taken for 3 days or more irrelative of previous attendance record.

Which parent receives the fine?

Where both parents live together and have day-to-day care and also any absent parent who has frequent contact with the child and is named in the child's school records may receive a fine for each of their children. This will include parents who allow their child to go on holiday with another family member or friend of the family.

Who is fined when parents do not live together?

The situation can become complicated where parents do not live together and both wish to remove their child from school at separate times during the same academic year. Where parents are

separated, if an absence request is submitted by the parent not involved with the absence, then both parents may be fined.

Who is considered to have parental responsibility?

The definition of a parent is anyone who has parental responsibility for the child and/or any adult with day to day care and responsibility. (Section 576 Education Act 1996). This will include step parents and cohabiters, partners of older pupils if the partner is over 18 years of age and they are living together, other relatives with residency orders.

What happens if I am a self-employed worker e.g. a Farmer, an employee with fixed holiday dates, or on a holiday rota set by my employer?

It is advisable for parents to discuss this with their child's school prior to making any arrangements for absence during school term times. Legislation no longer allows Head teachers to authorise 10 days absence from school for a term time holiday. If you are self-employed then you are able to select when you take your annual leave.

We want to go on a trip of a lifetime. Could this be an authorised absence?

No, this would constitute a family holiday. The Head teacher cannot authorise term time holidays.

I have a significant number of relatives abroad and may need to spend an extended period in another country. Could this be an authorised absence?

Head teachers are bound by law to discourage families from taking trips during term time, whatever the reason given.

Can I have a payment plan or make part payments?

No, the Code of Conduct does not allow part payments or payment plans.

The Primary school authorised the absence but I received a Penalty Notice fine for my secondary school aged child. Is there no consistency?

The Government has given the authority to individual head teachers to make their own decision based on the explanation provided by the parents. What is exceptional has not been defined by the government and therefore individual opinions may differ between head teachers. However, the county council does encourage schools to work together but at the same time take into account circumstances of the individual child's needs.

Could an absence to attend a religious observance or festival be an authorised absence?

Absence that is due to religious observance must be authorised. The day should be marked as authorised where there is an element of worship associated with the religious observance. The religious observance days are set apart by the religious body of the individual religion, not determined by the parents.

Attendance Letter 1 – Authorised absences

We are writing to express our concern regarding your child's recent high levels of absence from school. **Pupil's name** has so far been present for only **??** percent of school days this academic year. This means they have already missed **???** full days of learning. While these absences were authorised, they still have the same consequence of your child missing education.

We know that sometimes our pupils cannot attend school due to illness, and in those circumstances remaining absent from school is the right thing for them and the rest of our school community. Medical advice, however, is clear that children with mild illnesses will often be well enough to attend, for example if they have a cold or cough. We encourage our parents to utilise the NHS guidance on if your child is well enough to attend school. You can find this **here**.

The wellbeing and educational progress of our pupils is our priority, and we believe that your child's regular attendance is hugely important in enabling them to succeed at school. School absences can also interfere with your child developing the following:

- Friendships
- Social skills
- Values
- Life skills
- Cultural awareness
- Career pathways

We would appreciate your help in supporting **pupil's name** to attend school every day so that they can get the best possible outcomes and believe that working together is the best way to achieve this.

Please contact the school office in order to arrange a meeting for us to discuss how best we can support your child's lost learning time, and anything else which you would like to raise. We understand that every family's situation is unique and are here to provide support where necessary.

With kind regards

The Pastoral Team
Kerry Middleditch and Nichola Grove

Attendance Letter 2 – Continued deterioration of attendance

We are writing to express our concern that your child's attendance has continued to deteriorate since we last wrote to you on ??/??/?????. Pupil's name has so far been present for only ?? percent of school days this academic year. This means they have already missed ??? full days of learning. While many/all/some of these absences were authorised, they still have the same consequence of your child missing education.

The wellbeing and educational progress of our pupils is our priority, and we believe that your child's regular attendance is hugely important in enabling them to succeed at school. School absences can also interfere with your child developing the following:

- Friendships
- Social skills
- Values
- Life skills
- Cultural awareness
- Career pathways

We recognise that there may be reasonable explanations for the absences, and we appreciate that each family has its own circumstances; however, it is important to be aware that you are legally responsible for ensuring that your child attends school regularly. If you fail to do this – even if your child misses school without you knowing – legal action can be taken against you by the LA, including a penalty notice of £60.

More information about attendance and the potential consequences of unauthorised absences are available in our **Attendance and Absence Policy**, which can be found on our website or by request at the school office.

Please contact the school office on the contact details below as soon as possible in order to arrange a Parent Contract Meeting for us to agree a collaborative plan to ensure your child loses no more learning time.

Yours sincerely

Beci McCaughran

Headteacher

Attendance Letter 3 – Unauthorised Absences

We are writing to express our concern regarding your child's number of unauthorised absences from school. **Pupil's name** has been absent without authorisation for a total of **4** days on the following dates:

- **3/10/2023**
- **4/10/2023**
- **5/10/2023**
- **6/10/2023**

The wellbeing and educational progress of our pupils is our priority, and we believe that your child's regular attendance is hugely important in enabling them to succeed at school. School absences can also interfere with your child developing the following:

- Friendships
- Social skills
- Values
- Life skills
- Cultural awareness
- Career pathways

We recognise that there may be reasonable explanations for the absences, and we appreciate that each family has its own circumstances; however, it is important to be aware that you are legally responsible for ensuring that your child attends school regularly. If you fail to do this – even if your child misses school without you knowing – legal action can be taken against you by the LA, including a penalty notice of £60.

More information about attendance and the potential consequences of unauthorised absences are available in our **Attendance and Absence Policy**, which can be found on our website or by request at the school office.

Please contact the school office on the contact details below as soon as possible in order to arrange a meeting for us to discuss the unauthorised absences and how best we can support your child's lost learning time.

Yours sincerely

Beci McCaughran
Headteacher

