

Featherstone Primary School



Pupils' Attendance and Absence Policy

Governing Board approval date: 16.01.24

Monitoring, evaluation and review: Annually

Featherstone Primary School, with full support from the Governing Board, place a high priority on achieving excellent standards for all pupils and feel that pupil attendance and punctuality are essential to do so. We understand the link between attendance, safeguarding and attainment. In order for pupils to achieve their full potential, it is important that they are highly motivated to learn, and keen and eager to attend school. Regular and punctual attendance will establish good habits that will support children throughout their lives.

Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school yet we do understand that barriers to attendance are complex. Some children find it harder to attend school than others. Therefore, the Governors and staff are committed to working in partnership with parents to ensure that we listen to parents' concerns and support families, so we secure very good levels of attendance.

Definitions:

Regular attendance

At Featherstone Primary School, attendance is 'regular' if a child's good attendance is interrupted only by unavoidable absences caused by genuine illness, which means they cannot attend.

Parents

A child's main carer(s). This could be mother, father, foster carers, special guardian, grandparents, mother's partner (may or may not be married), father's partner (may or may not be married), etc. They can be living at the same address or different addresses, but MUST have an influence on the child's attendance.

Compulsory School Age

A child becomes compulsory under the following criteria:

Child turns five before:	Compulsory from
31 st December	1 st January
31 st March	1 st April
31 st August	1 st September

Featherstone Primary School has a duty to:

- To communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school
- Inform parents/carers of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences
- Have appropriate registration processes in place using DFE coding
- Celebrate good attendance- 96% and above

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits
- Ensure that all children attend school regularly and are on time for school
- Ensure that all absences are explained and that evidence is provided when required
- Monitoring and analysing attendance on a weekly basis to identify individuals or cohorts that need more support
- To have systematic, robust and consistent records which chart absence and lateness
- To consistently and correctly administer the school's internal attendance procedures
- Intervening early to ensure the very good attendance of all of our pupils
- To consider the safety of absent children and take measures to verify this
- Act upon and pursue consequence for cases of persistent absence / lateness

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2022'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2023) 'Providing remote education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- SEND Policy
- Medical Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1)

'If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence.'

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Policy.

- Having regard to KCSIE when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance officer role.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The Deputy Headteacher (Attendance Leader) is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
- Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance and punctuality of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.

Punctuality

The school bell rings to start the school day at 08.55. If a child arrives after the bell, they are late and will be marked accordingly on the register. These late marks will be monitored and children who are frequently late will be referred to the school's Attendance Officer (Deputy Headteacher).

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that code 'U' should be used for a pupil who is late after the registers have closed. Prior to registers closing, the code to use for lateness would be an 'L'.

Celebrating good attendance (96% and above)

Attendance has a very high profile at Featherstone Primary School and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in classes. Parents are regularly reminded by newsletters, text messages, emails, the school website and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment, and attendance figures are published in school reports and shared at Parent evenings. Parents receive a printout of their child's attendance registration every term to highlight the importance of school attendance.

At the end of each half term (key dates to be announced), every child's attendance will be calculated. If their attendance falls between 96% and 100%, they will be given an **Attendance Shop Voucher** and a certificate. Pupils will be able to exchange their voucher in the Attendance Shop, where a variety of items will be available.

Other circumstances taken into consideration:

As part of calculating the pupil attendance for each award, consideration will be given for individual pupil's circumstances (out of the child's control) that may have had a detrimental impact upon their attendance percentage.

The table below gives some examples of possible circumstances but is not exclusive:

Circumstance	Example of
Children with medical conditions under the care of a consultant or hospital team (Diabetes, Cystic Fibrosis, physical disabilities etc)	Medical appointments/hospitalisations will be considered and added to overall absence.
Children who live beyond the statutory walking distance (2 miles for KS1 and 3 miles for KS2)	Any lates plus U codes given due to transport issues out of their control will be taken into consideration.
Vulnerable children with extenuating circumstances (at the discretion of the SLT)	Percentage thresholds may be adjusted due to specific needs or circumstances. Any lates and 'U' Codes will be taken into consideration.

At the end of the academic year, the three children with the very best attendance from EYFS to Year 6 receives a very special certificate and trophy.

Working with parents to improve attendance

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The school will ensure that there are two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is

open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the attendance officer (Deputy Headteacher) will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, e.g. bullying, the attendance officer will work with the Headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g. the DSL and SENDCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the attendance officer will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

Persistent Absence (PA)

The Department for Education has stated the persistent absence (PA) threshold has changed from 15% to 10% from September 2015. That means that attendance below 90% falls into this criteria.

Persistent absence at 10% is equivalent to missing the number of sessions indicated below:

Half-term	10 percent (approx.)
Half-term 1	7 or more sessions
Half-term 1-2 (Autumn term)	14 or more sessions
Half-term 1-3	20 or more sessions
Half-term 1-4 (Autumn term and Spring term combined)	25 or more sessions
Half-term 1-5	31 or more sessions
Half-term 1-6 (full academic year)	38 or more sessions

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Young carers
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend school. These include:

- Meeting with pupils/patterns to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support
- Leading weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress
- Assessing whether an EHC plan or IHP may be appropriate

- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care. The school will also bear in mind that the continuation of severe PA following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent/carer telephones the school to explain the absence and has suitable evidence that medical advice has been sought (school may request this for any absence, if required).

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence (UA)

If a child is away from school without good reason, or reoccurring illness, but no medical evidence provided, the child's absence will be unauthorised.

An absence is also classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent/carer.

Finally, an absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.

Internal Attendance Procedures

Registration

Each day at school is made up of two sessions (am and pm). The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom based staff are legally responsible for completing the attendance registers correctly. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school uses SIMS to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday

- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent.

Pupils who are absent from school but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

Categorising absence

Using DFE coding (see above), a mark will be made for each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time, and no valid/acceptable reason is provided, will be marked as an unauthorised absence, unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended if necessary.

If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff have a duty to challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child’s absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum.

A note or explanation from a pupil’s home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school, the absence will remain unauthorised.

First-day calling/text

Featherstone Primary School has a system of first-day calling/text in place for children who are absent. This means that parents will be telephoned or sent an SMS text when a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early

stage, pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge.

Where it is not possible to make contact with parents or where the child's absence is a concern, the school will need to carry out a welfare visit to the child's address to see the child.

Absences from school are closely monitored and school will do all it can to support families when attendance becomes a concern or where there are patterns of illness. We ask that parents provide accurate reasons for absence when notifying school, including describing their symptoms and any medical advice sought.

Absences will only be authorised in the following exceptional circumstances:

- where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend and medical evidence is provided (school may request this in-line with Birmingham ELIT (Educational Legal Intervention Team) policies, if required).
- where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand)
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's / student's parents belong.
- other authorised reasons at the discretion of the SLT, i.e. appointment at the passport office.

Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday/shopping
- family holidays
- cheaper cost of holiday
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- illness if the child could be well enough to attend, (i.e. sore throat)
- Featherstone Primary School will **NOT** authorise holidays during term time
- There is a pattern in absences, e.g. Fridays or Mondays

Medical Evidence that can be accepted by school:

- Copy of prescription
- Slip with date, pupil's name and surgery stamp, signed by receptionist
- Medical appointment card with one appointment recorded on it
- Letters concerning hospital appointments
- Print screen of medical notes
- Doctor's medical certificate
- Doctor's letter.
- Medication prescribed by doctor
- Letter from a professional
- Any other relevant evidence i.e. confirmation text message showing appointment date/time
- NOT SICK NOTE (these are not given to children by doctors, they are only intended for adults)

Processes for monitoring attendance

Levels of attendance are a key indicator of a school's overall performance and all schools are now required to set annual attendance targets. Schools are also required not just to improve levels of overall attendance but to reduce the numbers of persistent absentees (a persistent absentee being defined as a child whose attendance rate is below 90%).

Levels of Attendance	Risk	School action
96%-100% Attendance	No concern	Celebration!
95% and below	Monitoring	Weekly Monitoring of attendance
94% and below	Concern: Risk of Underachievement	Letters Meeting with school staff to discuss reasons for low attendance. School to offer support using Early Help offer. Fast Track
Below 90% Attendance (Persistent Absence)	Concern: Severe risk of underachievement	Persistent Absence Daily monitoring Formal monitoring of attendance Fast Track Court action/Referrals to ELIT

The Attendance Officer (Deputy Headteacher) monitors and analyses attendance at an individual pupil level, class level, year group level, key stage level and vulnerable groups level. This is reported to Governors termly.

When does the school take action to improve attendance?

Featherstone Primary School has a duty to ensure that every child receives the full-time education they are entitled to. In the event that a child's attendance becomes a concern we have two options:

Fast-Track to Prosecution or Leave in Term Time (LiTT) Process

These two approaches have different criteria but the consequence of each is the same – if leave in term time is taken or if families (who are on the Fast-Track to Prosecution process) do not improve attendance, it is possible that a family could meet the criteria for both, resulting in cases proceeding for both. The court would use this information to decide how to proceed with prosecution. This decision would not lie with the school.

We will always attempt to contact parents to communicate our concerns and the actions we will take. We always seek to support our families where possible to ensure that all pupils have access to a high standard of education on a regular basis. Where parental engagement is sought and a partnership is established, we can often put in measures to improve attendance, avoiding having to take the case further. Where we are unable to engage with the parents, however, the process towards prosecution would be accelerated.

Fast-Track to Prosecution

Featherstone Primary School uses Fast-Track to Prosecution which is an Early Help Model approach recommended by Birmingham Local Authority. Its aim is to improve attendance.

The school office will log instances of absence and lateness. The Head Teacher, Deputy Headteacher and other DSLs discuss matters relating to attendance daily/weekly. Where issues persist, the following Fast-Track procedures would be followed.

Stage 1:	If a child's attendance becomes a concern because they are not attending school regularly (whether the absences are authorised or not) or they are frequently late, they will be identified on the internal attendance monitoring. Parents will be invited to school and offered support through the Early Help Offer.
Stage 2:	If the Early help is refused and the attendance does not improve or the Early Help is ineffective in improving attendance, parents will be invited to a School Attendance Review Meeting (SARM).
Stage 3:	If there continues to be no improvement in attendance the family will be issued a Formal Warning Notice Letter (which is a standard LA approved letter) and an up to date attendance print out.
Stage 4:	Any further unauthorised absences will result in the case being referred to ELIT. The case will be considered by ELIT and the parents will be notified directly. If ELIT deem that there is a case where the parents are guilty of an offence, the family will receive a Penalty Notice. Failure to pay this could result in the case being heard in court and the parents having a criminal record.
In the event a family is repeatedly referred or if the case is serious enough, the case could go straight to court under Section 444 (1A) Education Act 1996. These cases would deem higher fines or imprisonment.	

Featherstone Primary School Early Help Offer

At Featherstone Primary School, we want to support families to improve their child's attendance. We work in partnership with families and outside agencies to bring about change. Below is a list of support we can offer:

- School nurse referral
- Support with referrals to other medical professionals
- Individual Health Care Plan
- Support with finance/ housing/ health
- Family Support (i.e. routines/ behaviour/ sleep/ diet, etc)
- Emotional Wellbeing Support for pupils and their parents
- Right Help Right Time
- Place2Be
- CSAWS Attendance support

Leave in Term Time (LiTT) Process

Featherstone Primary School uses the Leave in Term Time (LiTT) process, which is recommended by Birmingham Local Authority.

The LiTT process allows the Local Authority to prosecute parents for removing their child from school for an unauthorised leave of absence during term time. This is different to the Fast-Track to Prosecution process because it focuses only on leave taken in term time which is not due to illness.

Stage1:	Any parents who wish to take their child out of school during term time must complete an application form (available from the school office) no less than 3 weeks before the leave is due to take place.
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Stage 2:	Where further clarity is required, the parents will be invited to school to meet the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher to discuss the application. This meeting is an opportunity for school staff to get a full understanding of the reasons for the leave request. The decision to authorise or not authorise will not be made at this meeting.
Stage 3:	The request will be considered by the Headteacher. A decision will be sent out by letter to all parents individually, using a standard LA letter. Head Teachers are within their rights to turn such applications down and refuse authorisation for parents/carers to take their children out of school during term time.
Stage 4:	On the rare occasions where this leave is granted, the Headteacher will notify the parents in writing.
Stage 5:	If the school decides not to agree to the request and the parents/carers take their child(ren) on unauthorised leave, the school will refer the case to court- if it meets the thresholds below.

Leave in Term Time- Thresholds for Penalty Notice

Absence	Legal Consequence
At least 5 days consecutive Leave in Term Time (G code)	Penalty Notice

LiTT will only be authorised in the following exceptional circumstances:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil or life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)
- leave for armed forces personnel who are prevented by operational duties to take their leave at any other time
- leave of absence already granted by a previous school or local authority (granted within the last six months and supported by documentation from the previous school)

Legal consequences of Leave in Term Time Process and Fast-Track to Prosecution

Section 444A (1) of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by section 23(1) of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) and the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, empowers designated Local Authority Officers, Head Teachers and the Police to issue a penalty notice to the parents/carers of pupils who have UA (Unauthorised Absence) from school.

£60 per parent per child- up to 21 days.

£120 per parent per child- up to 28 days.

If payment is not received or the level of offence is too great to issue a PN, the case will be prosecuted under section 444 (1) of the 1996 Education Act.

Up to £1,000 fine per parent. This results in a criminal record.

For pupils who have taken unauthorised leave in term time for four weeks or more, penalty notices may not be issued as cases may proceed straight to court. Decisions as to whether a

penalty notice is to be issued or the matter proceeds straight to court lie with ELIT. The Headteacher cannot make this decision.

Where children do not attend school, but unauthorised leave in term time is suspected (parents have not followed the application process), the usual school absence procedures must be followed. Schools must then follow the Children Missing in Education (CME) procedures, for safeguarding purposes, jointly with the Local Authority making reasonable enquiries to try to locate the pupil (refer to CME Policy).

Please note: in circumstances where the parents/carers do not apply for authorisation prior to departure, retrospective authorisation of leave in term time by the Head Teacher is not permitted under the regulations set by the Local Authority.

SEND and health-related absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. All pupils will be supported with their mental health in accordance with the school's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy.

Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is 96 percent.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.