



Attendance and Punctuality Policy & Guidelines

Last updated:	September 2021
Date for Renewal:	September 2022

Fishponds Church of England Academy strives to be a fully inclusive school. Our Vision statement is **Loving to Learn, Learning to Love** and this is underpinned by the Bible Passage 1 Corinthians 13 v 4-7:

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;^[b] ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13 v4 -7 Bible ESV)

We have chosen 12 core values that we feel underpin that passage and we strive to teach and live these values together as a school.



‘Regular’ attendance at Fishponds CE Academy means ‘attending school every day that the school is open’

- Fishponds Church of England Academy is committed to providing all its pupils with a high quality full time education **which is based on our core values.**

- We believe that regular attendance at school is the key to every pupil fulfilling their potential. The school will do its best to provide a welcoming, peaceful and loving environment, whereby each member of the school community feels secure, respected and valued.
- The school will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.
- The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards, which acknowledges and is thankful for the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and punctuality and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.
- The task of raising and promoting attendance is a joint one. We believe that parents/carers, pupils, schools and agencies can raise achievement by raising attendance.

Aims of the whole school policy on attendance

- To raise overall percentage of attendance of pupils at the Academy to at least in line with the national expectation.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community.
- To increase attendance of vulnerable groups including pupil premium pupils.
- To have a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils through the support of the Academy's Family Support Worker.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data. This will include regular meetings with the attendance team and termly reports to SLT.
- To ensure that there is positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To implement a system of rewards for good attendance.
- To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service (EWS) and with other services and agencies.
- For the SLT to recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following periods of absence or reduced time spent in school and for the SLT to ensure that these periods of absence are as short as possible.

Rights and Responsibilities

Parents:

- Are responsible for making sure that their pupil attends punctually and regularly;
- Need to ensure that their pupils are properly dressed in school uniform, equipped and fit to learn;
- Must inform school when their pupil is not in school in the morning of the first day of absence;
- Must make a written request through the school office in order to request permission for any leave of absence which is known about in advance, including absence for religious observance or compassionate time off e.g. funerals etc. and planned medical appointments;
- Expect the school to support and encourage them in continually seeking ways to improve attendance of their pupils at school.

The Pupils will:

- Be listened to and respected;
- Have individual records of attendance and punctuality.

The Academy will:

- ensure accurate and daily registers are maintained on all pupils;
- not authorise absences, unless within appropriate categories;
- ensure parents are fully informed of their responsibilities;
- publish expected schools times and holidays (including inset days) to parents in good time;
- keep parents informed of attendance levels at parents' evenings;
- ensure the school is a welcoming place where pupils want to learn;
- reintegrate positively any pupils that have been absent for a significant period of time;
- monitor data to identify patterns of attendance and resource accordingly;
- work closely with the EWS through the EWS / School Service Level agreement;
- discuss individual pupil attendance with each class teacher regularly;
- ensure the whereabouts of absent pupils is known and any children missing in education reported to the local authority;
- identify barriers to school attendance for persistent absentees and provide support to the parents in order to maximise pupil attendance;
- communicate regularly with parents' when pupils attendance is a cause for concern through texts, letters and school attendance meetings;
- ensure fixed penalty notices are issued for unauthorised holidays in term times;
- share attendance figures with parents during parents evenings and within end of year reports;
- monitor punctuality of pupils, tracking and addressing pupils regularly attending school late.

The Education Welfare Service will:

- Meet regularly with the Attendance Lead to monitor levels of attendance and discuss individual pupils.
- Develop and review the Service Level Agreement.
- Take appropriate legal action against parents who do not complete their statutory obligations.
- To monitor and work with cases referred by the school.
- To monitor pupils who are missing from UK education through pupil tracking procedures.
- To support families in improving their pupil's attendance and punctuality.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Parents do not have the right to take a pupil out of school during term time to share a family holiday.

Families should be made aware that if their pupil is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year. As a school it is our responsibility to determine whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. A letter or telephone call from parents/carers does not in itself authorise an absence. Only the school's acceptance of the explanation will do this.

Acceptable reasons for an authorised absence **may** include:

- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Sickness
- Days of religious observance such as Eid or Diwali. This must be agreed with the Principal beforehand (by completing a leave of absence form).
- Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement.

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing on the leave of absence form. Where a request has been granted the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur
- That the pupil's place may be withdrawn if the family do not return as expected

**If a pupil fails to return after 20 sessions and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The pupil will then be pupil tracked by Bristol City Council
This means that the pupil could lose their school place following notification to the local authority.**

- If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil still takes leave from learning, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases, the school may issue a Penalty Notice.
- Only in **exceptional** circumstances will absence be agreed. In such cases, consideration will also be given to family circumstances.

Religious Observance

We acknowledge the multi-faith nature of British society and our Academy, therefore we recognise that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

- It is reasonable for a parent to allow their pupils not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's / carers religious body.
- Parents / carers are requested to give advance written notice to the school if they intend their pupil to be absent using the leave of absence form.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised. One day will be coded 'R' for religious observance.

Lateness

- The doors from the playground into school will be opened at 8.40 am and school starts at 8.45 am. To facilitate the accurate recording of lateness, all school doors are closed at 8.55 am. Entry to school after this time is made via the main entrance to ensure that we can be responsible for pupils' health and safety whilst they are in school.
- Registers are taken at 8.55 am and closed at 9.00am.

- The administration team record all pupils arriving after 9.00 am in the register. (Code L).
- Pupils arriving after 9.30am are recorded as arriving after the register has closed for the morning session (code U). Marks recorded as code U will be classed as **unauthorised** and will count as an absence for that school session.
- Lateness will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at an emergency medical appointment. However, permission and requests should whenever possible be requested prior to the appointment day.
- The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

Unauthorised absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of **unsatisfactory** explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday;
- Shopping for uniforms;
- Having their hair cut;
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes;
- "Couldn't get up" or the parent not able to get the pupil to come to school;
- Illness where the pupil is considered well enough to attend school;
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school;
- Keeping the pupil at home because of problems in school the day before.

Parents wishing to remove their pupil from learning during term time must send a written request to the Principal before arrangements are made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised automatically as unauthorised. Each request will be treated individually and will consider the following factors:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's absence/attendance record and absence patterns –
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time leave of absence taken – either authorised or unauthorised
- When the request was made

The School Roll

A pupil will remain on the school roll unless one of the criteria below applies:

- The pupils moves from one mainstream school to another and is enrolled at that new school.
- A permanent exclusion which has been upheld.
- Where a parent makes a formal request to the LA to 'Educate Otherwise' their pupil at home.
- Following a period of 20 sessions – where the 20 sessions are not due to sickness or other unavoidable reason – this will initiate pupil tracking procedures. This may be invoked earlier if concerns about the location of the pupil are expressed, particularly where they are taken overseas without the school being informed of the visit and / or a return date.
- Where a pupil has been certified by a medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school.

- Where the LA names another school in an Educational Health Care Plan.
- Pupils who do appear and cannot be traced by the Education Welfare Service through the City Council's missing pupil's protocol.

Procedures

Registers

- Each class will have the register taken by 9.00am. The teacher, teaching assistant or another designated adult may do this, but it is the class teacher's responsibility to ensure that the register is completed correctly.
- Registers are completed at the start of the morning and afternoon session. The times of the registration periods are:
 - 8.55 am – 9.00am (doors open at 8.40 am and register closes at 9.00 am)
 - 12:45 pm – 12:55 pm (FS and KS1) and 1.15 pm – 1.30 pm (KS2)
- All completed registers must be with the school office by 9.15 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. each day. The register should be completed electronically, unless there is a technical difficulty.
- A list of appropriate codes for absence is available for referral for all staff on the electronic register system.
- The school administrative staff completes any uncoded or missing registration data into the Attendance program every day. When completed electronically, absence codes will be updated when saved each day.

Monitoring Attendance

- All pupil's attendance is monitored 3 times a year, unless there is cause for concern, in which case fortnightly monitoring will take place. The attendance record of all pupils below 96% for each term and/or the year to date will be scrutinised. If the pattern of absence is a cause for concern letters will be sent to parents – see attached example.
- Pupils who fall below 96% in any term and/or the year to date could be invited to an attendance meeting with the attendance officer and family link worker. The Educational Welfare Officer worker may be present at these meetings. At this meeting, targets will be set. If the absence is due to illness, a referral may be made to the school nurse. If a parent fails to attend the meeting and does not notify the school in advance, they may be referred to the Education Welfare Service.
- If a pupil does not meet the agreed target in the next term then the case may be referred formally to the Educational Welfare Service. This will be based on the individual circumstances of each case.

Support Systems

- School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a pupil's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school, which could then in turn action safeguarding procedures. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their pupil's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of violence in the home. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.
- We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after pupils.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Parenting contracts
- Referrals to support agencies
- PSHE / Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
- Family learning
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be pupil centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Fishponds Church of England Academy will consider the use of legal sanctions.

Legal Sanctions

Prosecution

- Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning pupils to education.
- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their pupil if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.
- A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.
- Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the pupil and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

- The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.
- The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.
- Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Bristol City Council's Parenting Contract Protocol.

Penalty Notices

(Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accumulated at least **eight** sessions (for a holiday or otherwise across a 10 week period) of unauthorised absence and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve
- A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £60 fine is paid within 28 days or £120 if paid within 42 days of the date the Notice was issued.
- Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
- Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Bristol City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

Promoting and celebrating good attendance

- An attendance certificate is presented each week to the class with the best attendance for the preceding week.

Review

This policy was updated in September 2021

To be reviewed September 2022

Actions for the Attendance Team in order to improve attendance

Daily Tasks

- Record late marks in the register code L after 9.00am and before 9.30am and code U after 9.30am
- First day calling / text message to ensure all unknown absences are accounted for, including the most vulnerable pupils first.
- Ensure class registration marks are up to date and correct codes have been recorded.

Weekly Tasks

- Ensure all registration marks are entered into SIMs (no missing marks) and correct codes have been recorded
- Process leave of absence forms¹ and pass to the Principal
- Analyse class attendance to ensure attendance certificates and awards for best attendance and punctuality percentages are ready for assemblies.

Fortnightly Tasks: Attend and contribute to meeting between Attendance Lead, Admin team and Family support worker. Look at individual concerns for pupils, and groups, with <90% attendance, high late records and those with persistent absence. Agree next steps – monitoring, attendance surgery invite, letter home or referral.

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- Send out appropriate letters to families.
- Following attendance surgeries, book dates for attendance meeting and surgeries with EWO / Assistant Principal
- Maintain display in hall.

Term 2, Term 4 and Term 6

- Ensure teachers have pupil attendance printouts in readiness for parent consultation evenings and end of year reports.

