



# **FOWLMEERE PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Autumn 2022**

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## Statement of intent

Fowlmere Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that: "The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable – (a) to age, ability and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs he/she may have Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.

## Aims

- To emphasise the importance of, and secure from pupils, maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities;
- To make explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations over attendance levels;
- To promote a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance;
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents, pupils) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";

- To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

## Introduction

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put simply: absence means missed learning. It is also a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. **Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our pupils.**

Attendance is a national priority and, like all schools, we submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will be scrutinised by OFSTED. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance and progress.

## The National Perspective

The Department for Education states that 'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less'.

The government expects schools to:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to a full time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

The government expect parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age, who are registered at school attend regularly and for all pupils to be punctual.

## What is an acceptable attendance rate?

New guidelines around Absence from school mean that we **expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence**, which would then be authorised. Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (ie those where the pupil is marked present on all ten sessions); pupils should **NOT** have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

## Authorised Absences

Authorised absences include those where:

- i) A child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) The day is set aside for religious observance - notified in advance;
- (iii) Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).
- (iv) Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances – agreed by the Headteacher (see appendix 1)
- (v) Approved Sporting Activity

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged **out of school hours wherever possible**.

## Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- No explanation is provided by parent (s)/carers on the school day of the absence;
- The explanation received on the day of the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The following activities are examples of what would be classified as unauthorised:

- holiday
- minding the house;
- caring for relatives;

- awaiting repair people;
- shopping;
- a birthday or family celebration.

There are clearly some grey areas. The guidance from the County Council and the Department for Education makes it clear that only **exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised.

We ask parents to **notify the school in advance** (preferably 2 weeks' notice) of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits and fine judgements will have, on occasions, to be made.

In line with our Homework Policy, homework in the form of missed lessons will not be provided for unauthorised absence.

The Governments guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not.

### **Leave of Absence**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where this is the case, head teachers should determine the number of school days a child is granted leave.

Parents should complete a 'Leave of Absence' form to apply for leave (see appendix 1).

**UNAUTHORISED TERM TIME LEAVE (includes Holiday):** Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more over a 4 week period, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. Therefore Penalty Notices will be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. Such cases will have to be supported by evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice. (The Supreme Court Judgement in the case between Isle of Wight Council v Platt (6th April 2017) clarified the meaning of regular school attendance in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996. To attend school "regularly" means "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".)

Our Leave of Absence Form includes a warning that unauthorised absence may result in a Penalty Notice being issued and therefore this is deemed as sufficient evidence that 'parents have been warned.'

**UNAUTHORISED TERM TIME ABSENCE (non-attendance):** Unauthorised term time absence as a result of non-attendance may now lead to a Penalty Notice being issued. The criteria for this would include a child having at least 8 unauthorised absences over an 8 week period or 90% attendance and below marked as unauthorised over a longer period of time.

### **Home/School Partnership**

**Securing** a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

- (i) do all they can to ensure their child arrives **on time. Parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late.** We will monitor persistent late comers and action may be taken.
- (ii) notify the school on the first day if their child is unwell with details of the illness and an estimation of the likely length of absence;
- (iii) Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's motivation to attend school.

In return the school will:

- (i) Contact home on day 1 of absence if no explanation has been received from home;
- (ii) Contact home over any unexplained absences.
- (iii) Follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;
- (iv) Involve the Class Teacher and Teaching Assistants (where applicable) to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;
- (v) Regularly and consistently remind pupils of the importance of good attendance and punctuality through whole school assemblies;
- (vi) Support good or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

## **The Local Authority Attendance Team**

Our Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) is a frequent visitor to our school. The school works very closely with the Local Authority Attendance Officer regarding pupils who are giving cause for concern; the LAAO sees and supports pupils in school and is a vital component in our efforts to secure high attendance. He/she is available to assist parents where difficulties arise and can be contacted via the school or at the Local Authority Attendance Service.

The Local Authority Attendance Officer will initiate legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility of getting their child to school. Before a case goes to court, Parenting Contracts will be drawn up setting targets for attendance levels; there may also be interviews which could lead to a fixed penalty notice. The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis.

## **Reporting Attendance**

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance, attendance is reviewed on a weekly basis in line with attendance targets as advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE).

Attendances and absences are included in the school's Annual Report issued in July. Any attendance and punctuality issues will also be discussed at the Parents' Consultations hosted in March.

## **The Process of Recording & Monitoring Absences**

- Electronic registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Where the reason for an absence has not been provided, the absence will be recorded as 'N'.
- The school expects parents and carers to contact the school on the first day of absence (preferably by 9:30 am) to account for their child's absence; this does not need to be supported by a letter. Where an absence has not been explained on the first day of the absence, it will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.
- The school office will contact parents to determine the reason for the absence to be satisfied the child is accounted for. An appropriate code will then be entered into the register. An absence without an explanation on the first absence day will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Weekly monitoring by the Headteacher will highlight where attendance has fallen below 95% or where there has been a pattern of absence or continuous lateness.



- Where attendance or punctuality is established as a concern the Headteacher will send a letter and discuss the situation with the Local Authority Attendance Officer.
- The Headteacher will meet with the Local Authority Attendance Officer termly to discuss such cases.
- 'Leave of Absence Forms' for exceptional circumstances will be considered by the Headteacher in line with this policy and, where appropriate, an interview arranged or the form returned advising parents of his/her decision.
- Where a child is transferring to another school, their attendance record will be shared with the new school.
- The Headteacher will report attendance trends to the governing body termly.

## **Registration Procedures**

Each day children should be on the school premises ready to come into school at 8.35am.

A weekly electronic register is completed by each class teacher on a daily basis at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Registers will close at 9.00am.

Any children who arrive after this time will be marked as absent for that session, either with a 'U' if they arrive in school after this time or with an 'N' if they do not arrive at all. Expected absences would show as the appropriate code on the electronic register.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of any child, including a child who is subject to a child protection plan, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. As a result, the school will make swift arrangements to contact the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

The afternoon register is taken as soon as possible after lunch and any unexpected absences will be investigated by the school office.

## **Procedure for Office**

Parents are expected to email or telephone the school on the day of absence to inform the school that their child will be absent. They are asked to state a reason. These absences are recorded in the class registers on Bromcom.

By 8:50am the registers will be saved on the school's information management system (Bromcom) to enable the office to begin calling/texting parents to establish reasons for absence. Prior to contacting a parent, the administrative officer will liaise with class to ensure the child has not subsequently arrived in school without signing in at the front office. When

established, the reasons provided for any absence will be recorded in Bromcom. Any 'N' codes will be updated to show the appropriate code for the absence.

The codes (and explanations) for recording pupil attendance/absence are available to teachers and the office staff on Bromcom.

The most common codes (other than the late codes referred to above) are:

- C (Circumstances)
- G (Unauthorised Holiday)
- I (Illness/ recuperation from an operation)
- M (Medical/dental appointment)
- O (Unauthorised absence)
- V (School trip / visit)
- Y (Forced and Partial Closure – school office only)
- # (schools closed to pupils – school office only)

The electronic registers remain accessible via the management information system for the duration of the child's time at Fowlmere. Letters explaining absence filed in the child's school file.

## **Late Arrival**

All children who arrive at school after the register has closed (8.50am and 9.00am) must report to the front office.

If the late arrival is not backed up with a satisfactory explanation, the child will be marked as an unauthorised late 'U'. If the explanation describes a situation beyond the parent's control the school might consider the application of an 'L' mark.

It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent / guardian during normal school hours are signed in or out from the school office. The signing in / out register in the office is used in the case of an emergency drill and as a record of arrival / absence.

## **Young carers**

The school understands the difficulties that face young carers and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity from enrolment at the school and throughout their time at the school. We will take a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

## **General**

Registers are legal documents. It is essential that school staff consistently apply the procedures outlined in this policy together with the codes for registration and that the correct codes are used to record absences from school.

Registers are checked by the Local Authority Attendance Officer to ensure they are kept accurately by teachers and to assess the reasons and frequency of any absences below 90%.

The distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence should also be clear and consistent. Any issues surrounding attendance / punctuality should be discussed with the parents/carers at one or both of the parent teacher consultations. In particular parents should be notified if attendance is below 90% or a pattern of frequent late arrival is emerging.

## **Parents' Responsibilities**

Children should be ready to enter the school at their classes allotted time. They should not arrive any earlier unless they have prior permission to do so.

Parents/Carers should make the school office aware of any reason for a child's late arrival or absence as soon as possible, preferably by 9:30am.

Wherever possible, we encourage children to enter the school and classroom independently, as this has shown a significant increase in positive learning attitudes.

### APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

**Please complete and return to the school office as soon as possible.**

*Children of compulsory school age who are registered at Fowlmere Primary School must, by law, attend school regularly. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 amended the previous Education Regulations (England) 2006 removing the Headteacher’s discretion to agree term time holiday. As a result, all holidays taken in term time will be unauthorised unless the absence is for **exceptional circumstances**.*

*Parents are expected to provide explanations for their child/rens absence. Please complete this form to explain why your child will not be in school. If permission for this leave is not granted but the child is absent, or no authorisation is sought, or the period of leave is at a similar period of time to an absence in a previous year, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. As a result, a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Officer who may issue each parent with a Penalty Notice fine ranging from £60 to £120 per parent per child. Alternatively, this could lead to prosecution and given a sentence up to £2500 fine and / or 3 months in Prison. For more information on Penalty Notices please see the Cambridgeshire County Council’s website page on school attendance, Penalty Notice Code of Conduct. **Where parents are separated a copy of this decision will be sent to both.***

*Please note that the school day is divided into two sessions i.e. a request for one day’s leave will be recorded as **two** sessions.*

**The information on this form will be treated as confidential.**

Name of Child/Children	Class / Classes

**Date of Requested Absence:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Number of School Days:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Contact Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**It is necessary to take my child/ren out of school for the following reason. Please continue overleaf if required and provide copies of any relevant supporting paperwork with this application:**

**I understand that each parent / carer may receive a Penalty Notice for each child if this absence is unauthorised.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Declined:**

**Headteacher**

**Agreed:**

**Headteacher**

**Date:**

**For the following reasons:**

DATE

ADDRESS

Dear Parent Re: <> Dob: School: Fowlmere Primary School

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to «percentage\_attendance»% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

I will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If possible, and again if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me. However, it does no harm in speaking with the teacher, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

DATE

ADDRESS

Dear Parent Re: <> Dob: School: Fowlmere Primary School

I am writing to inform you that «forename»'s Attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting «forename»'s progress and we need to meet with you urgently.

You are required to attend a meeting with a member of the school team to discuss this matter further at the date and time below.

Date:

Time:

Should «forename»'s attendance remain irregular; the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under **Section 444 Education Act 1996, and a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.**

Medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support our students in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve «forename»'s attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 4

MEETING RECORD (Following Step 2)

**MEETING RECORD**

<b>Title/Reason</b>	<b>Attendance / Punctuality</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Time:</b>
<b>Name:</b>		<b>Year Group:</b>	<b>DOB:</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Unauthorised</b>	<b>Authorised</b>	
<b>Total Lates</b>		<b>Unexplained Absence</b>	

<b>RECORD</b>
<b>Any problems at home/school i.e. bullying etc. that may affect attendance/need support?</b>
<b>Medical:</b>
<b>School:</b>
<b>Bullying:</b>
<b>Community:</b>
<b>Home:</b>
<b>Transport:</b>
<b>Planned Holidays:</b>
<b>OUTCOMES (INCLUDING ATTENDANCE TARGET)</b>
<b>EHA Offered? YES / NO</b>
Check address/telephone numbers/email address of those with Parental Responsibilities and Day to Day care



<b>Mum's name:</b>	<b>Dad's name:</b>
<b>Mum's Address:</b>	<b>Dad's Address:</b>
<b><u>Tel:</u></b> <b>Home</b> <b>Work</b> <b>Mobile</b>	<b><u>Tel:</u></b> <b>Home</b> <b>Work</b> <b>Mobile</b>
<b><u>Email:</u></b> <b>Home</b> <b>Work</b>	<b><u>Email:</u></b> <b>Home</b> <b>Work</b>
Step Parents: Address:	Other: Address:
<b>I must remind you that as parent(s) it is your responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may result in a Penalty Notice being issued against you and/or legal proceedings being considered.</b>	

<b>Staff Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>		<b>Print Name:</b>	
<b>Parent Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>		<b>Print Name:</b>	
<b>Parent Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>		<b>Print Name:</b>	

DATE

ADDRESS

Dear Parent Re: <> Dob: School: Fowlmere Primary School

As the Attendance Officer for xxx, it has been brought to my attention that xxx has been absent from school for xxx sessions this school year/over the previous xxx weeks. I enclose a record of XXX's attendance.

As parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually.

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

I am therefore writing to inform you that if attendance fails to improve during the next (4) weeks, the case may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

DATE

ADDRESS

Dear Parent Re: <> Dob: School: Fowlmere Primary School

I have noted during a recent attendance review that your child is beginning to show a pattern of persistent lateness.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's education, I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss this.

Please note that if your child arrives after registers close this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. I must remind you that as parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may result in a Penalty Notice being issued against you and/or legal proceedings being considered.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher