

Fairfields Primary School

Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

Regular attendance is important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The Supreme Court has given its judgement on the meaning of what is meant by "attend regularly" at school for the purposes of section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The Supreme Court decided that "regularly" meant "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school". Therefore, it is the expectation that all children attending Fairfields Primary School attend every day the school is open.

2. Aims

This policy outlines the aims and expectations of Fairfields Primary School to support pupil attendance at school.

3. Overview

No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.

In the first instance, it is the responsibility of parents/carers and pupils to ensure attendance at school as required by law.

Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents/carers may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents/carers, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.

The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with their skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of the communities.

4. Expectations

We expect the following from parents/carers:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school
- To ensure that they contact the School Office by either telephone or ParentMail before 8.45 am to advise the school if their child will not be attending school that day and the reason why.

5. Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively, for safeguarding purposes.

In cases where a problem may appear to be emerging, the Headteacher may telephone the families concerned or invite parents/carers to meetings about attendance discreetly, to discuss the situation with them.

5.1 Recording Pupil Attendance and Absence

To ensure children's safety, and help us meet Government guidelines, we request that parents contact the school before 8.45 am on the first day of absence to inform us of their children's absence. Parent/carers are required to call in to inform us about any children absent for any reason, or you can notify the school of your child's absence by logging in to your ParentMail Account. If the school is not contacted, a call home will be made to ensure all children are accounted for. If school cannot make contact with any of the people on the contact list, a home visit will be made.

If Your Child is Absent

- Parent/carers are required to contact the School Reception Office on the day of the absence, informing them of the reason for absence and before the registration period at 8.45 am
- Each reason will be recorded on the child's registration document
- The parents/carers are required to contact the school EVERY day the child is absent
- If parents/carers do not contact the school and the school is unable to speak to anyone about the child's absence, the school will conduct a home visit to check the child is safe. If we are concerned for the child's safety, a referral will be made to the MASH or the police may be called.
- If the school are concerned about a 'Child Missing in Education', the procedures stated within the Children Missing in Education Policy will be followed.

If your child needs to be taken out of school for any reason during the school day, please notify the school in advance and notify one of the office staff when taking the child out and on return. You will be asked to sign your child in and out. This will ensure the safety of your child at all times.

Any absences not explained will be marked as unauthorised. Should the school not require parents/carers to telephone about an absence, e.g. when a child is expected to be absent for some time for hospitalisation etc, the school will inform parents whether they are required to telephone in. An accumulation of unauthorised absences may result in a FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) being issued.

When a pupil is late into school, i.e. after 9.00 am for the morning session, parents are required to sign in the pupil at Reception on arrival. They will receive a late mark in the register. This lateness will be marked as unauthorised absence.

It is essential that our contact details are kept up to date and ask that if parents/carers change either address or phone numbers then these details are communicated to the office so that our records can be amended.

5.2 Absence Management

It is the school that authorise absence. Parents/carers provide a reason for children being absent from School. It is at the discretion of the school as to whether this reason is acceptable or not. The School may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to each Parent or Carer who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child at school. This currently stands at £60 if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 for those paying within 28 days. Fairfields Primary School follows the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct (<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-for-parents/milton-keynes-council-school-attendance>) to ensure consistent approach across the school.

5.2.1 Authorising Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. An absence can only be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness of the pupil concerned (not of the parent or another family member)
- A medical or dental appointment
- For the purpose of religious observation (one day only)
- It is an educational event/trip
- Family bereavements
- Fixed term exclusion or permanent exclusion until removed from roll or reinstated

It is important that you understand the circumstances when absence in term time will not be authorised by the school – such as:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible
- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence

In cases of medical absence, where the school has initially authorised the absence but the issue persists, the school may request the parent to complete the GP stamp form (see appendix 1) or request other GP/medical proof of absence from the parent; this change should be communicated to the parent in writing or included as part of a meeting with the school.

5.2.2 Holidays and requests for a leave of absence during term time

We advise parents that Fairfields Primary School follows the guidance which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>.

Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This, however, will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Parents who wish to request a leave of absence during term time are asked to complete a leave of absence form (see appendix 2) and submit any supporting evidence with it. Forms can be obtained from the school office or downloaded from the school website.

Parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. The school works within the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £60 if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents will be prosecuted in the magistrates' court.

5.2.3 Absence will not be authorised under the following circumstance:

- Shopping trips
- Holidays in term time
- Minding the house or looking after siblings
- Lateness after 9.00 when the registers have been taken
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified
- No reason given
- School staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or not valid

5.2.4 Attendance Monitoring

Attendance of all pupils is monitored by Fairfields Office Manager and the Headteacher. On a weekly basis, every child's attendance is considered, and an overall percentage figure is created based on attendance during this academic year.

5.2.5 Attendance Procedures

Fairfields Primary School applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

5.2.5.1 Attendance Below 96%

Parents will be contacted with a letter (see Appendix 3 – attendance letter 1) to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family via a member of the school's SLT (Senior Leadership Team)

5.2.5.2 Attendance Below 90%

Parents will be contacted with a letter requesting a meeting with a member of the SLT (see Appendix 4 – attendance letter 2) to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family. This letter will also identify procedures that will be followed should the attendance figure continue to drop. A child attending school only 90% of the time or less is considered to be 'persistently absent' according to the Government's expectations of attendance.

5.2.5.3 Attendance of 85% or Less

If a child's attendance reaches this level, parents/carers will be invited into a meeting outlining the School's concerns. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the attendance figure, an action plan will be set up and parents will be invited into school to discuss the situation in greater detail. The school will request where necessary medical evidence to support the reasons for failing to attend school.

5.2.5.4 Fixed Penalty Warning Letters and Prosecutions

A Fixed Penalty Warning Letter (see Appendix 5) will be issued where there are at least 10 unauthorised sessions over a 12-week period. The warning letter is effective for 12 weeks but the FPN cannot be issued for at least three weeks after the warning to give time for attendance to improve.

For the standard Section 444(1) prosecutions, there is a requirement for an overall attendance of below 85% with some unauthorised in the last 4 weeks. There are no limits to the number of times a warning letter can be sent. For the higher level, also known as the 'aggravated offence', a 444 (1A) letter needs to be issued. In these cases, there is a requirement for the parent/carer to have knowledge of this offence.

If the issuing warning letters does not lead to the desired improvement, Colin Mayo (Senior Attendance Officer – Legal Interventions) will be contacted. At this stage, documentary evidence of the interventions already attempted should be provided by the school. If it meets the criteria, a FPN will be issued and a copy sent to the school. If the school would prefer a prosecution, and a warning letter had been sent, then Colin Mayo will write to the parent/carer(s) and invite them to an Attendance Interview. At that meeting, a review will not be planned. However, if there is no improvement then parents will be written to again and invited to a PACE Interview. Information will be given at the Attendance Interview about the PACE Interview and the parent(s) right to legal representation.

The PACE Interview will be carried out following the guidelines given to Local Authorities by the Department for Education. A police caution will be given to the parent(s) in accordance with Code C of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

Following the interview, the case will be booked into court. Colin Mayo will inform the parents of the court date and write a Section 9 statement based upon the PACE interview and other supporting information, which has been provided by the school and/or other agencies. This 'court pack' will be sent to parents two weeks prior to any legal proceedings.

5.3 Punctuality

5.3.1 Start of the School Day

The classroom doors are open at 8.30 and the children come straight into class. The register for the morning session will be taken at 8.45 a.m. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked late on the register, the register closes at 9.00. After this time, the lateness will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

School will notify parents/carers of pupils who are persistently late.

The school may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to each parent/carer where the child has persistent late arrival at school after the registers has closed. This currently stands at £60 (for those that settle with 21 days) and £120 (for those who pay within 28 days). The school works with the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

5.3.2 - Punctuality

Fairfields Primary School actively discourages late arrival at school by challenging those who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation.

Fairfields Primary School applies the following procedure in deciding how to deal with individual concerns about punctuality.

5.3.2.1 - Missed Sessions

Parents/Carers will be contacted with a letter to outline the decline in punctuality and the offer of support to the family via our SENDCo and SLT (see Appendix 6 – punctuality letter 1).

5.3.2.2 - Missed Sessions

Parents/Carers will be contacted with a letter to outline the decline in punctuality and the offer of support to the family via the School's SENDCo and SLT. This letter will also identify procedures that will be followed should the punctuality figure continue to drop (see Appendix 7 – punctuality letter 2)

5.3.2.3 – 10 Missed Sessions

If a child's punctuality reaches this level, parents/carers will receive a phone call outlining the School's concerns. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the punctuality figure, an action plan may result in a fine. This currently stands at £60 if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 for those paying within 28 days.

5.3.3 - Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a "persistent absentee" when they miss 10% (90% or below) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately

6. School Organisation

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education. In addition, there may be specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff such as the following:

6.1 Parents/Carers

Fairfields Primary School expects parents/carers to:

- Make contact with school on first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence thereafter, unless the School asks you not to do this, by the methods mentioned in section 5.1
- Support their child and the school achieving maximum attendance

6.2 Authorised or Unauthorised Absence

6.2.1 General Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as unauthorised.

6.2.2 Approved Educational Activity

Where pupils are away from school but are undertaking an approved educational activity, this should be marked in the usual way but are counted as present for calculating data for the DfES absence return. To avoid confusion in emergency situations who are off site should not be marked as present. The following activities fall within this category:

- Educational visits and activities, both in this country and overseas

6.2.3 Other Circumstances

Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Headteacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstance, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered.

6.3 Lateness

Schools should actively discourage late arrival by challenging parents/carers and children who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation

Registers will remain open until 9.00 am. In the event of adverse weather, this period can be extended at the discretion of the Headteacher.

6.4 Ensuring Pupil Information is Up-to-Date

Schools should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies are effective. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states 'Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'. The School Office will send out Data Collection sheets three times a year.

Parents are asked to:

1. Amend the Data Collection Sheet with any information that has changes or is incorrect
2. Sign the Data Collection Sheet at the bottom to let us know that you have seen it
3. Return the Data Collection Sheet to the School Office within two weeks.

Date: September 2018
Review Date: September 2019

Appendix 1 – GP STAMP FORM

To the GP Surgery

I am supporting xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx and his/her family with school attendance matters. I would appreciate if you could confirm, by surgery stamp, when xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx attends the surgery to see a GP/Nurse.

Thank you

Date

Surgery Stamp

I, _____ parent/guardian give my permission for the surgery to

confirm that I visited the surgery with xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx on the above dates.

Appendix 2 – LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

The Staff and Governors of Fairfields Primary School are confident that parents share our wish that all children make the most of their skills, talents and opportunities. Regular attendance at school is vital if we are to achieve this aim. If you would like to request leave of absence during term time., please complete the attached form, after reading the guidance below.

From the start of the academic year 2013/14, Headteachers are no longer able to authorise leave of absence or holidays during school term time. The Secretary of State for Education has stated that all holidays during term time are unauthorised and could be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) of up to £60 per child. A FPN will be issued to all persons known to be a parent or carer of the child in question.

Parents are advised not to seek approval for term time holidays from their child's Headteacher unless there is "exceptional circumstances", such as a family wedding, overseas funeral or other family event which is not deemed to be a 'holiday' and cannot be easily arranged outside of term time. It is at the discretion of the Headteacher of your child's school to grant leave in these circumstances.

Please be aware of the following prior to making an application:

- All leave must be applied for at least two working school weeks in advance of the first day of requested leave. Only in emergency situations will requests be considered in shorter timescales.
- We strongly advise you not to make any travel arrangements until the Headteachers decision of the request for leave of absence is made final.
- Failure to request leave in the appropriate way, is likely to result in authorised absence and a possible fixed penalty notice (see further details below).
- The definition of parent generally includes all those with day to day responsibility for a child
 - ✚ All natural parents, whether they are married or not
 - ✚ Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
 - ✚ Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

Important information about the Fixed Penalty Notice:

A fine becomes effective if a child has had more than ten unauthorised sessions or five days absence. Further details of the FPN are included below:

- A FPN can be issued to each parent, per child
- A fine of £60 is payable in 21 days and, if there is a failure to pay after that time, it raises to £120 payable in 28 days
- If the fine remains unpaid after 28 days, then the parent(s) or carer(s) may be prosecuted under S444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 for the period of non-attendance and is subjected to a fine of up to £1000 per parent.

More information is available on the Milton Keynes Council Website by visiting:
<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-for-parents/milton-keynes-council-school-attendance>

Name(s) of pupil(s) for which leave of absence is being applied for			
Child 1	Class		
Child 2	Class		
Child 3	Class		
Dates (inclusive for which leave of absence is being applied for)			
From:	To:		
How many school days do you require the pupil(s) to have leave of absence for?			
On which date will the pupil(s) return to school?			
Please use the space below to justify the 'exceptional circumstances' for which the leave of absence is being requested. If the leave request is to return to your home country, please give an address in your home country and contact number where you can be reached on.			
You are also required to provide copies of evidence to support your justification of 'exceptional circumstances' e.g. wedding invitations. Please state below the evidence you have attached.			
Name of parent(s) making the application and who will be responsible for the pupil whilst they are absent from school	Parental signature	date	
1.	1.	1.	
2.	2.	2.	
For office use only			
Decision Unauthorised Or Authorised	Code for register G – Holiday not authorised H – Holiday authorised C – other authorised circumstances	Notes	Signed/Date

Appendix 3 – Attendance Letter 1

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing to you as it has been recognised that xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx has been absent from school for a period of time during this academic year resulting in an attendance rate of _____%.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined 'regular' attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Fairfields Primary School.

Attending school every day is essential for your child and their learning and social development.

Holidays during term time will be recorded as unauthorised absence unless otherwise granted and this will affect your child's attendance record.

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day, we can work with you and your family, so please contact the School Office to arrange this further.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Shotton
Headteacher

Appendix 4 – Attendance Letter 2

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to you as it has been recognised that xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Has been absent from school for a period of time during this academic year resulting in an attendance rate of _____%.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined 'regular' attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Fairfields Primary School.

Attending school every day is essential for your child and their learning and social development. Holidays during term time will be recorded as unauthorised unless otherwise granted and this will affect your child's attendance record.

We invite you in to school to attend a meeting to discuss the reason for your child's persistent absence on _____.

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day we can work with you and your family, so please contact the School Office to arrange this further.

Should your child's attendance fail to improve, you may be issued with a formal warning.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Shotton
Headteacher

Appendix 6 – Punctuality Letter

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to you as it has been recognised that xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx arrived late _____ last term.

Arriving late to school is not in the best interest of your child as they miss vital learning.

I would like to clarify that our classroom doors open at 8.30 for your child to arrive at school. Registration and early morning work takes place from 8.35 am to 8.45 am. When a child arrives after 8.45 they are marked as late.

Any child arriving after 9.00 am will have an unauthorised marked session for the first half of the day.

Should you have any problems getting your child to school then we can work together to ensure your child gains the most from their school day.

Please contact the School Office should you wish to discuss this.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Shotton
Headteacher

Appendix 7– Punctuality Letter 2

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing to you as a follow up from our previous letter in which we were highlighting your child's lateness to school. Your child has now been late _____times, totalling _____ minutes of lost learning.

Arriving late to class is not in the best interest of your child as they miss vital learning.

I would like to clarify in writing that our doors open at 8.30 am for your child to arrive in school. Registration and early morning work takes place from 8.35 to 8.45 and any time after 8.45 children are marked as late. If they arrive after 8.45 am they need to come through the main reception to be signed in by the adult who brings them to school with an explanation given for the lateness.

We have wrap around care onsite from 7.30 am should this be easier for you. Please contact Mind the Gap to get more information.

Should your child continue to keep arriving late to school then you will be invited in to discuss this matter. This will now be monitored over the coming weeks.

If you have any issues regarding this, or have any problems getting your child to school then please contact us as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Shotton
Headteacher