

FARLEY HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL



Attendance Policy

Governing Body Responsibility: Resources Committee	REVIEWED and APPROVED: Sept '25
	Next Review: September '26

Commitment to Attendance

The staff of Farley Hill Primary School are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, pupils, governors and the Local Authority, to building schools which provide the best education possible for young people.

Regular attendance is key to achieving this. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Attending school every day is essential in order for children to reach their maximum potential and we will do all we can to ensure children do not miss precious learning time.

As a school, we will encourage parents to ensure that their/our children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. Regular school attendance at Farley Hill Primary School will set pupils up for positive attendance throughout their school life.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher or an appropriate member of staff any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.

School staff will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's or parent's/carer's concerns
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual pupils' attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received by 9.15am, to explain the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested
- Meet regularly with the Education Welfare Office (EWO) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Education Welfare. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Education Welfare may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order
- Notify the EWO after 10 days unexplained absence and after 15 days sickness absence.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is when the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence OR when the school considers the circumstances to be highly exceptional and has given approval in advance.

Unauthorised absence is when school does not accept an explanation as being reasonable justification for the absence, OR when no explanation has been provided despite a written request being sent to parents/carers, OR when the Headteacher/Attendance Lead has not approved a parent's/carers request for leave of absence.

Note: Whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised, being absent from school will still affect your child's overall attendance %

Parents/carers should be aware that it is the Headteacher's/Attendance Lead's decision whether to authorise an absence or not.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15 am or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office staff, who can be contacted via 01189 732 148 or office@farleyhill.wokingham.sch.uk

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for supporting medical evidence. This could be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip from a doctor's surgery or a copy of an email/text or a prescription. (Please note that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for any cost.)

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this. Home visits may be made by school staff to check upon a pupil's wellbeing.

Planned absence

We ask parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

Where this is not possible, a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment and the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Evidence of a medical/dental appointment may be requested.

Please collect a leave of absence form from the school office and return as early as possible before the appointment.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Leave of Absence

- The school holiday dates, INSET days and SATs dates are published with sufficient notice
- Only in "exceptional" circumstances will leave of absence in term time be authorised.
- If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and Education Welfare may be notified.

Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher/Attendance lead will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Headteacher/Attendance lead will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad (licence required)
- Attending an interview
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's/Attendance Lead's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Only 1 day will be authorised for the religious observance.
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision so school will liaise with the Educational Welfare Service on this matter.
- Immediate family events/occasions i.e.: Weddings, funerals, Christenings/Naming Ceremonies, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs – approval for these leaves of absence are at the Headteacher's discretion. If approved, there will only be 1 day authorised for the ceremony
- Passport renewal for foreign nationals – 1 day
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

ABSENCE WILL NEVER BE AUTHORISED FOR A HOLIDAY TAKEN DURING TERM-TIME.

Pupils Leaving During the School Day

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Parents/carers should arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time where possible. Parents/carers are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time.
- Pupils must be signed out at reception on leaving the school and signed back in on their return.
- When a pupil is being collected from school, parents/carers are requested to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents/carers will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupil as a missing person or contact Social Services.

Punctuality/Lateness

It is crucial that children arrive at school on time for registration at the beginning of the day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. For school pupils and parents/carers the grounds are open at 8.30 am.

- Registration takes place at 8.45 am and pupils who arrive after this time will be recorded as late to school
- Registers close at 9.15am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session.
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will initially be followed up by school staff, the attendance lead and if not resolved may be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decided to send their child to a different school that they inform the school in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting their new school
- The address of the new school
- A new home address, if appropriate, is supplied.
- The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to Education Welfare Service and after four weeks the pupil will be registered on the S2S website as a pupil missing education.

Elective Home Education

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their children receive a suitable full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The law allows parents/carers to choose to educate children at home instead of sending them to school. This is known as Elective Home Education.

Should parents/carers wish to follow this route then this needs to be put in writing to the Head Teacher with a request that their child is removed from the school roll.

School will then inform the Education Welfare Service and arrangements will be made to inspect the education put in place at home.

Penalty Notices for Holidays

- The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) can now refer unauthorised absence to the Local Authority and action may be taken
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notices is £80 per child and per parent if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.
- If a penalty notice is not paid then the Parents may be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court. In some cases, a Penalty notice will not be offered at all and the matter referred immediately for Prosecution. Upon conviction the following sentences can be imposed:
 - Fines of up to £2500 AND/OR
 - 3 months imprisonment AND/OR
 - A Parenting Order

Penalty Notices

In addition to Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised leave, Penalty Notices may also be issued when a pupil is stopped by a Truancy Patrol or if a parent/carers fails to ensure regular school attendance.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance

If concerns regarding attendance arise, the class teacher will be notified and in the first instance talk to the parent. Should no improvement be seen or the concerns remain, a letter will be issued to the parent/carers. If there is no improvement a 2nd letter of concern will be sent to parents. Any parent/carers whose child is identified as a cause for concern will then be invited to attend an attendance meeting at school for their child with the attendance lead and family support practitioner. During this meeting an individual attendance plan (IAP) will be set up and reviewed every 2-4 weeks. Following this over the next 2 IAP reviews, if there is no improvement in school attendance the school will refer the family to the EWO who will work in partnership with school and parents/carers in support of pupils who are failing to attend school on a regular basis.

Education Welfare may also issue a Penalty Notice to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Education Welfare Officers. Before a penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

If unauthorised absence continues Education Welfare will call a Pre-Court meeting with the aim of resolving the problem. If these meetings are unsuccessful the measure of last resort is to take parents/carers to court for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

COVID-19

Gov.uk states for children and young people aged 18 and under who test positive for COVID-19, the advice is to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for three days. This is because children and young people tend to be infectious to other people for less time than adults.

Management of this policy

This is a model policy provided by the Local Authority.