

# Forest Academy & Elveden Church of England Primary Academy



## Attendance Policy

Date Completed: April 2017

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Review Date: April 2020

# FOREST ACADEMY & ELVEDEN CHURCH PRIMARY ACADEMY ATTENDANCE POLICY April 2017-April 2020

## **Aim**

The aim of Forest Academy and Elveden C of E Primary Academy is to provide an environment, which encourages all our children to attend school regularly and punctually. This is vital if we are to ensure they succeed in school and in their future lives.

The whole school community has a responsibility for promoting excellent attendance; parents, pupils and all school staff.

## **Parents Responsibilities**

The Education Act 1996 states that all children should attend school regularly and punctually section 444 of the Act says: -

“If a child of compulsory school age who is registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence”.

(NB Where the Education Act refers to “he”, it also means “she”).

If a pupil is prevented from attending school because of sickness or other unavoidable cause, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school of the pupil’s absence. Ideally this should be by telephone on the first day of absence and confirmed in writing. Wherever possible, parents should avoid making medical/dental appointments for their children during school hours.

Parents also have a responsibility for following school procedures if their child arrives late and must report to the school office. If they arrive after registers close, this will be marked as an unauthorised, late session.

Parents do not have the right to take children out of school for a holiday during term time. If however, parents apply to the school at least 1 month in advance, the school may, at the Headteacher’s discretion, grant authorised absences in exceptional circumstances. These are limited to:

- Leave for funeral of a family member (If this takes place outside of the UK, 3 days/6 sessions will be authorised)
- Leave for a religious ceremony (If this takes place outside of the UK, 3 days/6 sessions will be authorised)
- Leave if a child has a parent in the armed forces which determines when they are able to take leave.

## **Pupils responsibilities**

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties, which might prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.

Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher a note from their parents to explain the absence

## **School Responsibility**

All the staff at the Academies will provide an ethos, which places a high value on regular attendance and good punctuality. They also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

School staff are responsible for ensuring that pupils have good attendance by

- ❖ Ensuring that attendance registers are kept accurately
- ❖ Differentiating appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence (a letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence – only the school can decide whether the parent's explanation justifies authorising the absence).
- ❖ Responding to absenteeism firmly, consistently and with care.
- ❖ Contacting parents when they are concerned about a pupil's absences and recording the contact.
- ❖ Consulting the Education Welfare Service if a pupil's attendance continues to give cause for concern.
- ❖ Reporting poor attendance to the Education Welfare Officer.
- ❖ Acknowledging improvement of attendance of individual pupils and classes.
- ❖ Rewarding good attendance with stickers and certificates.
- ❖ Work with parents to resolve any issues that may affect attendance
- ❖ The home-school agreements include clear understandings about attendance and punctuality.

## **A GUIDE FOR STAFF**

### **REGISTRATION**

#### **Call on the registers:**

- ❖ Classroom teachers are responsible for attendance registers, however admin staff record codes for absence.
- ❖ The class teacher will call register promptly at 8.50am for morning registration at both schools. Afternoon registration will be 12.45pm for EYFS, 1.00pm for KS1 and 1.15pm for KS2 at Forest Academy. Elveden afternoon registration is at 1.00pm.
- ❖ Registers will close at 9.05am and 15 minutes after the start of the afternoon school.
- ❖ If a pupil fails to arrive before the register closes, he/she will be marked absent.
- ❖ Pupils, who arrive late, but before the close of registration, should report to the office where they will be signed into the late book by their parent/member of staff.

#### **Who will amend the register?**

- ❖ Pupils who arrive after the register has been closed but before the register leaves the classroom should be marked as late in the register and sent to the office.
- ❖ Pupils who arrive after the register has closed should report to the school office and sign or be signed into the late book indicating time of arrival. The register will be marked with the appropriate code by admin staff.

### **Monitoring procedure**

Attendance reports are printed weekly by admin staff for monitoring purposes.

## Weekly totals

These must be completed by admin staff on a weekly basis.

## Authorised/unauthorized absences

Providing an explanation is received, an absence **may be authorised for:** -

- ❖ Illness/medical needs
- ❖ Dental / medical appointments
- ❖ Day of religious observance
- ❖ Family bereavement
- ❖ Exceptional special occasions (Religious) e.g. family wedding
- ❖ The pupil is not within walking distance and no suitable travel arrangements have been made by the LA (This applies only to children allocated a place at the Academy by SCC, where catchment school was oversubscribed)
- ❖ Attendance at a Pupil Referral Unit
- ❖ The pupils parents are Travellers and the pupil is engaged in his/her parents work

## The following circumstances will be classed as unauthorised:

- ❖ Family holidays except on exceptional circumstances, in line with the school policy.
- ❖ For family holidays longer than the duration originally authorised by the Headteacher
- ❖ For family holidays where prior permission was not sought or was refused
- ❖ If no explanation is received from parents
- ❖ For looking after siblings
- ❖ For shopping trips
- ❖ For unexceptional special occasions e.g. birthdays

## School attendance: Penalty Notices

Below outlines the situations when we may issue a penalty notice for your child's unauthorised absence from school. We are committed to providing all children with the best start in life. Good school attendance is a key factor in ensuring that children can make the most of their education. The majority of parents and carers ensure that their children attend school regularly. Unfortunately for a small but significant minority that is not the case. As a result, we may decide to begin the process of issuing a legal penalty notice for unauthorised absence from school.

## The legal basis for penalty notices

The law says that parents and carers whose children of compulsory school age are absent from school without good reason are committing an offence, and those parents may be prosecuted in the Magistrate's Court. Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced additional powers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 authorising local authorities to issue penalty notices in cases of **unauthorised absence** from school.

## When will a penalty notice be issued?

Staff working in children and young people's services will always aim to work with schools and parent and carers to improve pupil attendance. However the school is obliged to submit a penalty notice referral to the local authority who have the responsibility to issue penalty notices in the following situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Where a pupil has taken holiday during term-time and the absence is not authorised by the school. Unauthorised holiday, under DFE guidance 'Head teachers should not grant leave of

absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the Head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrants the leave'. Exceptional circumstances would be for e.g. funeral of immediate family member, USAF family leave, religious ceremony.

- Where a pupil is stopped with parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school.
- Where a pupil has missed at least 8 sessions (4 school days) due to unauthorised absence during an academic year.
- If a child has persistent medical absences, then a letter requesting medical evidence will be sent to parents to authorise further absences. Without medical evidence, these sessions will be recorded as unauthorised and could lead to a penalty notice. Medical evidence can be in the form of an appointment card/prescription.
- In every case a pupil will have lost a minimum of 8 sessions (4 school days) of unauthorised absence during the academic year.

The following has been agreed between the local cluster of schools and is shared with parents and families on the school website:

***Our cluster of schools (St Mary's, Elveden and Forest Academies, and Great Heath, West Row, Beck Row, Lakenheath and St Christopher's Primaries) are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only attending regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance. Any absence which is not approved by the school is classified as unauthorised. If your child has 8 or more unauthorised sessions (half days) in a year, then you will receive a £60 penalty notice from the Local Authority per child, per parent. This must be paid within 21 days or it will increase to £120 per child, per parent. If this is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority refer it to the courts where the maximum penalty is £1000.***

#### **How do I pay and what happens if I don't pay the penalty notice?**

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the penalty notice. The penalty must be paid in full. The penalty is **£60** if paid within 28 days, increasing to **£120** if paid after 28 days.

If you do not pay the penalty in full within 42 days of issue the LA are required to start legal proceedings against you in the local Magistrate's Court for the original offence of failing to ensure your child attends school regularly. This may lead to a fine of up to £1000 and a court appearance. Once payment of a penalty notice has been made parents and carers will no longer be liable for their child's absence from school during the period to which the notice relates.

But, if your child has further periods of unauthorised absence from school, the LA may decide to take you back to court for a further prosecution.

#### **Keeping of Notes**

- ❖ Notes should be kept in the register. These notes should be filed half-termly, by admin staff into individual pupil files.

### **Following up absences**

- ❖ Rapid responses are essential if there is no contact from the parent. We will phone parents on the morning of the first day of absence.
- ❖ In cases where there is doubt about an explanation received, contact will be made with the parent.

### **Strategies employed to support pupils and parents**

- ❖ The school will continuously monitor attendance and send letters to parents when attendance declines.
- ❖ If a pattern of concern re attendance is developing the class teacher or Headteacher will speak to the member of the child sensitively about the pattern of absence.
- ❖ If there is no significant improvement the class teacher or Headteacher will contact the parents and invite them into school to discuss attendance.
- ❖ If there is no improvement the Headteacher will contact parents and invite them to attend a meeting with herself and the Education Welfare Officer. At this point the Education Welfare Officer should receive copies of all previous attempts made.
- ❖ A monitoring program may be set up between the parent, the school and the Education Welfare Officer, with the aim of improving attendance.

### **Acknowledging good attendance**

- ❖ Pupils will be acknowledged in assembly at the end of each term with gold, silver and bronze certificates.
- ❖ One class each week will be nominated to receive a Headteacher Award for attendance. This will be based on attendance figures for the week before. Rewards are given at the end of each half term for class with best attendance overall.

### **Support for pupils who have difficulties attending school**

- ❖ Where pupils are absent with good reason (for example because of exclusion or long term illness/medical needs) a member of staff will coordinate meaningful work to be sent home and will ensure it is marked on a regular basis. Parents are responsible for ensuring work is completed and that lines of communication are kept open with the school to fully explain reasons for absence. Tutor support may be provided if appropriate.
- ❖ When pupils who have been absent for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised, return, they will be welcomed back to school and a reintegration programme agreed where appropriate.