



Fairfields Primary School & Nursery

Attendance Policy 2024

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Owner	Mr G Gaidoni
Ratified by the Governing Body:	To be ratified in September 2024
Review	Annually

The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school, is:

Mr G Gaidoni (Headteacher) contact 01992633195 or via admin@fairfields.herts.sch.uk

The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is:

Mrs C Wainwright contact 01992633195 or via admin@fairfields.herts.sch.uk or school gateway



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Introduction

Fairfields Primary School & Nursery is a successful school and every pupil plays their part in continuing to make it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the school community to reach their potential. For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly.

Every pupil should be at school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable or in exceptional circumstances. Legally exceptional circumstances are defined as "*circumstances that could not be reasonably foreseen and for which there was insufficient time to take the necessary action to resolve the situation arising from those circumstances*". At Fairfields Primary School & Nursery in respect of attendance exceptional is defined as unavoidable, unexpected and short-term.

It is very important therefore that parents /carers make sure that their child attends regularly. This policy sets out how parents /carers and the school will achieve this in partnership.

Points of Law

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

It has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers, local Headteacher Associations, the Local Authority and parents and carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance being everyone's responsibility. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance. In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school.
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.



1 Promoting Regular Attendance

1.1 Why Regular Attendance is so important:

It has long been reported that there is a direct link between a pupil's attendance and their attainment. Early poor attendance habits in Primary school often follow through into secondary school and then employment. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the same class. It is the legal responsibility of parents /carers to ensure their child's regular attendance at school (above 96% attendance). Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a penalty notice or prosecution.

1.2 Attendance monitoring/reward:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education;
- build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- award weekly attendance certificates to the class with the highest attendance each week;
- award the attendance cup to the class with the highest attendance each term;
- inform parents/carers if their child's attendance or punctuality becomes a concern;
- give parents/carers details about whole school attendance each term and regularly via school gateway;
- notify all parents/carers in end of year reports about their child's attendance and punctuality.

1.3 Understanding Absences

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

An unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for noninfectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, is counted as an absence for the session;
- shopping trips;
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.



- their own or family birthdays;
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends;
- day trips;
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

Authorising absences is the school's responsibility. We need to be able to show our Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) evidence regarding absences we authorise and provide information about those which we do not. For example, parents may be asked to provide appointment cards or copies of letters from a hospital or doctor. The AIO looks at the absences during his /her regular register check and offers advice about any issues and possible courses of action.

Any planned absences must be communicated via the form in Appendix B – 'Absence Request Form' must be completed.

We do ask that we are provided with at least two contact people and numbers for each pupil so that we can make contact in the event of pupil absence. Where the school feels that a particular pupil is either vulnerable or at risk they reserve the right to carry out a home visit to determine the pupil's whereabouts and wellbeing. Where appropriate the situation may be reported to the police and/or Children's Services.

The Department for Education have provided guidelines on medical absences and suggest that a child with persistent sickness or diarrhoea should remain absent from school for 48 hours from the last period of vomiting /diarrhoea and then may return provided they are well enough to attend. If they vomit once due to travel sickness, coughing or running around just after eating the exclusion period may be reduced to 24 hours providing there are no other symptoms.

2. The School Day

The timings for the school day at Fairfields Primary School & Nursery are:

Gates open: 8.45am

Registration starts: 8.55am

Registration closes: 9.00am

End of the school day: 3.25pm

The school day starts at 9.00 am with doors opening at 8:55am. Children should be in their class by 9am. Any pupil arriving after 9.00am will need to enter the school via the school office. Any child who is not in school when the register is taken will be marked as late.

The registers officially close at 9:15am and therefore children who arrive in school after 9:15am are marked as having an unauthorised absence unless information in writing has been provided prior to this and authorised.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents /carers and the child. Parents /carers are asked to liaise with the school if their child is well but reluctant to attend rather than report their child as unwell.

2.1 Understanding barriers to attendance

Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents, and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can consider a Families First Assessment or use outside agencies to help with this, such as:



- School Nurse
- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services
- Family Support Worker, or the relevant Local Authority team/s

Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

We can then work together to resolve any issues that may be affecting attendance.

Parents /carers can support their child by:

- ensuring regular and early bed times;
- not making appointments during school hours where possible;
- having uniform and equipment prepared the night before;
- providing a healthy breakfast;
- helping with homework;
- reporting any academic or social concerns promptly;
- retaining open and honest communication with the school;
- being positive about school.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils; however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

See Appendix A - useful links B for DfE summary tables of responsibilities for school attendance.

3 Absence Procedures

3.1 Reporting an Absence

Parents /carers must:

- contact the school office before 9:30am on the first day of absence to notify us of the reason for their child's absence;
- keep in regular contact with the school about their child's absence. The office may make a call home during the period of absence to seek additional information or clarity.

The school will:

- contact parents /carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them;
- invite parents /carers in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Improvement Officer and/or Headteacher if absences persist;
- refer the matter to the Attendance Improvement Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

There are times when we need to contact parents about many things, including absence, so we need to have parents' /carers' current contact numbers at all times.

We expect to be provided with at least two points of contact and telephone numbers for each and every child. This will help us to help parents /carers by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we do not have up to date contact information then something important may be missed.



3.2 Persistent Absence

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% 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 co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Parents /carers will be informed of any case that has reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully.

All our PA pupils and their parents /carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a mentor or a member of staff, use in school support, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Attendance Improvement Officer in the monthly return we are required to submit.

3.3 Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and spend less time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Pupils arriving late disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

If a child has a persistent late record parents /carers will be asked to meet with the Attendance Improvement Officer and/or Headteacher to resolve the problem. Parents /carers are encouraged to approach the school at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time. Parents /carers could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the lateness persists.

3.3.1 How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 9.00 am with doors opening at 8:55am. Children should be in their class by 9am. Any pupil arriving after 9.00am will need to enter the school via the school office. Any child who is not in school when the register is taken will be marked as late.

The registers officially close at 9:15am and therefore children who arrive in school after 9:15am are marked as having an unauthorised absence unless information in writing has been provided prior to this and authorised. However, the register will show that they are in school.

If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we celebrate good class and individual punctuality. Unauthorised lateness could result in the school seeking advice and guidance from the Local Authority

We also monitor late collection from the school premises at the end of the school day. The school will invite you to meet with them to discuss late collection of pupils if it becomes frequent and regular or a pattern emerges. A letter will be sent home once a child is collected late from school on three or more occasions.

3.3.2 Local Authority Attendance Support Team

Local Authority Attendance Support Specialists work strategically by offering support to schools, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents/Carers are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parent/Carers should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken which may be in the form of a Penalty Notice (see Appendix A - useful links for the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct) or other legal options available to the Local Authority such as prosecution in the Magistrates Court.



3.3 School Attendance and the Law

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996).

- ❖ Parent/Carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.
- ❖ Parent/Carers may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.
- ❖ A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

3.4 National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent/carers may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent/carers is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction. See Appendix A - useful links C for the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

In adherence to this law Fairfields Primary School & Nursery will not grant a leave of absence in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school.

Legally exceptional circumstances are defined as "*circumstances that could not be reasonably foreseen and for which there was insufficient time to take the necessary action to resolve the situation arising from those circumstances*". At Fairfields Primary School & Nursery in respect of attendance exceptional is defined as unavoidable, unexpected and short-term. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).



The Headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances. If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parent/Carers are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is then probable that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Hertfordshire Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents, as well as to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.



Appendix A - Useful links

DfE guidance Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance. From 19th August 2024:

[Summary of responsibilities for school attendance](#)

HERTFORDSHIRE CODE OF CONDUCT: PENALTY NOTICES FOR PARENTS OF TRUANTS AND PARENTS OF PUPILS EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003 SECTION 23

[Penalty notices for unauthorised absence | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

Illness Absence Guidance

UK Health Security Agency [Poster My Child off school Guidance](#)

NHS [is-my-child-too-ill-for-school](#)



Appendix B - Absence Request Form



Fairfields Primary School & Nursery Application for Leave of Absence form

To be completed by the Parent/~~Carer~~ for any leave of absence from School during term time

Dear Headteacher

I would like to request permission for a leave of absence for my child, a pupil registered at your school for the reasons details below (further information can be attached if required)



Pupil/Pupils full name/s	
Pupil/Pupil's Date of Birth/s	
Class/Registration	
Pupil's full address and postcode	

First date of absence	
Last date of absence	
Date of return to school	
Number of school days absent	

Please be aware, as per our school's attendance policy and the Hertfordshire publish Code of Conduct relating to school attendance, that the law requires parents to seek permission from the head teacher to take their child out of school during term time. The law states permission can only be granted if:

1. An application has been made in advance by the parent the child normally lives with; and
2. There are exceptional circumstances

Please also note that, if on the rare occasion circumstances are deemed exceptional by the head teacher, the duration your child is permitted to be away from school may only be determined by the head teacher.

Reason for Request including why you believe your circumstances to be exceptional.
(further details may be attached to this form, such as a copy of a letter for a medical appointment)

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If you have a child/ren at another school/s, please detail their name/s and which school/s they attend below

Pupil's name, name of school and school telephone number:

Full name of person making request (note requests must be made by a parent who the pupil normally lives with)	
Relationship to child	
Signature	
Date	



For Office Use

Authorised Unauthorised (Delete as applicable) Signed _____

Date		
Date input on MIS		