

FELIXSTOWE FAMILY OF SCHOOLS



The Government expects

Schools and local authorities to:

- reduce absence including persistent absence;
- ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and
- act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents to: perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

Link Governor/committee:

Policy adopted on:

Chair of Governor's signature: _____ *Mrs S Painter* _____

Head teacher's signature: _____ *Mrs S Ross* _____

Policy Date: Autumn 2016 **Review Schedule:** Autumn 2019

FELIXSTOWE FAMILY OF SCHOOLS ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Felixstowe Family of Schools is 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 school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school 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.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy has been drawn up after consultation with the whole community and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the committee know of the policy and have access to it.
- 1.4 **Safeguarding** – The welfare of our pupils is paramount. The Designated Person for Safeguarding is Mrs S Ross; Alternate Person is Mrs J Matthews and Named Governor is Mrs Mann.

2. School's roles and responsibilities

As a school we will aim to:

- Create a happy and secure working environment for all
 - Stimulate pupils to learn effectively and with enjoyment
 - Deliver a broad, balanced and creative curriculum which meets statutory requirements
 - Enable children to reach the highest levels of achievement in all areas of the curriculum and to celebrate their success
 - Develop independent learners
 - Encourage children to be aware of their own needs and also the needs of others
 - Achieve the best in standards of behaviour, courtesy and consideration
 - Instil the skills and attitudes necessary to form successful relationships with others
 - Work closely with parents as our partners in children's learning
 - Treat with equality all members of the school community
- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at Felixstowe Family of Schools have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
 - 2.2 The Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently

applied throughout the school. The Head will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), are made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body each term. The Head assisted by the SLT will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

2.3 Registration

- i) 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 teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown overleaf).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

- i) The register will be called promptly at **9.00am** and **1.00pm** by each classroom teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.
- ii) The registers will close at **9.10am** and **1.10pm**. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted as **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (page 8).

2.4 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked 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 in such a way that the original entry and the amendment are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher.
- ii) Felixstowe Family of Schools recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at Felixstowe Family of Schools will therefore 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**.
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised;
- iv) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:
 - (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
 - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** circumstance – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
 - (c) 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);
 - (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control;

- (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
 - (f) in other **exceptional circumstances** (eg a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.
- v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:
- no explanation has been given by the parent;
 - the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
 - the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, eg a birthday;
 - the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday;
 - the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

2.5 Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.6 Staff Training

The Headteacher will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. **Collection and analysis of data**

- 3.1 The Headteacher will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.
- 3.2 Attendance is monitored by year group, class and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.
- 3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

4. **Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance**

- 4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at Felixstowe Family of Schools and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in class groups. Parents are regularly reminded about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.
- 4.2 Attendance that falls below 95% will be monitored by both the school and the EWO. Attendance that falls below 90% will result in a letter home and EWO intervention.
- 4.3 First-day calling
Felixstowe Family of Schools has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day 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. Referral to the EWO if unable to contact parent.

4.4 Meetings with parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence over a 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

4.5 Lateness and punctuality

- Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day.
- It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late.
- Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon).
- This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late.
- The same procedures will be adhered to for a pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness as other students with an emerging pattern of absence.
- If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

4.6 Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes report to the school office to be registered. This is logged. If a pupil arrives late on a regular basis the Head will write a letter to the parents and ask them to visit school to look for ways of improving punctuality.

4.7 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to school office.

4.8 Pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day are signed out in the office by the adult collecting them.

5. Leave of Absence

5.1 Felixstowe Family of Schools will consider every application individually, its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

5.2 Felixstowe Family of Schools will consider authorising leave of absence for:

- service personnel who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;
- a pupil is involved in an exceptional circumstance – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,

6. Religious Observance

6.1 Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but

only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.

7. Parents' / carers' responsibilities

- 7.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Felixstowe Family of Schools.

8. Governors' responsibilities

- 8.1 The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

Reviewing the policy

The school will review this policy every three years, or when new legislation comes out.

PENALTY NOTICE PROCEDURE

1. Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued

1.1 The criteria for issuing Penalty Notices will be –

- i) where a child has been identified as having 6 sessions (a session being a morning or an afternoon) of unauthorised absence in the preceding 12 school weeks;
- ii) where there have been at least 10 sessions (a session being a morning or an afternoon) of unauthorised absence in the preceding 12 school weeks **and** all or part of this absence is the result of a holiday taken in term-time without prior permission from the school;
- iii) where a child has had at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in the preceding 12 school weeks **and**, in the company of a parent, has been stopped under Section 16 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (i.e. during a 'truancy sweep' conducted by Police and Education Welfare Officers) and the parent has failed to give a satisfactory explanation for the child's absence which the school has confirmed is unauthorised.

1.2 Parents who meet the criteria under 3.1(i) and 3.1(ii) above will, in the first instance, be issued with a warning. Warnings will therefore be issued to parents –

- i) whose child(ren) is/are identified for the first time as having 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in the current term. The warning will inform them that if there are any further unauthorised absences during the following 15 school days, a Penalty Notice may be issued.

- ii) who take their child(ren) out of school in term-time without permission. The warning will inform them that any future term-time holidays taken without permission could result in a Penalty Notice being issued where the total amount of unauthorised absence during that term is 10 sessions or more (including those sessions of unauthorised absence accounted for by the holiday).

3.3 Parents who meet the criteria under 3.1(iii) above will receive no warning prior to being issued with a Penalty Notice.

3.4 Penalty Notices will not be used in the case of unauthorised absence of Looked After Children.

4. Procedure for issuing Penalty Notices

4.1 Any Penalty Notices or warnings issued under this scheme will be issued on behalf of the LA by Officers of the Education Attendance Service. These Officers will not issue a Penalty Notice unless:

- all terms of the protocol are applied;
- all relevant information required is supplied to them by Headteachers (or Deputy or Assistant Headteachers authorised by them) and/or by Police Officers;
- no other strategies are in place or being enforced at the same time. Education Attendance Service managers will be aware of all proceedings contemplated or commenced under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 (the offence of failing to secure the regular attendance at school of a registered pupil).

This will serve to –

- ensure consistency across the Authority;
- avoid the issue of duplicate Notices;
- reduce the possibility of Notices having to be withdrawn because they had been wrongly issued or issued in cases which would make prosecution following non-payment of penalties difficult;
- ensure that Notices were not issued when proceedings for an offence under the Education Act 1996, Section 444 are being planned or have started.

4.2 Headteachers (or Deputy or Assistant Headteachers authorised by them) will notify the Education Attendance Service of any child whose parent(s) they believe meet the criteria under 3.1(i) or (ii) above for receiving a Penalty Notice or under 3.2(i) or (ii) for receiving a warning. These children may also be identified by Education Welfare Officers. The Education Attendance Service will issue a Penalty Notice or warning to the parent(s) if satisfied that the criteria are met. Headteachers will need to demonstrate clearly that leave from school has not been granted.

- 4.3 The Police may refer to the Education Attendance Service any child whose parent(s) they wish to be considered for a Penalty Notice. The Education Welfare Service will examine those cases and issue Penalty Notices where the criteria are met.
- 4.4 Neighbouring LAs where Suffolk children might be registered at school or stopped on truancy sweeps will be asked to refer to Suffolk Education Attendance Service those cases it considers meet the criteria for a Penalty Notice or warning.
- 4.5 All warnings and Penalty Notices will be issued by first class post.
- 4.6 Parents will not receive more than one Penalty Notice per child in any 12 month period.

5. Withdrawal of Penalty Notices

- 5.1 A Penalty Notice will be withdrawn only in the following circumstances;
- the Notice was issued outside the terms of the protocol; or
 - the Notice was issued to the wrong person.
- 5.2 There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

6. Payment of Penalty Notices

- 6.1 The penalty is payable to the LA (details for payment will be contained in the Notice). The amount of the penalty is –
- £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the Notice;
 - £100 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days of receipt of the Notice.
- 6.2 Payment of a Penalty Notice cannot be made by instalments.
- 6.3 Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parent's liability for the period to which the Notice relates.
- 6.4 Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the parent being prosecuted for the child's unauthorised absence during the period of the Notice.
- 6.5 Penalties will be payable to Suffolk County Council. The LA will retain the revenue collected to cover the cost of issuing Notices and of prosecuting parents who fail to pay the penalties.

7. Review of the Penalty Notice Scheme

- 7.1 The Penalty Notice Scheme will be reviewed at regular intervals by the LA (at least every 2 years) with amendments made as appropriate.