

# Fairhaven CEVA Primary School



# Attendance Policy

**Date Agreed by Governors:** 3/12/2020

**Date Agreed by staff:** 15/11/20

**Date for Review:** Summer 2023

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

Chair of Governors

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

10/12/20

### **Vision Statement**

Our Christian school community strives to provide a variety of learning experiences for all our young people. We are here to nurture the gifts God gives us and to celebrate our differences. We encourage our pupils to explore their interests, find their talents, flourish and live life to the full. We want our children to live great lives and ultimately make a difference in the world.

*Belief – Friendship – Diversity – Achieve*

### **Introduction**

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances.

At Fairhaven CE VA Primary School we believe that regular school attendance enables children both to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and to become responsible, organised and motivated adults. We value all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- 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.
- Rewarding regular attendance.

Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

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## Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

## Definitions

**Absence** is defined as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

An **authorised absence** is defined as:

- An absence from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

Examples include:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during the school time, for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to family emergency
- Approved Educational Activity - this covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.
- This would include:
  - Field trips and educational visits
  - Sporting activities
  - Link courses or approved education off site

If a pupil is receiving education off site or is attending at a school where they are dual registered, the school will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

**During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic, pupils who are self-isolating due to being in close contact with someone who has coronavirus or a positive test themselves. Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and / or public health advice, they will immediately offered access to remote learning, in line with the school's Pupil Remote Learning Policy.**

#### **An unauthorised absence**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school. That decision is at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms or other clothes
- Arrangements or appointments for cutting the pupil's hair
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- An unwillingness to attend school, or inability to attend owing to inadequate personal/family organisation
- A refusal to attend school on health grounds but where the pupil is actually considered well enough to attend
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the school

#### **Promoting Attendance**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

Our Home/School agreement and School Prospectus remind parents/carers of our expectations of their role in ensuring their child achieves good attendance.

We will ensure that our pupils are made aware of the importance of good attendance and how this will benefit them.

When sending their children to our school before the statutory school age start date, parents and carers agree to all school policies and procedures; however no legal action for absence will be taken until a child is of statutory school age.

Good attendance is celebrated throughout the year.

## **Attendance Procedures**

### **Registers**

Fairhaven Primary currently uses Pupil Asset to record attendance and class teachers are responsible for completing the daily registers electronically. The school office checks the electronic registers daily and makes sure absence codes are correctly recorded. Electronic Pupil Asset records are kept indefinitely. No paper copies are printed or stored.

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity outside of school. Only the Head Teacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Education. A full list of register codes is given in Appendix A.

### **Lateness**

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8:55 am.

The afternoon registration will be at 1:15pm.

**Whilst special measures are in place due to Coronavirus, afternoon registration for Bubble 1 takes place at 1.00 pm and Bubble 2 at 1.30 pm.**

- The registers will remain open for 30 minutes.
- Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be coded as late before registers close.
- Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation e.g. school transport was delayed. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

## **Process and Monitoring of Consecutive Absence**

Within the school it is the responsibility of the Office Staff to be aware of, and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. Attendance data will be monitored on a monthly basis and any pupils falling below 96.5% attendance will be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible.

Parents / carers will be reminded of the importance and legal obligation of ensuring regular school attendance. If the problem appears to be a medical one the school will recommend the child sees their GP.

Fairhaven Primary CE VA School adheres to the following procedure when pupils are absent from school.

### **First Day Absence**

- On the first day of absence, parents should notify the school of the absence, the reason for it and how long they anticipate their child will be absent. This expectation is communicated through our Home/School Agreement and through our School Prospectus. All notification of absence should be passed to the school office, who will communicate the information to the class teacher. If no message is received, the office Staff will make telephone contact with the parents or carers to establish the reason for their child's absence. It is the responsibility of the Office Staff to ensure the reason for absence when given is transferred into the register. Should a child's absence be longer than originally anticipated parents are requested to notify the school as soon as possible.

### **Third Day Absence**

- If no contact has been made between the parent or carer and the school by the third day of absence, a standard letter (Appendix B) is sent. Upon receipt of the letter parents/carers are requested to contact the school.

### **Continuing Absence**

- If there has still been no contact between the parent/carers and the school by day five the pupil will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered. This may be in the form of a fixed penalty notice. Lack of explained absence will be a safeguarding concern and Children's Services will be contacted in line with the school's safeguarding policy.

## **Procedure according to Attendance Data over time**

### **• 100% - 97% attendance:**

- Termly 100% attendance reward certificates will be issued in assembly.
- Good whole class attendance will be congratulated at the end of each half term. A certificate will be given and displayed in the classroom

- Pupils with 100% individual whole year attendance will be awarded a certificate and a small reward.
  
- **96% - 92% attendance:**
  - Careful monitoring of pupil's attendance.
  - Class teacher informed and positive strategies put in place to ensure wellbeing of pupil
  - If attendance falls below 93% the child along with their parents/cares will be invited to attend an **Attendance Support Meeting**. Parents/carers will also be sent out a printout of their child's attendance for that half term detailing any concerns about the pattern of attendance, and number of unauthorised absences
  - The meeting will discuss and record any actions that could be taken to improve attendance. (Record and Plan – Appendix C)
  
- **Under 90% attendance:**
  - The child along with their parents / carers will be invited to attend a **Fast Track to Attendance Panel Meeting** to identify the reasons for absence and work together to improve attendance. A school governor may also be invited. (Letter – Appendix D) A supportive plan will be agreed and an attendance target will be set. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.
  - A date for a review meeting will be arranged and at this meeting the action plan and attendance will be reviewed. A new action plan will be agreed. If the attendance target is met, the Review Panel can recommend that no further action is required.
  - However, the school will continue to monitor the attendance of the child and will notify the local Education Authority if attendance deteriorates. This could result in legal action being taken. If the attendance target is not met the Review Panel will recommend to the Local Authority that legal action is taken.
  - If attendance continues to cause concern parents/carers may be invited to attend an attendance meeting, the purpose of which will be to set an attendance target and create an action plan so that the school/parent/carers can work together to ensure that attendance improves. If there was no improvement when using the action plan, the case will be referred to the Local Education Authority for their consideration of prosecution in the magistrates' court.



### **Leave of absence in term time**

Parents / carers can request a leave of absence during term time by completing a leave of absence form. This is available via the school office.

Leave of absence during term time will be discouraged. Parents / carers will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement. The school will consider any application for leave of absence and will only agree to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances; parents must apply in advance for permission for their child to have leave of absence. The school will authorise leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances e.g. funerals, family weddings and children of parents whose employers do not permit leave during school holidays – a letter from the employer stating this must be received for the request to be considered

### **Fixed Penalty Notice**

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention where they have:

- At least 9 sessions (4.5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil during the last 6 school weeks.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the receipt of the notice. The fixed penalty notice is per parent per child. Failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken.

### **Absence notes**

Notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

### **Child missing from School**

If a child goes missing from school during the day, parents and carers will be informed immediately. Reasonable efforts will be made to trace the child but if the child is not found within a reasonable amount of time they will be reported missing to Norfolk Constabulary.

### **A Welcome Back**

It is important that on return from an absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on

missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

### **Attendance Targets**

The Governors have set Fairhaven CE VA Primary school attendance target at 96.5% and above. We strive to achieve 100% attendance for all pupils.

Currently the National Average attendance figure is 96%.

### **Related Policies**

To underpin the values and ethos of our school and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential the following policies are integral to this approach:

- safeguarding including child protection
- admissions
- behaviour and anti-bullying
- special educational needs
- teaching and learning

### **Statutory Framework**

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- School attendance, DFE (2018)
- School attendance parental responsibility measures: statutory guidance, DFE (revised March 2017)
- Children Missing Education: statutory guidance, DFE (2016)
- 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', DFE (2019)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children DFE (2019)

This policy will be reviewed and updated every three years.

## Appendix A

### The registration system

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorized absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorized absence
O	Unauthorized absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorized absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorized absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untameable sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils <b>Coronavirus related absence</b>	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

**Appendix B**

Standard Absence Letter to Parents (text) – to be sent after third day of un-notified absence.

Dear .....

We are very concerned that..... in class ..... has been absent from school since ..... We have tried to contact you by telephone/email without success. As this is now the third day of absence without notification we are very concerned for the welfare of ..... and require you to contact the school immediately so that we can discuss your child's absence.

May we take this opportunity to remind you that it is a legal requirement under the The Education Act 1996 Part 1 section 7 that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:

- a) To his/her age, ability and aptitude and
  - b) To any special needs s/he may have
- either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

It is an offence under Part V1 Section 444 of this Act if a child fails to attend school.

Yours Sincerely,

Head Teacher

### Appendix D

Name of parent

Address of parent (n.b. each individual parent to be invited should receive an individually addressed letter)

enter date

Dear name of parent

**Initial Fast Track to Attendance Panel re:** name of child\_date of birth

Regular school attendance allows your child to improve their life chances by taking full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. From our recent contact with you, you will be aware that we have concerns about your child's school attendance. Between enter date\_and enter date he/she has attended on only % of the number of sessions sessions that the school has been open. This is an attendance level of only %.

In order to secure an improvement in name of child's school attendance, I invite you and name of child to attend an initial Fast Track to Attendance meeting at name of school\_on enter date at time am/pm, please report to the reception area at school when you arrive. The purpose of this meeting will be to set an attendance target and create an action plan so that we can work together to ensure that attendance improves.

It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their children attend their registered school on time each day. I must therefore inform you that unless name of child's attends school on a regular full-time basis, the school will have to recommend that the Local Education Authority place this matter before the Magistrates Courts. Parents who are seen to fail in their duty can be brought before the Magistrates Court where a maximum £2,500 fine and/or up to a three month prison sentence can be imposed. The Local Education Authority also has a duty to consider an application to the Family Courts for an Education Supervision Order. This Order would put name of child under the direct supervision of a Local Education Authority Officer who will have the authority of the Court to advise, assist, befriend and give directions to the child and parents.

At the meeting we will explain your legal responsibilities and the action Norfolk County Council may take if name of child does not return to regular school attendance in more detail. I hope that we can work together to ensure that name of child's attendance improves.

Yours sincerely,

NAME OF MEMBER OF SCHOOL STAFF

