Farnborough Road Infant School

Attendance Policy

“Learning, Caring and Achieving Together”

Values:

‘Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfill 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 in both primary and secondary school’.

School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DFE Aug 2013

Farnborough Road Infant School believes that all pupils benefit from the education we provide and from regular school attendance. In order to achieve this we will take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may affect full attendance, are acted on as quickly as possible.

We aim to work with parents/carers to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly and on time. Helping to promote a pattern of regular, punctual attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

The government has set a minimum target of 95% for attendance. To achieve this, a child must have no more than 9 days absence per academic year. All absence, whether authorised or not, is included.

Farnborough Road Infant School expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved.

Our target for attendance is at least 96%, although we are continuously working towards a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils.

Statutory Duty of Schools

DFE guidance states “all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance, which should be set out in an Attendance Policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.” The policy must be communicated to all parties and implemented consistently.

Schools are legally required to record pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made on the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll. The attendance register is a legal document.

Statutory Duty of Parents/Carers

The Education Act 1996 Section 7 requires parents or carers to ensure their child receives efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Aims:

The school will:-

- Ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- Ensure the school attendance target is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality.
• Raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
• Ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality in newsletters, Headteachers’ reports and on our website
• Keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for recording and monitoring attendance in accordance with statutory requirements
• Identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
• Work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.
• Ensure teachers mark the register at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions
• Check the registers weekly to monitor lateness and absence
• Contact home on the first day of absence (if school has not heard from parents/carers)
• Follow up unexplained absence
• Monitor absence for exceptional circumstances
• Set targets for reducing absence
• Celebrate pupils’ attendance at the end of each half term and end of year
• Refer children who have taken leave during term time, without prior permission from the Head, to the Attendance and Welfare Service for Penalty Notice Proceedings
• Refer pupils who have 10% or more unauthorised absence to the Attendance and Welfare Service for enforcement action; which may result in either a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine) or proceedings in court

**Strategies for promoting/rewarding excellent attendance:**

**Aims:**
• To ensure good attendance and punctuality (above 96%) is regularly promoted and supported and remains high profile across school.
• To achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality (above 96%) through rewarding good attendance and punctuality.

**Weekly Celebration Assemblies**
Celebration Assemblies are held every week on Friday. The class in EYFS or KS1 with the highest attendance/punctuality look after the Attendance Bear for one week.

**This develops healthy competition between year groups to improve attendance. It also engages the teacher in conversation with their classes about attendance.**

**Fortnightly School Newsletter**
The school newsletter is used to highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality. It regularly includes sections reminding parents of our school attendance target and what that means in terms of number of days absent. It also includes information about any initiatives, which the school is using, to promote attendance and punctuality.

**Breakfast Club and Walking Bus**
Daily Breakfast Club is open every day. This supports parents by allowing them to drop their children off from 7.45am, ensuring they are on time for school. The club is organised by Fun 4 Kidz.
The Walking Bus runs twice a week meeting at Liverpool Road Methodist Church and encourages children to be on time for school as well as walk to school.

**The School Learning Environment**
A welcoming, organised learning environment, that supports and celebrates its learners is a key factor in ensuring children enjoy school and attend regularly. All staff ensure that their
learning environments are of a high quality. Regular, rigorous environmental audits are carried out by the SLT, to ensure this.

Staff Promoting Good Attendance
It is important that teachers are regularly promoting good attendance with their classes. Good class attendance is attributed to good teaching and this is celebrated.

Attendance Rewards
Class of the Week attendance is celebrated in Star of the Week assemblies on a Friday in Early Years and Year One. Each class will look after the Attendance Bear that week and each child will receive a praise postcard.
At the end of each half term children receive a certificate for achieving 100% attendance. The Headteacher and the School Administrator organise and lead on the end of term attendance incentives.

Children with 96%+ attendance in Key Stage One, receive ‘Green’ on their Going for Green feedback to parents 4 times a year; December, March, May and July.

Only pupils achieving 100% attendance and 0 lates for the whole school year, are eligible for the end of year reward.

Children whose attendance has improved over a half term and has gone back to 92% and above will receive a praise postcard sent to their home address.

Parent’s evenings
This provides an opportunity for form teachers to praise and recognise excellent attendance or share attendance concerns and discuss barriers to good attendance.
Where necessary a target for improving attendance is set between the parent and the Headteacher. The Headteacher and the AWO will then monitor this.

Punctuality
Morning registers open at 08.50. Afternoon registers open at 13.00 (Reception) 13.15 Year 1 and Year 2. Registers close half an hour after the start of each session. Children arriving late will be coded accordingly. If a child arrives late, after registers have closed, this is classed as Unauthorised absence. Persistent late arrival is classed as truancy, which may lead to a referral to the Education Welfare Officer.

Parents/Carers
Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school punctually, regularly and full-time. Failure to comply with this duty is an offence.

Parents/carers must:

- Ensure their child is on the playground by 8.45am each day
- Ensure that their child is collected or goes home alone promptly at the end of school
- Contact school by 9.30 a.m. on the first day of absence to explain the reason for absence (by phone, email or in person)
- Provide written notification (letter, e-mail or text) giving the reason why their child is absent from school otherwise the absence will not be authorised
- Remain in regular (daily) contact with school when absence continues (unless you know at the outset how long your child will be absent, i.e. hospital admission)
• Arrange dental, doctor or hospital appointments outside the school day where possible (When this is not possible, children are expected to attend school before and/or afterwards and only 1 session (half a day) may be authorised)
• Sign their child in/out at the school office, if arriving/leaving at any point during the school day
• Only ask for leave of absence for their child in exceptional circumstances and be prepared to provide evidence of such, if asked to do so
• Request leave at least four weeks before the required time and attend a meeting with the Head, to discuss, if asked to do so.

If a child’s attendance falls below 90% and/or their punctuality causes concern school will:
• Offer support via the schools internal systems for managing absence.
• Contact parents/carers to discuss the reasons why and plan for improvement.
• Monitor the child’s attendance in accordance with their individual action plan and statutory regulations.
• Celebrate improvements.
• Challenge every absence.
• Not authorise absence, unless medical evidence is provided.
• Refer children with 10% or more unauthorised absence to the Attendance and Welfare Service Education Welfare Officer. (The Education Welfare Officer [EWO] will contact parents/carers).
• Refer to the Attendance and Welfare Service for Penalty Notice proceedings and/or prosecution.

The Governing Body will:
• Ensure that school registers are kept; one for admissions and one for attendance.
• Be required to agree the annual attendance target for the school.
• Support the school with action plans where appropriate
• Review and approve the Attendance Policy annually

Understanding types of absence:

The register is a legal document. Each school day equals two sessions, a.m. and p.m. Schools are legally required to record the reason(s) for absence. Every session has to be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why the cause of absence is always required.

Authorised absence includes:

• Illness
• Medical/dental appointments (1 session)
• Approved education activities (school trips/sporting activities)
• Leave, in exceptional circumstance only, with prior permission from the Head

Unauthorised absence includes:

• Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
• Truancy
• Absences which have never been properly explained
• Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
• Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
• Leave of absence which has not been agreed (leave will not be agreed retrospectively)
Unauthorised absence may lead to a referral to the Education Welfare Officer and the Local Authority may use sanction and/or legal proceedings to enforce attendance.

Persistent Absence (PA):

A child is classed as a persistent absentee when their attendance is 90% or less at any point during the academic year. Pupil attendance is monitored from the start of the academic year to date. Any absence, whether authorised or unauthorised, is included. Absence at this level is doing harm to your child’s educational prospects and therefore support from parents is needed to tackle this.

The parents/carers of all children on the PA Report are contacted and will be offered support via the schools internal systems for managing absence. A meeting may be set up with the Headteacher to discuss the attendance plan and create a successful strategy.

All PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system.

From February 2004, the law gives powers to the school and other designated bodies to request Fixed Penalty Notices as an alternative to Prosecution, when a parent/carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child’s school attendance. When school deems this appropriate, usually as a last resort, a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent/carer.

Leave during term time:

Leave during term time will be considered (by the Headteacher) in ‘exceptional circumstances’ only. Applications must be submitted in advance and in writing, for the attention of the Headteacher. A form is available from the school office.

Parents will be informed of the Headteacher’s decision in writing. A copy of the letter will be kept on file.

If the application is declined, and the parent removes their child without permission, a copy of the letter to the parent confirming the Headteacher’s decision will be sent to the Manager of the Attendance Welfare Service at the Local Authority; along with a request for consideration to be given to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice to the parent.

Use of the Fixed Penalty Notice and Prosecution:

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. In every case, a learner must have had a minimum of five school days lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or nine days during two consecutive terms. All unauthorised absence is included, whether consecutive or cumulative.

The school never takes such action lightly. We make every effort to work with parents/carers and the individual learner to improve attendance. However, where intervention is deemed ineffective, we will actively pursue such action to ensure we meet statutory requirements. Where parents/carers are clearly failing to fulfil their legal obligation (Education Act 1996 section 444(1) and 444(1a), Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) prosecution will be recommended.

Children Missing Education:

Definition:-
- The child or young person fails to attend school without offering a reasonable explanation.
- The school has been unable to locate the pupil at the last known address or any of the contact numbers.
- The Parents/Carers have failed to offer an explanation in relation to the child or young person’s absence or a change of school or any other education provision.
Between days 1-5 – We will make all investigations to determine the whereabouts or reasons for absence from school.

Between days 6-19 – We will refer to our Attendance Welfare Officer, who, depending on the outcome of necessary enquiries/home visit, may contact the Attendance and Welfare Service, via a ‘missing pupils’ checklist’. A copy of which will be kept on file, in school.

Movement of children in the UK between local authorities and schools is tracked nationally, by each local authority. Movement of children whose families move/take them abroad is tracked by the UK Border Agency.

Schools are legally required to advise the Local Authority (Sefton) about the details of all children admitted and removed from the roll of their school. No child will be removed from the school roll without consultation between the school and the Attendance and Welfare Service.

The attendance team is responsible for identifying learners who are missing education and for liaising with the Local Authority and informing them of any removals from roll.

Removal from Roll:

School will be guided by the local authority in accordance with the criteria set out in Regulation 9 of the Education (Learner Registration) Regulations 1995 (amended 1997 and 2001).

Legal Enforcement by Sefton Council

As part of promoting good attendance and punctuality, Sefton Council will use its legal powers to enforce school attendance where this becomes problematic; including powers to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (Section 443 of the Education Act 1996), or fail to ensure their child’s regular attendance at school (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

Education Supervision Orders:

The local authority must consider applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) before prosecuting parents. A local authority may apply for an ESO instead of or as well as prosecuting parents. The order is placed on the child and the local authority is appointed by the court to supervise that child’s education, either at a school or at home, for a specified period of time.

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance. Parents or carers who take their children out of school without school’s permission or are late returning from a leave of absence that has been granted during term time as there are exceptional circumstances, may receive a Penalty Notice (fine) of £60 per parent per child, which must be paid within 21 days. If payment is made after 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty is increased to £120. Where a fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter will be referred to the Attendance and Welfare Service, who will consider instigating criminal proceedings. Please note that Penalty Notices can be issued after 12 sessions (6 days) unauthorised absences in a term or 20 sessions (10 days) in two consecutive terms. Children who are late without good reason, after registration closes, also receive an unauthorised absence mark. Unexplained absence will be recoded to unauthorised absence if a parent/carer fails to provide an explanation, or ‘evidence’ to support the absence, if required to do so.

In addition, a Penalty Notice may also be issued where parents allow their children to be present in a public place during school hours (when absent from school) without reasonable justification.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 sets out the details of how the Penalty Notice scheme must operate. Sefton Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices will be made available for schools, parents/carers and other interested parties.
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 amendments (2013) make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Sefton Council will also be conducting Pre Court Panel meetings in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984.

Updated October 2018

Signed:-  Date:-  Headteacher.
Signed:-  Date:-  Chair of Governors.

Appendix 1 - The Legal Foundation of this policy is found in Education Act 1996

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that: The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Section 444 further states that: The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law. An offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- the pupil was absent with leave agreed by school staff; (authorised absence)
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause;
- the absence was on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs;
- school is not within walking distance of the child's home and the LA has made no suitable arrangements for the child's transport to and from school (walking distance is defined in section 444(5) of the Education Act 1996). The law relating to 'walking distance' effectively is defined as two miles for pupils under age eight and three miles for all other pupils (one way).

Since March 2001 there has been a more serious offence where a parent/carer who, knowing that his/her child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him to attend (Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A), as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). This amendment was introduced to provide another, more serious offence which requires proof that the parent knew of their child’s non-attendance and failed to act. Under the higher offence a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court. Prosecution under section 444(1A) can lead to a custodial sentence.

Appendix 2 - Parental responsibility (The term 'parent' refers to one parent, both parent’s or the child’s carer)

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child’s age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This may be by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise (the parent can elect to educate their child at home).

The expression “parent”, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for him or her, or who has the day to day care of the child.

Compulsory school age is defined as beginning from age five when a child should attend school from the start of the term commencing on or after his fifth birthday. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.
Appendix 3 – First Day Contact Guidelines

First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The correct procedure at Farnborough Road Infant School is as follows:

- The Attendance Administrative Officer will mark all registers electronically at the beginning of each session.
- The Attendance Administrative Officer will check all absent pupils and for those pupil’s for whom no message has been received, will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity.
- When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the parent will be informed that the absence will not be authorised.
- In the case of minor ailments, the parent will be encouraged to send the child in with an assurance that school will keep a close eye on him/her. (NB – if there has been a spate of certain symptoms in the school or community, such minor illnesses may be treated as a valid reason for absence).
- Where no contact is made, a message will be left asking the parent to contact the school with an explanation (please note, not well or unwell is not considered to be ‘an explanation’).
- If no contact is made then other people on the child’s contact list will be contacted.
- If no contact is made then this may result in a home visit or a phone call to the police.

Appendix 4 - The Government expects schools and local authorities to:

- Reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and act early to address patterns of absence.
- Ensure parents perform their legal duty, by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend early; and all pupils to be punctual to their lessons and attend school regularly.