



# Attendance and Punctuality Policy

## Falconhurst School

Reported to TLS Governors: October 2021

Review Date: October 2023

This policy will clearly define how the procedures and opportunities in school will enable all children to achieve our vision.

Together we encourage children to take ownership of and responsibility for their learning, so they have the confidence and curiosity for life-long learning.

Together we strive for success in academic, creative, sporting and personal accomplishment.

Together we care for each other through the kind and positive choices we make.

Together we are proud of the inspiring and supportive environment we create for children, families and staff.



This policy was approved by Teaching, Learning and Standards Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021 for a period of two years and is informed by our vision for learning at Falconhurst School.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff are committed to ensuring that all our children attend school regularly and punctually so that they receive the best education possible in order that they fulfil their potential. To this purpose, parents will be informed of the school policy and encouraged to understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% and we will keep parents updated regularly about progress to this level and how their child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and future employment chances and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Improving attendance at Falconhurst School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – Parents, Children, Governors and all Staff.

### **Statutory Framework**

Under Section S444 of the 1996 Education Act, a child is required to attend regularly at the school where she/he is a registered pupil. It is parents'/carers' responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

### **Purpose of this Policy**

To recognise that:

1. Attendance at or above the National standard (95%+) is expected from all statutory school aged children.
2. Regular and punctual school attendance is vital if pupils are to benefit fully from the opportunities which this school offers them.
3. The National Curriculum underlines the importance of continuity and progression in the learning process.
4. It is an established fact that children who develop poor patterns of attendance and punctuality at primary school tend to continue in this pattern throughout their school life and beyond.
5. Ensuring good attendance enables us to avoid disruption to learning for both the child and the class.

### **Expectations:**

1. All absences should be noted initially as an absence or late mark on the school register
2. Registers will be marked at:
  - a. Foundation – Nursery 8.40am and 12.10pm
  - b. Foundation – Reception 8.45am and 12.30pm
  - c. Years 1 and Year 2 - 8.45am and 1.05pm

- d. Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 – 8.45am and 1.35pm
3. Children who arrive after 8.55am will be marked late and must sign at the school office and record a reason.
  4. The school's Attendance Lead (Mrs Natalie Matthews) is responsible for overseeing pupil attendance levels, organising support meetings for identified families, pursuing formal attendance improvement measures and reporting to the Head teacher upon request. Children arriving after 9.20am will be recorded as absent with the appropriate code in the register. This will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
  5. There is an expectation that parents will either provide an explanation by telephone to the office by 9.30am or through verbal communication to the class teacher on the first day of absence or through the online form on our website ([www.falconhurstschool.co.uk](http://www.falconhurstschool.co.uk)). In any event, the communication should be forwarded to the office so that the correct attendance code can be entered. Any written communication will be collected with other items from the classrooms on a daily basis.
  6. The electronic storage of attendance information will be updated daily by the school office and monitored weekly by the attendance lead.
  7. In the event of the child contracting an illness or suffering an injury which would make an absence of 5 days or more likely, parents should inform the school immediately, and subsequently keep the school informed on progress.
  8. The school Office will operate a First Day Calling for all unexplained absences and inform either the Learning Mentor responsible for attendance of any child on the PA list or who is known to be vulnerable.
  9. The Learning Mentor, responsible for Attendance will review the late system daily and monitor pupils who are regularly late, engaging with families when necessary.
  10. Contact requesting a reason for absence will be sent by the attendance lead and monitored for a response which will be recorded. If this is unsuccessful then the attendance lead will follow the steps within the attendance policy to support to improve the pupil's attendance.
  11. Parents may be requested to meet with either the attendance lead and possible the Headteacher to review their child's attendance.
  12. For children whose attendance is below 90% parents may be given a medical evidence form which will require a date stamp from their Doctors' Surgery to say their child's absence is medically acknowledged.
  13. School registers will be inspected daily for accuracy by the attendance lead wherever possible.
  14. The attendance lead will regularly review attendance patterns and track children who have either reached the threshold for, or are close to, Persistent Absence.
  15. Governors will monitor attendance, requiring the Headteacher to provide them with the necessary data.

### **Parent partnership:**

Parents will be contacted in the event of:

1. unauthorised absence or no reason received
2. frequent short absences, particularly where a pattern emerges; e.g. every Monday
3. Persistent lateness.
4. when a referral or concern is shared with an external agency (if the child is thought to be at risk of harm a referral may be made without contacting parents)

Contact will be made following the attached Attendance Procedure flow diagram.

## **Absences and Requests:**

### **Accepted reasons for absence will be:**

1. Illness (medical evidence may be requested by school)
2. Unavoidable medical or dental appointments (Routine dental and medical appointments should be made outside normal school times)
3. Religious Observance
4. Periods of Covid-19 Self-isolation pending a PCR result or for the period of recovery upon receipt of a positive PCR result.
5. Exceptional circumstance as detailed below:

### **Exceptional circumstances would be**

1. Travel of more than 1 hour for a family wedding or funeral. 1 day leave of absence will be granted.
2. Family wedding or funeral abroad where 3 days leave of absence will be granted. Invitations **and/or** flight tickets will be required and a copy taken as evidence for all requests.
3. Bereavement

Any request for Leave of Absence for exceptional circumstances should be submitted on a form which can be collected from the school office. This needs to be returned to the office and the Headteacher will look at each application individually to decide on which registration code the application will be put under.

Children who suffer a major accident or illness will be supported to enable access to the curriculum as appropriate. Work will be provided and a programme of support offered to reintegrate the child back into school when required.

Any extended absence other than agreed exceptional circumstances may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice fine.

(Extended absence would be more than 3 days for which no medical evidence was obtained)

### **Unacceptable reasons for absence will be**

1. Family Holidays
2. Birthdays
3. Shopping
4. Babysitting siblings
5. Waiting for deliveries
6. Parental illness or work commitments

### **Holidays**

Holidays during the school term will **not** be agreed. Holidays taken may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice. This will be issued by Milton Keynes Council and is currently £60 if paid within 21 days or £180 if paid within 28 days. There is the capacity for the fine to be issued for each child and each parent. Therefore, a family of two adults and two children the maximum fine could be £240 if paid within 21 days or £720 if paid within 28 days.

### **Persistent Absence**

Children whose attendance is below 90% are in the category of Persistent Absentee (PA). This will be having a significant effect on learning and life choices. If a pupil falls into this category then the attendance lead will follow the school's attendance procedure to ensure that an improvement is made.

If a nursery aged pupil is not achieving 63% then the attendance lead will follow the Little Falcons attendance procedures and if no improvement is made and no acceptable reasons are given the local authority may look to claim back funding for the Nursery place from the parents.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices:**

If school based interventions and support fail to help a family improve their child's attendance or a family fail to work in partnership with the school to improve their child's attendance or punctuality, a request will be made for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued for unauthorised absence. Milton Keynes Council's Legal Officer for Attendance has a protocol for this sanction and the school will work closely with the Legal Officer to execute this.

In the event of a FPN not being paid the Legal Officer may consider holding an Attendance Interview which will be under Police & Criminal Evidence interview (PACE), under formal caution, where written statements will be taken and may be used as evidence in court. Parents will have the right to legal representation at these interviews. Fines of up to a £1000 and/or 3 months imprisonment could be imposed in the most severe cases.

It will be considered as an option for families whose children are persistently absent from school with unauthorised absence.

The school will be advised by and adhere to the local authority's protocols to ensure our children have every opportunity to get the best education possible.

### **Lateness:**

**Poor punctuality is not acceptable.** Being on time is a good habit for future employment and life chances. Evidence clearly points to children with poor punctuality and attendance at primary school go on to be non-attenders at secondary school.

Pupils arriving late for school miss vital teacher input and disrupt the learning of other children. Children who frequently arrive late will be kept out of the classroom until a natural break in the day such as break time or Assembly, to reduce the disruption to the class.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts **at 8.45am** for children in Years R to 6 and we expect every child to be in school at that time.

**At 9.20am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an **unauthorised absence**. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a child has a persistent late record, parents will be asked to meet with the attendance lead to resolve the problem, but we encourage parents to approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.