

Attendance Policy

Furneux Pelham CE Primary School



Together we care, inspire
and achieve excellence

Approved by:

Curriculum and Pupil Welfare Committee

Date: October 2023

Next review due by:

October 2024

1. Introduction

Furneux Pelham Primary School aims to maximise attendance rates and secure high levels of punctuality in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them. Irregular attendance and lateness undermines the educational process and may lead to educational disadvantage. We strive to raise standards by promoting the regular attendance and punctuality of our pupils. We believe the foundation of securing good attendance is our school being a happy, calm, orderly, safe, and nurturing environment where our pupils want to be and where they are keen and ready to learn.

Parents are primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend school. It is the school's responsibility to support attendance and to take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance. Parental responsibility extends beyond securing regular school attendance so it is also important that parents ensure that their children arrive at school on time.

Pupils attend for 190 days each year – a total of 38 weeks.

2. Aims and Expectations

- To demonstrate that improving attendance is a shared responsibility.
- To embed a 'support first' approach.
- To develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance and is an integral part of the school's ethos.
- To work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships.

3. Our Attendance Target:

It is our aim to maintain a school attendance figure that is higher than 96%.

4. School Attendance and the Law

In line with the 1996 Education Act, we expect all children on roll to attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to create a happy and rewarding environment for all children.

We recognise that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. At all times, parents are encouraged to take an active role in school life and to share and support their children's learning.

Under the Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority. Through our home-school agreement, parents agree to ensure their child's regular and punctual attendance. As part of our annual written reports to parents, the children's attendance records are shared.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a valid reason for absence is later provided by the parent/carer, the absence will be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education

5. Arrival and registration – Normal practice

Children may arrive at school from 8.40 when the gates open. The hall door remains open until 8:50am to enable a staggered and calm arrival period. The register is taken straight away and closes at 9.00am. From 8:50 children need to enter through the main office. If a child arrives after the registration period they will be marked in as late. A full day at school counts as two sessions of attendance.

We ask parents to contact the school by 9.30am if their child is absent. The office telephones all parents on the first morning of absence if parents have not already rung in to explain their child's absence.

The afternoon register is taken at 1.05 pm.

It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent/guardian outside the normal hours are signed in or out from the office. The signing in/out register in the office is used in the case of fire as an appendix to class registers.

6. Punctuality and lateness

The School doors open at 8:40am to ensure there is time for pupils to arrive ready to start their learning at 8:45am.

The register remains open for no longer than 30 minutes after learning begins. Pupils who arrive after the register has closed at 9:15am and for whom the parent provides a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session. Pupils who arrive after the register has closed and parent fails to provide a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session (Code U).

If concerns arise from repeated late arrivals, the school may arrange a meeting with parents to discuss concerns so that the problem can be addressed.

7. Authorised and unauthorised attendance

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents, and it is a statutory requirement for the headteacher to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. Any absence for which the school received no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given, will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

8. Illness and medical appointments:

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, they must attend school first if the appointment is later in the day and in all instances return to school directly after the appointment.

Absence as a result of illness or for a medical or dental appointment will be treated as authorised.

9. Holidays in Term Time:

The school holiday dates and end of Key Stage Assessment dates are published well in advance and leave of absence **will not** be authorised during these assessment periods. INSET days are published as soon as the school have agreed these, but these may be subject to change.

Holidays in term time are **not an entitlement** and are strongly discouraged by the Government, Local Authority and School.

In line with the Government's amendments to the 2006 regulations [Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, holidays during term time will NOT be authorised except in "exceptional circumstances".

"**exceptional circumstances**" being defined as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.

Whilst all decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis a request will normally be refused. Where permission is granted it will be for a maximum of 5 days and will be dependent on previous good attendance (95% or higher over the previous three terms).

Leave which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheaper holidays during term time
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Delay on passport application/arrival

10. Process for requesting leave of absence

Applications must be made by a parent normally residing with the child and parents should seek permission for authorised holiday absence before making firm bookings/ arrangements/payments for the holiday.

All applications should be made by completing the Leave of Absence request form (Appendix 1) available from the school office or on the school website.

After consideration of the above criteria, the head teacher will usually make an appointment to discuss the request with the parent(s). On occasion, it will be more appropriate to discuss the absence with parents over the phone, or for very brief periods of absence just a letter may be sent. This will usually be if application for absence has been given too late to organise a meeting. Absence will not be granted retrospectively.

Parents who decide to take a holiday without permission will incur an unauthorised absence for their child. These remain on a child's record and are monitored for further action by the Attendance Improvement Officer, and could result in a Penalty Notice or court action.

If a pupil does not return to school within ten school days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term time, the school will consider removing the child from the school roll. The school has the right to do this under government legislation.

11. Fixed Term Penalty Notices:

In accordance with Hertfordshire Local Authority, the school will, in liaison with the Attendance Improvement Officer, comply with the government's code of conduct with relation to truancy, for Hertfordshire County Council to deliver penalty notices for unauthorised absences. (A full copy of Hertfordshire guidance is available on request).

If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day= 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term (including unauthorised holidays), the Head Teacher may ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice. The school must have sent a formal warning letter to each parent separately, addressed and on school headed paper before a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued.

The penalty is £60 (per parent) if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 (per parent) if paid after 28 days. Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If the penalty is not paid the Local Authority may prosecute parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance.

12. Arrangements for absence in other circumstances

Sudden, serious circumstances, such as family bereavement, do occur rarely, when it is impossible for a family to bring a child to school. It is essential that school is informed by the parent of the circumstances so that the appropriate code can be written in the register.

13. Strategies for promoting/rewarding excellent attendance:

To ensure good attendance (above 97%) and punctuality we need to regularly promote and reward it so that it remains high profile across school. A number of strategies will be used to do this.

- **Newsletter**

The weekly school bulletin is used to highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality. It may also include information about any initiatives, which the school is using, to promote attendance and punctuality.

- **Breakfast Club**

Early Birds Breakfast Club runs every day. This can support parents by allowing them to drop their children off from 7.45 am, ensuring they are on time for school.

- **The School Learning Environment**

A welcoming, organised learning environment, which supports and celebrates its learners is a key factor in ensuring children enjoy school and attend regularly. All staff ensure that their learning environments are of a high quality.

- **Staff Promoting Good Attendance**

It is important that teachers are regularly promoting good attendance and punctuality with their classes. Good class attendance can be attributed to good teaching and this is celebrated.

- **Parent/teacher consultation evenings**

This provides an opportunity for teachers to praise and recognise excellent attendance or share attendance concerns and discuss barriers to good attendance. Where necessary a target for improving attendance may be set.

- Informing parents

The headteacher informs all parents each term of their child's attendance for the year so far. This information is banded and will highlight the impact of their attendance levels – both positive and negative. If attendance falls below 93% and is therefore nearing persistent absence, a letter will be sent to parents requesting their attendance at a meeting (see appendix). If attendance then falls into the banding for persistent absence, a further meeting will be held to discuss strategies to help improve attendance and a support plan may be put into place. This may include requesting medical evidence of absences.

If attendance falls below 93% and is therefore nearing persistent absence, a letter will be sent to parents requesting their attendance at a meeting (see appendix).

14. Data Analysis

The school collects and stores attendance data using the management information systems (Arbor). The school provides attendance data to the DFE, using Arbor to send data about the school census. The figures returned are then published by the DFE as part of the annual publication of school statistics.

The school uses the attendance data to identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and to track the attendance of individual pupils. Where attendance is a concern, the school will use data to monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support. This data will determine the support that is put in place to ensure that attendance is maintained at a good level, above 96%.

15. Persistent Absence:

Persistent absence occurs when a child's attendance is at or falls below 90%. Absenteeism at this level will considerably damage a pupil's educational prospects and the school will work alongside parents/carers to tackle this issue.

Pupils at risk of persistent absence:

Where data shows that a pupil is at risk of persistent absence, the school will identify these pupils by proactively identifying these pupils. We will work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including in-school barriers to attendance. The school will signpost and support parents to access any required services where out of school barriers are identified.

Pupils who are persistently absent:

Where persistent absence occurs, the school will:

- Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent.
- Ensure additional targeted support is in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.
- If there is lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents, being clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where support is not working or being engaged with, work with the Local Authority on legal intervention.
- If there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.
- Work with other local schools, such as schools previously attended or schools of siblings.

Pupils who are severely absent

Severe absence occurs when a child's attendance is at or falls below 50%.

If severe absence occurs, the school will:

- continue support as for pupils who are persistently absent.
- agree a joint approach for all pupils who are severely absent with the Local Authority.

Pupils who are severely absent may be at risk of CCE/CSE/grooming etc. and teachers must ensure this cohort is made the top priority for action and support.

The school will be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.

Often severely absent pupils have additional needs and therefore it is vital that school ensure all appropriate services are informed and aware of the pupil's absence so suitable support can be considered, and education provided/accessed.

16. Monitoring and Review

The School Governors regularly monitor the attendance of pupils at Furneux Pelham School and it forms part of the Headteacher's termly report to Governors.

Attendance at school is part of the Government's agenda for safeguarding pupils and this policy will be reviewed by Governors annually.



Furneux Pelham C of E Primary School

Leave of Absence Requests

Furneux Pelham C of E Primary School's attendance policy places a strong emphasis on children being in school every day in order that they can develop both academically and socially to achieve their potential. The policy is available on our website or from the school office and should be read alongside this guidance.

The Government's amendments to the 2006 regulations [Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "**exceptional circumstances**". The Government has made it clear that parents **do not** have an automatic right to withdraw their child from school during term time.

Points to note:-

- Taking a pupil out of school during term time disrupts their learning and may cause them to fall behind their peers. Absence can also affect a child's relationship with others.
- Absences may only be authorised by the Headteacher and in advance. Please hand the attached form in to the school office with as much notice as possible and no later than 1 month prior to the requested date/s.
- Our Attendance policy defines "**exceptional circumstances**" as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.
- Holidays for the following reasons will never be authorised: availability of cheap holidays; availability of the desired accommodation; poor weather experienced in school holiday periods.
- Homework will not be set for holiday periods.
- Term time breaks, when added to unpredictable absences e.g. for medical reasons, all add up. **Learning time lost from school cannot be replaced**
- If the absence is not authorised and the holiday/time is taken anyway, the Attendance Improvement Officer may issue a Penalty Notice for £120 if paid within 28 days (or £60 if paid within 21 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school.



Leave of Absence Request Form

Name of child/children	
Class/es	
First date of absence	
Date of Return	
Number of days requested	
Has leave of absence been requested in term time before? Please give details below	
Please give full details of the <u>exceptional</u> reasons for this term time absence request. Please write a letter or continue on a separate sheet as necessary.	

Signed: _____ **Name:** _____ **Date:** _____

For school use:	Name of child/children		
Current attendance%:			
Attendance over the previous 3 terms %			
Days pupil absent this year:			
Total unauthorised absence over the last year:			
Request authorised:			

Signed: _____ Mrs. L. Foley, Headteacher **Date:** _____

Appendix 2:

Individual Attendance Plan

<i>Name of pupil</i>	
<i>Year group/class</i>	
<i>Staff supporting with attendance plan and roles</i>	
<i>Date plan was agreed</i>	

Attendance history

Include details of attendance percentages (broken down by attendance code where appropriate), details of trends or patterns over time and any historical factors that might be relevant.

Current risk factors/current barriers to attendance

To help with this, it might be useful to carry out an [individual attendance audit](#). We have provided an editable template that can be used in conjunction with this plan.

<i>Academic targets</i>	<i>Milestones</i>	<i>Date each milestone achieved</i>
Target 1 - add specific target here	For each target provide a number of measurable milestones •	
Target 2 - add specific target here	•	
Target 2 - add specific target here	•	

Strategies to be implemented by the school

Details of strategy (including date commenced)	Purpose of implementing strategy	Member of staff responsible
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E.g. daily wake-up calls for two weeks, starting from 16 th October	E.g. to establish an effective morning routine	E.g. parent support worker to carry out calls
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<i>Expectations of the pupil</i>		
Details of expectations	How this has been communicated to the pupil?	Monitoring arrangements (who by and when?)
E.g. set an alarm for 7 a.m. every day	E.g. discussion with attendance officer and ongoing reminders	E.g. attendance officer will monitor this daily

Expectations of the family		
Details of expectations	How this has been communicated to the pupil's family?	Monitoring arrangements (who by and when?)
E.g. for parents to phone school before 9 a.m. to report the reason for any absence	E.g. expectations explained during face-to-face attendance meeting and agreed by parents	E.g. attendance officer will monitor this daily

External support		
Details of agency/partner	Support being offered	Date support commenced
E.g. social care	E.g. Early Help referral has been made as mother is reporting that she feels overwhelmed	E.g. referral made 2 nd November - currently awaiting first contact


Appendix 3:

Dear Parents

Child's name:

The aim of this letter is for you to see your child's attendance for the term and to see where this lies in terms of the impact upon their education.

The attendance figures are based on from [date] to [date].

<p>Your child's attendance is 98% or above.</p> <p><i>This is fantastic – children with this level of attendance have the very best chance of success.</i></p>	
<p>Your child's attendance is between 95 and 97%.</p> <p><i>Good attendance so far. When calculated across a whole year, this could move to the top banding.</i></p>	
<p>Be aware – your child's attendance is between 92 and 95%.</p> <p><i>Missing more than a couple of days makes it hard for your child to catch up. Every day really does count.</i></p>	
<p>Your child's attendance is between 89 and 92%.</p> <p>This is classed as persistent absence.</p> <p><i>Attendance at this level could have a detrimental effect on your child's education - this level equates to half a day off per week.</i></p>	
<p>Your child's attendance is between 85 and 89%.</p> <p>This is classed as persistent absence and if it continues across the year, it will lead to a referral being made to the Attendance Improvement Officer.</p> <p><i>Attendance at this level across the course of a year will have a detrimental effect on your child's education and equates to 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed in a year – almost half a term!</i></p>	
<p>Your child's attendance is below 85%.</p> <p>This is classed as persistent absence, leads to a referral to the Attendance Improvement Officer and could lead to a penalty fine and/or prosecution.</p> <p><i>Attendance below 85% has a serious effect on your child's education and may affect their life chances in later life.</i></p>	

Remember – it is never too late to improve your child's attendance.

Please let us know if there are any issues affecting your child's attendance. There may be ways in which we can support you.

Yours sincerely

Louise Foley

Headteacher

**Appendix 4:
Warning Letter – if attendance falls below 93%**

Dear [parent/carer's name],

I am writing to you because [pupil's name]'s attendance has become a cause for concern. It currently stands at [add percent].

Regular attendance is an important factor in a child's academic success. When pupils are frequently absent, it is difficult for them to keep up with their school work and this could affect their life chances. For this reason, we take school attendance very seriously.

If your child is going to be absent from school, it is important that you contact the school on the first day of the absence to inform us of the reasons. If this continues for more than one day, you should make contact with the school on a daily basis to keep us updated.

We are keen to work with you to address any barriers to your child's attendance. If you require any advice or support on this matter, please get in touch with [add name and contact details] to discuss this and we will do our best to help.

Yours sincerely,

Louise Foley
Headteacher