



Field Place Infant School Attendance Policy and Procedures – September 2023

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Children need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Field Place Infant School recognises its responsibilities to ensure children are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of children who are registered at our school. This policy is also available on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve children' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and children of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.

- Work in partnership with children, parents, staff and the West Sussex Pupil Entitlement Team so that all children realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which children feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in children a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and children.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, children, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting children who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and children.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To reward 100% weekly, monthly and termly attendance through stickers and certificates.

- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual children's' attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the West Sussex Pupil Entitlement Team any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- This team will issue fixed penalty notices if a child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a 10-day period.
- To report attendance statistics to West Sussex County Council and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the member of SLT, (Deputy Headteacher), with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and taking action.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted on the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at parent evenings where necessary.

Senior Leadership Team

The Deputy Headteacher and Headteacher are responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Identifying trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the West Sussex Pupil Entitlement Team service.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the West Sussex Pupil Entitlement Team.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Deputy Headteacher.
- Sending out termly letters regarding attendance.

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

The school gate opens at 8.45 am until 9:00 am. This time is sufficient for all children to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9:05 am and by 12:45 pm. (Attendance code / and \ for children who are present).

All attendance records are documented using BromCom software, which is supported by the Local Authority.

Lateness

Once the gate is closed at 9:00am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9:00am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those children who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.10 will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and when children have time to greet friends and settle for the day.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

ABSENCES

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence we will approach parents. If we are not able to establish the reason for absence it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.10am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those children who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. We may do a home visit to check on a child's welfare if they are not in school and we have not authorised the absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries directly with your registered GP.

Parental Request for Absence from School

- As of September 2013, the Head Teacher is no longer allowed to authorise absence from school except in "exceptional circumstances". Holidays are not considered "exceptional circumstances".
- In "exceptional cases", parents/carers can request in advance to take a leave of absence. Requests should be made on the school leave of absence form and

should be sent into school at least 4 weeks in advance of the first day of the requested absence if possible.

- If the leave of absence form is returned to you as unauthorised, we will also send a letter advising you that if the absence goes ahead as planned we may refer you to West Sussex Pupil Entitlement Investigation team for a Fixed Penalty Notice. If the absence is not authorised and your child is not in school on one or more of the previously specified dates, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may lead to a fixed penalty notice (fine) being issued by the Local Authority.
- Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. Guidance offered to Headteachers which expresses the fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short, and by unavoidable the event could not be reasonably scheduled at another time.
- This applies to all children in years one and two and for children in reception who are of compulsory school age; i.e. the term after the child has turned five.

Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the BromCom attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. As an infant school, we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the West Sussex Pupil Entitlement Team.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The West Sussex Pupil Entitlement Team monitors attendance termly to check patterns of attendance. They will issue fixed penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to them from the school. This forms part of our school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued per parent, per child. They are generally issued where there have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence, i.e. 5 days, from school within a recorded 10 school week period. Should the period of absence for a holiday in term time be 15 school days or more, a FPN may not be deemed suitable. Instead the matter may be brought directly before the court.

Policy to be reviewed: September 2024