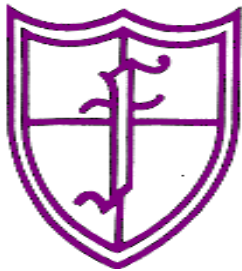




PORTICO
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Attendance Policy



Date Written/Reviewed: December 2022

Next Review Date: December 2023

Person Responsible: Scott Roche

Signature of Principal *C. McClay*

Date: December 2022

Friars Primary School and Nursery values all of its pupils and their attendance.

As set out in this policy, we will work with all families within our school to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. The school recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community.

Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is supported by our other safeguarding policies.

1. Aims

Friars Primary School and Nursery aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parent/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Attendance Targets

Friars Primary has its own attendance target each year. This is agreed by the school leadership team to ensure that we in line with the National Average for attendance.

All targets are set to be challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school will also consider carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

The minimum attendance target set by Friars Primary School and Nursery is currently 96%

At Friars Primary School and Nursery, the attendance of all of our pupils matters

Why regular attendance is so important:

There is a strong correlation between the amount of absence from school and the qualifications that pupils achieve. Every lesson in school matters and children who have regular absences tend to find it difficult to catch up and do well at school. Regular absence can limit a child's future opportunities and set up bad habits for work and life.

Attendance	Primary
>98%	98% = 4 days missed of the school year
95%	95% = 10 days (2 weeks) missed of the school year
90%	90% = 20 days (4 weeks) missed of the school year
85%	85% = 30 days (6 weeks) missed of the school year
<80%	80% = 40 days (8 weeks) missed of the school year

Once a child reaches 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 39 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education and

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/362822/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#).

2. Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parent/carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age and ability, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age the first term after their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parent/carers secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session, and then again during the afternoon session.

Penalty Notices to Address Poor Attendance at School

- In accordance with the Education Act 1996 Section 444 and Section 444a, penalty notices can be issued to parents whose child/children are not in regular attendance at school.
- The penalty notice is £60 if paid within 21 days. If it is not paid within 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty notice will increase to £120. If the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days the debt will be referred to the Debt Collection Agency.
- Penalty notices are issued per parent, per child.
- Parents cannot appeal against the penalty notice being issued and there is no option to pay in instalments.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Friars Primary School and Nursery's primary aims are to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across our schools through our Portico Attendance Leads group who endeavour to meet each term.

3.2 The Academy Trust Board

Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge.

Friars Primary School and Nursery recognises that improving school attendance begins at board level, therefore The Portico Academy Trust Board takes an active role in attendance improvement, supporting the school to prioritise attendance, and working together with school leaders to set whole school attendance cultures.

This should include:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents.
- Recognising that attendance improvement does not happen in isolation and therefore ensuring it is prioritised in wider improvement strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding.
- Allocating a link trustee that focuses on attendance.

In addition, should the school be struggling with their attendance, the Board of Trustees will work with school leaders to develop a comprehensive attendance action plan to improve attendance. This should be evaluated and reviewed regularly. This may form part of a wider school improvement plan, including where appropriate school-to-school support from attendance leaders.

The Board of Trustees may also wish to discuss school attendance at the half termly Portico Executive Meetings or Teaching and Learning Meetings, where each individual school may be asked to report on their attendance at defined intervals.

3.3 The Link Trustee

The Link Trustee is also responsible for ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties and that due regard is given by the school, to guidance and compliance with the law on school attendance. The Link Trustee must work closely with the school ensuring;

- The school has an attendance policy which meets expectations and is updated and publicised regularly so that it is easily accessible to pupils, parents and staff.
- Analysis of the school's attendance data is undertaken.
- Attendance is recorded accurately in their registers and share the required information with DfE and local authorities.
- The schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent attendance support is provided for pupils who require it most by prioritising the staff and resources needed.
- Ensuring that the school engages and works effectively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and wider local partners and services.

- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils, but that processes and support are adapted to the individual needs of particular pupils especially those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.
- Repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to ensure they are meeting the needs of pupils as experiences and barriers to attendance evolve.

3.4 Portico Attendance Leads Group

The Portico Attendance Leads Group are a group made up of Senior Leaders and Attendance Officers from across the 5 schools in the Portico Academy Trust. The group meet termly and their role includes:

- To monitor attendance patterns across their schools to identify common issues and barriers and share effective practice between schools.
- To share other resources between schools, sharing exemplar resources and documents such as communications to pupils and parents and topical best practice training or webinars.
- To have a dedicated group who can drive attendance improvement across the trust, work more intensively with the schools who require it, and act as a central contact point for schools with attendance queries.
- Regularly review attendance data, discussing and challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- To liaise with the Portico Leadership Steering Group and feedback on current developments or initiatives.
- To liaise with DfE's regional teams for advice about wider support programmes when appropriate.
- Work effectively with local partners to help remove the barriers to attendance that go beyond the school gates, including building strong links with local statutory services (including social care, health and police) and the voluntary and community sector.
- Provide support and challenge to their schools around current trends on attendance in the school community, by regularly reviewing attendance data at board meetings, examining recent and historic trends at a school level as well as benchmarking to comparator schools within the trust, local authority area, region and nationwide.
- Paying particular attention to attendance of pupil cohorts within their school(s) that have historically had poor attendance or that face entrenched barriers to attendance. This should be specific to the school's context, but may include pupils who have a social worker, are from a background or ethnicity where attendance has historically been low, have a long-term medical condition, special educational needs or a disability, or are eligible for free school meals.
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those focus areas.
- To ensure that the overarching Portico Academy Trust Attendance policy is reviewed and updated annually.

3.5 School Leadership Team

The School Leaders are responsible for:

- Allocating a member of the school leadership team to manage responsibility for attendance
- Implementation of the overarching Portico Academy Trust Attendance policy and the school's Individual Attendance policy at school level
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Board of Trustees
- Works with Local Authority Access and Inclusion officers to discuss issues of attendance and tackle persistent absence
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Considering the issuing of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.6 The Attendance Officer

The school Attendance Officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the School Leadership Teams
- Works with Local Authority Access and Inclusion officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the School Leadership Teams when to consider issuing fixed-penalty notices

3.7 Class teachers

Class Teachers:

- Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes via the SIMs system.
- Promoting good attendance and challenging non-attendance.

3.8 School administration staff

School administration staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. Serious concerns around attendance of monitored children are recorded on the school's 'Safeguard' system.

4. School procedures categorising absence

All parent/carers on admission to the individual schools sign a copy of the Home School Contract which states that parent/carers will ensure their children attend regularly and punctually.

4.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day (AM) and once during the second session. (PM) It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present (A)
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity (V or P)
- Absent (I)
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (C)

Children must arrive in school between 8:30 and 8:45am.

They must be registered by 8.55am on each school day.

The register for the first session (AM) will be taken promptly at 8.55 and will be kept open until 9.15am when the register is closed, any pupils that arrive after this time will receive a late mark.

- Children arriving between 8:45am and 9:15am will receive a late mark Code L – late before register closed.
- Children arriving after 9:15am will receive a late mark Code U - late after registers close mark.

The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm.

4.2 Unplanned Absence

Parent/carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school may ask parents/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. They will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised (Code M) as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies their child's school in advance of the appointment and provides evidence i.e. appointment letter/email

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. For example, if the appointment is at 11am, the child can come to school for morning registration, be collected for the appointment and return afterwards.

4.4 Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late, but before the register has closed will be marked as late (L code). If they arrive after the register has closed they will be marked as absent late (U code)

Lateness will affect a pupil's overall attendance. Children regularly arriving at school late will be monitored by the school Attendance Officer who will contact parent/carers as regular lateness has a detrimental effect on their attendance.

In some instances, the school will involve the Local Authority Attendance Officer who will undertake 'late gates' and issue letters to persistent offenders around punctuality.

4.5 Absence Monitoring

The school will follow up any absences to establish the reason and ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. This will identify whether the absence can be approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Typically this will include the following absence:

- Parent/carers will be contacted on the day of the absence by the school by phone/email/text.
- Where no contact has been made with the parent/carer on the first day of absence the school will mark this as an unauthorised absence.
- If the school are concerned about the child's absence and are unable to contact the parent/carer, we will contact the child's emergency contacts, carry out a home visit or contact other professionals. This will be recorded on the school's 'Safeguard' system as a concern.

4.6 Reporting to Parent/Carers

The school will ensure that parent/carers are informed of pupil's attendance along with their annual school report. Attendance information is also shared on individual pupils at parent/carer consultation sessions where necessary and on an in-year pupil registration certificate.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parent/carers.

All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

5.1 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.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parent/carers do not have this authority.

Consequently, not all absences supported by parent/carers will be classified as authorised.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** may include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

5.2 Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

An absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of parent/carer, such as a shopping trip or for a birthday.

An absence can also be registered as unauthorised if a child has low attendance which is being monitored following an Attendance Support Meeting and medical proof is not supplied by the parent/carer to evidence the absence. Medical evidence could include seeing the prescribed medicine, seeing the child's prescription, a doctor's or hospital letter or an appointment card etc. If necessary, the school can provide the parent/carer with a medical form which can be completed and signed by a Doctor.

5.3 Reporting pupil absence

Parent/carers are requested to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence providing child's name, class and reason for absence. The school should be updated if the absence continues into the following day.

Parent/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription, doctor's note etc.

Parents/Carers should call the school office on 01702 294837 or email absences@fps.porticoacademytrust.co.uk to record an absence.

5.4 Authorised term-time absence (exceptional circumstances)

The Government issued regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

Friars Primary School and Nursery shall not grant any leave of absence during term time unless it is considered an exceptional circumstance. If a child is absent, for the purpose of a holiday, this will not be authorised and the parent/carer may receive a penalty notice.

If a parent/carer wishes to apply for leave of absence during term time, they must complete a 'Leave of Absence Request Form' which can be obtained by speaking to the school office or on the school website under 'attendance'. All requests for leave during term time will be reviewed by the Senior Attendance Leader and parents/carers will receive notification stating whether the leave has been granted.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil does not attend school, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and a penalty notice may be issued.

In the instance, that a holiday is then taken without authorisation, the school will discuss the issue with the Local Authority Attendance Officer to decide if the issuing of a penalty notice is appropriate.

From these discussions, parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice.

To reduce the number of cases where a parent/carer may decide to simply 'call in sick' when they are actually on holiday, a penalty notice may also be issued if the parent/carer did not submit a leave of absence request, but the school have reason to believe the absence was for the purpose of a holiday.

Unless the parent/carer is able to provide any additional evidence which the school deems appropriate to support the absence, it will be marked as unauthorised and parents/carers could still be liable for a penalty notice.

'The Education Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a parent or carer to 'fail to secure their child's regular attendance at the school.'

6. Promoting School Attendance

Friars Primary School and Nursery recognises that children may be absent from school for a variety of reasons. Parents/carers should make the school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. Our schools deploy a range of strategies that could be used to support improved attendance.

7. Attendance Support

Pupil absence is monitored by the school on a daily basis, with the Attendance Team working closely with parent/carers and the pupils to support regular attendance in school.

If our school has concerns over a pupils' attendance, the Attendance Officer will contact parent/carers to discuss these concerns. If after contacting parent/carers, a pupil continues to have regular absences, the school will invite the parent/carer to attend a meeting with the Attendance Team in school and follow the formal process detailed below.

Our school will offer the following examples of school support:

- Discussion with parent/carers and pupils
- Issues of letters to raise awareness
- Referrals to support agencies
- Completion of an Early Help Assessment (EHA)
- Work with learning mentors
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Modified Learning Plans
- Reintegration support packages
- Working from home where in-school attendance is not possible

7.1 Attendance Support and Monitoring Formal Process

Level 1

If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, or when attendance falls below 95%, the school will review their attendance and the parent/carer may receive a level 1 attendance letter or contact from the Attendance Officer. In this instance, the child's attendance will be monitored for a period of 4 weeks with the expectation of 100% attendance. If it does not improve, the case will escalate and parent/carer will be invited to an Attendance Support Meeting.

Attendance Support Meeting

If attendance falls below 90% after the 4 week review period, the school will contact the Access and Inclusion School Attendance Team at the Local Authority to arrange an Attendance Support Meeting with parents/carers.

At the Attendance Support Meeting, targets will be set and reviewed. At this stage, the parent/carer will be expected to meet the target set and provide medical evidence for any further illness absences.

Once attendance targets are met and the parent/carer understands the importance of children attending school regularly, the case will return to Level 1 and be monitored in school by the Attendance Officer. If after 2 reviews, the child's attendance does not improve and targets are not met, the case could go to Fast-Track or escalate to Level 3.

Level 3 - If the attendance targets are repeatedly not met at Level 2, the child's case will escalate to Level 3. The Local Authority Access and Inclusion School Attendance Team

then takes the lead role and may commence home visiting and seeking to ensure that the parent/carer understands the seriousness of the situation. The Local Authority will make it very clear that if the child does not begin to attend school regularly, the family are likely to face a fine or court proceedings.

7.2 Persistent Absence

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and with other schools in our Trust and share this school linked Trustees.

Each month, our Attendance team complete a monthly return with the Local Authority Attendance Officer from the Access and Inclusion School Attendance Team to identify patterns in attendance and to highlight any cases causing particular concern.

The school Attendance Officer reports weekly/termly data to the Senior Attendance Leader through an Attendance Report including information on attendance of the whole school, individuals and key groups of children.

Fast Track to Attendance

The Fast-Track Framework is a time-focused model of best practice which concentrates on early intervention in cases of persistent non-attendance and aims to ensure a faster more effective approach to the implementation of strategies to tackle this behaviour and the underlying causes. Where the parents/carers fail to bring about the necessary improvement, legal proceedings are initiated.

The aims are:

- To ensure the intervention strategies are put into place early to tackle school attendance problems
- To ensure parents who fail to cooperate or are unwilling to work with the school/LA are identified sooner and action taken to make sure they take responsibility for their child's school attendance

Criteria for Fast Track

The pupil being considered for Fast Track should

- have an attendance rate of 90% or less within the previous 10 weeks
- have unauthorised absences of 10 sessions or more
- is not 'looked after' by the local authority
- school has evidence of pre-referral work undertaken by the school
- the parent or pupil has not identified any valid reasons or barriers why they cannot attend school on a regular and punctual basis

8. Legal sanctions

Friars Primary School and Nursery follows Southend Borough Council's Code of Conduct (2004). This means that each the school or local authority can issue penalty notices or fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by the Principal, Local Authority Officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where a suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice

9. Links with Other Policies

- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- Southend Borough Council's Code of Conduct under the Provision of the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004

10. Escalation of Attendance Interventions:

10.1 Pupils with attendance between 90% and 95%

- Attendance Officer/Family Support Worker will speak to the family to offer any support
- Attendance is monitored regularly by the Attendance Officer and a level 1 attendance concern letter is issued.
- If this does not affect an improvement in attendance, the issue is escalated to the local authority.
- Parent/carers will be advised of support services available and may be invited to complete an Early Help Assessment (EHA) if appropriate.

10.2 Pupils with less than 90% attendance

- If following the above strategies attendance continues to be an issue for concern, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting in school. An Attendance Officer from the local authority Access and Inclusion School Attendance Team will also be present at this meeting.
- Parents/carers will be requested to complete a parenting contract which will state that they agree to comply with specified requirements and that the school and local authority will agree to provide the support needed to enable the parent/carer to comply.

- Parents/carers will be informed that no further absence will be authorised without supporting medical evidence.
- A personal attendance target will be set and a review date agreed. If this target is not met, the case will be escalated.
- The Local Authority Attendance Officer will try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if this is unsuccessful, this officer can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecution in the Magistrates court.

10.3 Child Missing in Education (CME)

Child Missing in Education (CME) is a child of compulsory school age who is not on a roll at a school or a child that has unauthorised leave for a long period of time from school and cannot be contacted. It is vital that our school identifies and reports any children who may be missing in education as they are at risk of and may be living a life of abuse.

Friars Primary School and Nursery, as part of the Portico Academy Trust has a responsibility for ensuring that the school is aware of the Local Authority's guidance and has procedures in place for making a referral. Our schools will refer to the [Southend CME guidance](#) for further information or to make a referral.

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parent/carers has not been made, the school may take the pupil off-roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means the child will lose their school place.

Useful links

[Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus \(COVID-19\) during the 2021 to 2022 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Government's document 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

Summary

Friars Primary School and Nursery, as with all of the schools in the Portico Academy Trust, has a legal duty to publish their absence figures and promote attendance. Equally parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All of our staff and trustees are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.