



Children  
First Academy  
Trust

# Pupil Attendance Policy

Approved: Education and Standards Committee

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# Children First Academy Trust Pupil Attendance Policy

## 1. Introduction:

Within Children First Academy Trust a very high priority is placed on conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We are committed to providing a full educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is critical.

It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. Any unauthorised absence is damaging to a child's education and it gives children the wrong messages about the importance of education which may lead to problems later in schooling and employment. Good attendance and punctuality are important values for later in life.

It is the policy in our schools to look at attendance using a traffic light system. This is a visual way for the parents, staff, governors and pupils to understand their attendance, we encourage our pupils to Aim for Gold which is 100%. Red is for attendance below 90%, Amber is attendance between 90-94.9%, Green is for 95% and above.

Evidence shows that poor attendance over the years of school life, is very closely linked to poor results at GCSE

## 17 days absence in a year result in a drop of one grade at GCSE over time

Our aim is to reach our target for attendance which is 96%. This is above the target set by the Department of Education which is 95%. The table below shows how many days absence equates to each percentage.

Attendance Percentage	Days missed over a school year
100%	0 days
95%	10 days (2 weeks of school)
90%	20 days (4 weeks of school)
85%	30 days (6 weeks of school – approximately half a term)
80%	40 days (8 weeks of school)

Our policy reflects the DfE regulations which came into force in November 2016, which states that; Head teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Therefore, no holidays in term time will be authorised and a penalty warning letter/fine will be sent to the parents who insist on taking unauthorised leave.

Children First Academy would interpret "exceptional" in this context as being of a unique and significant event or circumstance which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will

be applied to each case, but the normality will be that requests for authorised absence in term time will be refused.

It is explained to parents that, if a child is taken out of school during term time without permission for an extended period, it may be that the child's registered school place may be terminated, and the parent will have to re-apply for another school place on return.

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to check the school's website and newsletters to confirm school holiday dates. If they are uncertain, they should contact the school directly to ask when the holidays dates are.

No holidays should be committed to before checking that the dates are not in school time.

It is also the responsibility of the parent/carer to try and book any medical or other appointments for their child outside of school time, however, the Trust recognises that this is not always possible.

## **2. Our schools agree;**

- To provide a safe learning environment
- To promote and encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To keep and maintain registers accurately
- To regularly analyse attendance data
- To report missing children to the LA
- To maintain a consistent approach to marking registers
- To commit to provide a full educational experience for all pupils
- To ensure that records of attendance are maintained on a daily basis, according to the government legislation and guidance
- To monitor attendance closely
- To follow up poor attendance or punctuality and persistent absence by inviting parents to have a meeting or a letter/phone call of concern
- To provide supportive, approachable staff for advice and guidance to parents and pupils at all times
- To acknowledge and celebrate a successful record of attendance
- To provide individual and class incentives to reward good attendance
- To provide end of year celebrations for pupils with 100% attendance with a personal trophy and certificate.
- To send encouragement postcards home for improving attendance and punctuality
- To provide annual reports to parents of their child's attendance
- To check all independent travellers and inform parent/carer at first instance if your child/ren has not arrived

## **3. Our Parents agree;**

- To ensure that their child attends school regularly, is punctual, correctly equipped and dressed in full school uniform every day
- To inform the school on the first day of absence, giving full valid reasons for absence before 9am.
- Daily contact is expected between parents and the school when your child is absent, if you do not contact the school this will be followed up by the attendance officer and absence will be unauthorised

- To provide medical evidence if requested to support absence
- To maintain regular communication with the school staff where necessary
- To inform the school of any changes to their contact details
- To avoid arranging medical / dental appointments during school hours
- To inform the school if a child travels alone to school as this will be checked and monitored daily by the attendance officer
- Not to book holidays during term time- if the exceptional circumstances are agreed, the Head teacher will determine the length of absence authorised. A leave of absence form should be completed in advanced and given to the attendance officer- Please remember to check the website and newsletter before booking a holiday
- To provide medical evidence after 3 days of absence or when requested at any time by the Attendance Officer
- To inform the school about any concerns or problems that might affect your child/ren's attendance and punctuality
- If your child independently travels to school (Walk, Bus) please inform the school in writing

#### 4. **Our Pupils agree;**

- To attend school and all their lessons regularly and punctuality and to comply with the school's rules and regulations
- To do their best in
- To be in full uniform
- To be fully equipped and organised
- To understand and comply with the school rules

#### 5. **Monitoring of Attendance**

Attendance is monitored weekly to identify pupils whose attendance is falling below 95%. Parents will be routinely contacted if attendance falls below 93%.

#### 6. **Authorised and Unauthorised absences**

##### **Authorised absences include:**

- Leave granted by the Head Teacher (Exceptional circumstances only)
- Religious day- Your Headteacher will authorise one day, absence will be coded as an R, should you request additional days, please complete a leave of absence form stating the dates.
- The Pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause \*
- There is a family bereavement
- The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or receiving special off-site tuition
- The pupil is attending a pupil referral unit
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance

\*If your child/ren is unwell and is going to be absent from school, we expect that you inform the Attendance officer before 9am to report your child's absence. If you do not report your child absent before then, you will receive a text message to kindly remind you to call the school. If you do not contact the school your child's attendance will be unauthorised for that day.

## **Unauthorised absences include:**

Unauthorised absences are those which the school DOES NOT consider reasonable and/or for which no reason has been given by the Parent/ Carer or permission by the school. This includes:

- No explanation of absence is given
- No contact with the school \*
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The pupil is off for unexceptional circumstances
- The pupil is off due to his/ her sibling being unwell
- Leave of absence being declined by the Head Teacher and the holiday is still taken
- Additional religious day taken
- Whole day taken off for a dental/medical appointment

\*Home visits will be carried out on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of non-engagement/no contact from the parents. Home visits are conducted by members of staff or with the Education Welfare Officer. Our allocated safer schools police officer may escort staff where appropriate.

## **7. Persistent absence**

Persistent absentees are pupils whose attendance is 90% or below. If a child/ren falls into the persistent absentee category, Parents/ Carers will be sent a Persistent Absence letter informing them of their child/ren's attendance. Meetings will be arranged with the Attendance officer and be parents are likely to be issued with a low-level penalty warning letter explaining there are concerning patterns emerging.

Referrals to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be made for pupils whose attendance does not improve or if the parent/carer is failing to engage with the Attendance Officer.

Any teachers or member of support staff with concerns about a child's attendance should refer to the Attendance Officer in the first instance.

## **8. Long term illness**

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health issues will be supported to continue their education. Parent/carers will be expected to inform the school as soon as possible. Parents should provide medical reports with the diagnosis and length of time a child may be absent. Absences will be coded as I (Illness) with medical evidence, this is an authorised mark. Should no medical evidence be provided upon request, absences will be coded as unauthorised after 3 days.

**Please refer to section Parent/Career agreement and unauthorised absences section for more information in relation to unauthorised absences.**

If your child is unable to attend school for 15 days or more due to their illness, the local authority will be informed to ensure suitable provisions are in place to support your child's education whilst either in hospital receiving treatment and or during recovery.

## **Returning back to school**

We require parents to provide a medical report stating their child is fit and well enough to return to school. Should your consultant advise that your child requires post treatment care during school time and recommends appropriate reasonable adjustments to support and suit your child's return, please provide an advisory report to support this. We will arrange a Medical phased return meeting with

parents/carers, the Welfare Officer and Education Welfare Officer to discuss your child’s return date alongside any reasonable adjustments the school can put in place to provide further support.

**Absence due to filming/adverts**

If a child is involved in activities such as filming during school time, parents should provide a document from the company explaining the activity. It is at the Headteachers discretion whether or not permission is granted and if so, how many days will be authorised.

The Headteacher will consider the application form considering specific facts and circumstances which includes your child’s attendance history. The Headteacher is within their right to decline the request.

**9. Withdrawing a pupil from roll**

Parents/carers must inform the school if their child is moving to a new school. A withdrawal form should be completed. You must provide the name of the new school your child will be attending, along with a start date. Pupils are expected to attend school until the last day notified. If parents/carers are moving out of the area and do not have an allocated school for their child, please provide the name of the borough within which they will reside.

**10. Punctuality**

- ALL pupils are expected to arrive at school on time (as stated by each individual school)
- Pupils arriving to school 10 minutes after the registers have closed, will be coded as L for late- 3 or more lates will trigger a letter and monitoring period
- Pupils arriving 20 minutes after the registers have closed will be coded as U for unauthorised late – an unauthorised late will be classed as an absence- 3 unauthorised lates or more will trigger a low-level penalty warning letter, meeting and possible referral to the EWO for further action
- Parent/carers are expected to collect their child/ren on time, should you be running late due to an unforeseen circumstance, please inform the school office as soon as possible

<b>Minutes lost each day</b>	<b>Days lost per school year</b>
5 minutes	3 days
10 minutes	6.5 days (over 1 weeks of school)
15 minutes	10 days (2 weeks of school)
20 minutes	13 days (over 2.5 weeks of school)
30 minutes	19 days (just under 4 weeks of school)

**Being late 10 minutes every day for one year is equal to 33 hours - approximately 6 days.**

**11. Penalty Notices**

Parents are expected to engage with school at an early stage when absence is a concern and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. In this way concerns should be able to be resolved. If concerns continue the school may refer the child to the Educational Welfare Officer from the Trust. He/she will also try to resolve the situation but if this fails these Officers can use court proceedings

to prosecute parents or seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

If a child is regularly late, a letter will be issued to the parent. If the problem persists, a meeting will be arranged to discuss the matter.

Persistent unauthorised lates will trigger a low-level penalty warning letter or a referral to the EWO.

There is clear guidance to parents that Head teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.

Parents of pupils with attendance below 90% will be contacted and if attendance is unexpectedly below 93%, referrals may be made to the Education Welfare Service.

If a parent wishes to contact the Educational Welfare Service to ask for advice or information themselves then the number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

**A letter will be sent to the parents warning of a possible fine if a child:**

- Has had **6 unauthorised sessions** a warning letter will be sent at this stage informing of a possible fine if absences continue
- Attendance falls **below 90%**
- More than **6 unauthorised sessions** will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer

The Local Authority issues penalty notices on behalf of Enfield Schools to ensure consistency should a prosecution be needed.

Should you receive a fine for persistent and unauthorised absences details of fine details are listed below: -

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
- In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty. Payment of a Penalty notice is £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days; per parent, per child.
- Please note, you may also be at risk of losing your child's registered school place and you may not be able to find another school place immediately on your return. Should your child/ren fail to attend 20 school days (40 sessions) the school place may be removed. Please provide evidence to support absence.

## **12. The role of the Trust Education welfare officer (EWO)**

The EWO role is to support schools, children and families to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

Attendance officers will make a referral to the EWO for those parent/carers whose child/ren are not attending school on a regular basis. Welfare visits will also be conducted without notice if necessary.

When and how the EWO becomes involved:

The EWO will meet with parents to assess the situation and to discuss any concerns and reasons for poor attendance when:

- Attendance falls below 90% or 6 or more unauthorised absences/unauthorised lates
- There is disengagement with the school/attendance officers
- Fails to attend meetings
- Failure to secure, maintain and sustain good attendance/punctuality for your child
- Consistent persistent absences or poor unauthorised lates
- If children are taken out of school to go on holiday
- When 6 unauthorised sessions (3 days) have been recorded over a 4-week period

The EWO will arrange a meeting when necessary to discuss strategies for how to improve the child's attendance. An opportunity will be given to improve attendance by giving a monitoring period of 4-6 weeks. After this point the EWO will review and re-assess the child/rens attendance to make the decision as to whether further action is required

Further action by the EWO:

- Parental prosecution- if both parents have parental responsibility, both will be prosecuted. Failure to pay the fine within 21 days will mean that Education welfare services will proceed to court without further notice. The fine then increases to £2,500. Further poor attendance may result in the following;
- Court assessment hearing (CAM)
- Magistrates court for prosecution
- 3-month prison
- Education supervision orders
- Referrals to relevant services/professionals
- Unannounced welfare visits

### **Definition of "Parent"**

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines "parent" to include:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not; and
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

### **13. Application for leave of absence for a pupil in term time**

#### **Important Information for Parents/Carers**

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 no longer permit Head Teachers to authorise leave for **holidays**.
- Head Teachers may grant leave of absence if they consider **exceptional** circumstances apply. This is seen as an urgent and unavoidable response to family circumstances which cannot be resolved or delayed. This absence is only authorised with written evidence of the reason for absence. This could be critical illness of a close relative, bereavement or another family crisis.
- **If** the exceptional circumstances are agreed, the Head Teacher will determine the length of the absence authorised.
- Requests for Leave of Absence should be made in advance by completing a 'Leave of Absence Form' before any arrangements are confirmed or money committed.
- If Leave of Absence is granted please contact the school to discuss measures to minimise the impact of the absence on your child's academic progress.
- This form **MUST** be completed by the resident parent(s)/carer(s) before requests will be considered.
- Failure to make a request for a Leave of Absence in advance will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

***Please note: Parents do not have any legal entitlement to take their child on holiday during term time.***

***The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 state:***

- Head Teachers **shall not grant any** leave of absence during term time **unless:**
- An application has been made in advance, by the parent with whom the child normally resides **AND**
- They consider there to be exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
- The Head Teacher must be satisfied that exceptional circumstances warrant the granting of a leave of absence.
- The Head Teacher can determine how long an absence should be and any additional absence will not be authorised.
- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full time education through regular attendance at a school or otherwise (i.e. home education) (Section 7 Education Act 1996).

- If a child who is of compulsory school age, who is registered at school and fails to attend regularly, it is the parent that will be guilty of an offence (Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996).
- Parents whose children have unauthorised absence may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or prosecution.
- Any Fixed Penalty Notices issued and/or prosecution will apply to each parent for each child who fails to attend school. The costs are £60 per child per parent.