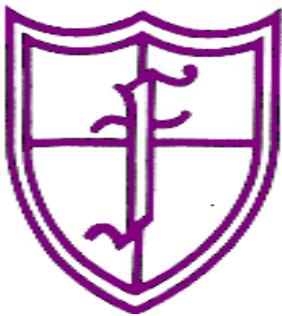




PORTICO
ACADEMY TRUST

opening doors, unlocking potential



Attendance Policy

Date Written/Reviewed: July 2021

Next Review Date: July 2022

Person Responsible: Scott Roche

Signature of Principal _____

Date: _____

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

Friars Primary School values all of its pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and give appropriate support to resolve any difficulties.

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

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1966 Education Act states that parents/carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full time education suitable for their age and ability.

The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents/carers secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education Regulations 2006 requires our school to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning and then again at the start of the afternoon session.

Categorising Absences

The registers must record whether the pupil was:

- Present
- Absent
- Present at an approved educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Registers must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by the parent/carer. All absences will be recorded as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for a pupil's absence has been received.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons such as illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. For example:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping trips or birthdays

- Day trips and holidays which have not been agreed in advance

Absence Procedures

Parent/Carers are requested to:

- Contact the school **before 9.00am** on the first day of illness and each subsequent day absent.

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

Leave of Absence

Current law does not give any entitlement to parents/carers to take their child out of school during term time. The Education Regulations 2013 prohibits headteachers from granting any leave of absence during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances.**'

Parents/Carers will be asked to complete a '**Leave of Absence Form**' at least one month before any leave is required, with supporting evidence identifying why the leave has been requested.

If leave of absence is requested for a close family wedding, one day will be authorised. In the case of a wedding abroad, three days will be authorised. Any extra days taken will be recorded as unauthorised.

If the leave of absence is not authorised, parents/carers will receive a letter from the Vice Principal (Attendance Lead), which will include a warning that a penalty notice may be issued if the leave is taken.

Penalty Notices can be issued if:

There have been 10 sessions (5 consecutive days) or more of unauthorised absence due to leave taken during an academic year;

AND

Attendance is below 90% during the preceding 12 weeks before the leave was taken; OR

The leave was taken during the month of September; OR

The leave was taken during a test week

The school will discuss the case with their allocated Attendance Officer at the Local Authority, who may in turn contact the Early Help, Family Support & Youth Offending Service Officer who will decide whether to issue a penalty notice. (£60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days). If the fine is not paid after 28 days, parents may be prosecuted for their child's absence from school.

Attendance Interventions

Pupils with attendance less than 93%:

- A level 1 attendance review letter will be sent advising parents of the expectations around attendance and a review period of 4 weeks is set to monitor further attendance.
- If attendance improves or their extenuating circumstances for absence – the pupil's attendance will continue to be monitored
- If no improvement is seen - Parents/carers will be contacted by the Attendance Leader in writing and invited to a Level 2 attendance meeting at school with the Local Authority attendance officer and school attendance leader. A target will be set and a review date, usually of 4 weeks will be agreed.

Pupils with attendance less than 90%

- If this is the first instance of low attendance and the reasons are clear, a level 1 attendance review letter can be sent or a telephone call can be made to seek further clarification around the reasons for absence in the current situation. The pupil's attendance will then be further monitored.
- If the child has a previous history of poor attendance, or has 10% absence or more over a six week period, parents/carers can be invited to attend a meeting in school. A Local Authority attendance officer attendance will also be present.
- Parent Carers will be requested to complete a parenting contract which will state that they agree to comply with specific requirements and that the school and local authority will agree to provide the support needed to enable a 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 referred to the Early Help, Family Support & Youth Offending Service Officer.
- The Early Help, Family Support & Youth Offending Service 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.
- In extreme cases, parents could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court can also present parents with a Parenting Order.

Roles and Responsibilities

Friars Primary School and Nursery believes that improved attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, trustees, parent/carers and the pupils.

As such the board of trustees will:

- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the board of trustees to lead on attendance matters
- Monitor the school's attendance through termly reporting at trustee and Portico executive Meetings
- Ensure there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence to identify vulnerable groups
- Ensure data is understood and used to devise solutions and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Ensure that a member of the leadership team has the role of Attendance Leader

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parent/carers through regular communication and attendance initiatives
- Ensure there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy by all staff and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Report school attendance data termly to the board of trustees
- Ensure attendance data is collected and analysed regularly to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure pupils whose attendance falls below the school target have individual targets which are shared with parents/carers.
- Ensure that the school attendance officer initiates phone calls to any pupil absent from school where no reason has been given.
- Meet regularly with the Local Authority attendance officer to discuss concerns regarding a pupil's attendance.
- Attend Pupil Planning Meetings with the Early Help, Family Support & Youth Offending Service with parents/carers to set targets for children with low attendance.

Children Missing in Education

- When children remain absent from school for 10 days after an authorised absence/leave of absence or without reason, the senior leadership team will carry out reasonable enquiries to establish their whereabouts.
- If there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral will be made to children's social care or the police.
- The local authority will be notified of children who are deemed to be 'Children Missing in Education' in accordance with the September 2016 statutory guidance for local authorities. (Section 436A of the Education Act 1996).

All Staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers
- Form positive relationships with parents/carers
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend.
- Comply with Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work alongside other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families

The parents/carers will:

- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let us know the reason for the absence
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences by making appointments outside the school day
- Ask the school for help if a child is experiencing difficulties
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing the school bag and uniform the evening before
- Avoid taking the child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, before booking the holiday, complete and submit a holiday form to the Senior Leadership team, who will consider whether the request should be granted

The pupils will:

- Be punctual for school and be ready to learn.

Friars Primary School and Nursery has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and promote attendance.

Equally parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils in the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Covid -19 addendum

Special dispensation is given to those pupil's that need to self-isolate or are awaiting tests. Work will be provided for the duration of their absence in line with our blended learning offer.

Refusal to return to school due to safety fears

Since the start of the academic year 2020-21, the government have stated that all children should be in education. Pupil's with low attendance are monitored and actioned in the same way as above once their attendance reaches less than 93%.

The local authority have advised that visits to schools or home may not be able to take place if the local COVID cases are high, so any Level 2 meetings may need to be undertaken virtually. The approach of the school needs to be balanced when dealing with COVID related attendance matters, and will need to recognise, and be mindful of the impact that COVID may have had on both the pupil and the wider family.

The Local Authority role will continue to be supportive, speaking to parents and trying to elevate their fears of sending their children back to school. They will be mindful of the local position when looking to apply legal sanctions and will assess whether the school can provide clear evidence that they have attempted to engage the pupil and family, offering reassurance, support and referrals to outside agencies where necessary, as part of their early intervention.

Should the school feel that they have exhausted their efforts to engage the family and parents are still not sending their child into school, a referral sheet should be completed and the Local Authority will make contact. If they are unable to make contact, a doorstep visit may be completed with the hope of encouraging the parent/child that it's safe to attend and then support them back in to school.