



FOREST HILL SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY - student

September 2015

*Review: as required, and in line
with changing legislation as
appropriate*

Introduction

Forest Hill School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. Personal qualities such as reliability that are inferred by excellent attendance at school are amongst those most prized in society in general and by employers in particular. The promotion of excellent attendance is therefore a primary objective which all staff must place at the forefront of every element of their professional activity. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education. The Home/School agreement can be used in this way.

Attendance Targets

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. These will reflect both national and local attendance targets and will feature regularly in home-school communications such as the weekly bulletin. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

School Procedures

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Lateness

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8:40am. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation, ie school transport was delayed. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

The afternoon registration will be at 1:30pm daily. The registers will close at 1:40pm.

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated, for statistical purposes, as present but will be coded as late before registers close.

Parents

- Ensure that children leave for school on time every day
- Provide written explanation for children's absences from school
- Endeavour not to take children out of school in term time
- Notify the school as soon as problems arise with child's attendance
- If no letter has been sent in advance, telephone the school on the first morning child is absent

Students

- Arrive at 8.40am for registration every morning. Arrive at 1.30pm for afternoon registration.
- Arrive on time for lessons
- Make sure a note is sent from parents to explain absences
- If late, sign in at Pupil Reception
- If need to leave early, sign out at Pupil Reception
- Tell Form Tutor or Head of House if having any problems attending school

First Day Absence

All parents/carers are contacted via truancy call and asked to contact the school.

Third Day Absence

On the third day of absence a letter is sent asking parents/carers to contact the school to explain the absences.

Continuing Absence

If there has still been no contact from the parents/carers, a further letter is sent.

Ten Days Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority via a referral to the Attendance and Welfare Officer. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of the Head of House/Tutor to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/s. If this is unsuccessful the school will refer to the School Nurse if the problem appears to be a medical one. In other cases the school will seek advice from the school's Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWO).

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence, all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

Absence notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

Promoting attendance

1. Headteacher

The Headteacher will recommend Attendance Policy to the Governing Body and agree appropriate strategies. The Headteacher will assign responsibility for the implementation of those strategies to the Deputy Headteacher designated as Attendance Leader.

2. Deputy Headteacher

The designated Deputy Headteacher responsible for leading the implementation of attendance policy will oversee the work of Heads of Houses in relation to student attendance. The designated Deputy Headteacher will also oversee the work of the Attendance Officer and will provide the Headteacher and senior colleagues with regular reports in order to inform strategic decisions.

The Deputy Headteacher will also liaise with relevant Local Authority agents in order to oversee the implementation of any student-related interventions as are necessary in terms of student safeguarding, and to match school strategies to those at national level.

3. Heads of Houses

Heads of Houses are responsible for promoting and celebrating good punctuality and attendance through their leadership and monitoring of the work of form tutors, through effective use of assembly time, in working with individual students and in speaking with parents.

Heads of Houses are responsible for implementing strategies that ensure the speedy implementation of remedial measures where a student's attendance is causing concern.

Heads of Houses are responsible for leading teams of form tutors in ensuring that student punctuality is embedded in the daily routines of each tutor group, and that rewards and sanctions are used to develop positive teacher-student relationships in this regard. Such systems may begin as 'informal', but must progress rapidly to the formal procedures of placing students on report and/or in detention if no sustained improvement occurs within days.

Heads of Houses are responsible for overseeing the work of form tutors in monitoring student attendance and providing initial elements of professional support and development in this regard. Where such support is judged by the Head of House to be having too little effect, it is their

responsibility to refer the matter to their line manager.

Heads of House are responsible for working closely with the Attendance Officer/Attendance and Welfare Officer, who will provide them with summary attendance reports each week, showing the attendance of their House, broken-down by tutor group, for the previous week, cumulatively for the academic year and highlighting those students with less than 80% attendance.

Heads of House are also responsible for ensuring that form tutors carry out their responsibility to:-

- Record student attendance accurately
- Monitor student attendance daily in order to identify concerns over unexplained and poor attendance
- Take action to speedily address such instances in order to ensure that bad habits do not become established

Heads of House are responsible for agreeing regular meeting times with the Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWO). It is the duty of the Heads of House to refer to the AWO the case of any student whose attendance has become a major cause for concern:

- Students whose attendance record reveals a pattern of multiple episodes of absence, whether explained or not, which suggest a problem in establishing and maintaining uninterrupted schooling
- Students whose attendance has fallen below the school target as a result of substantial questionable absence without a satisfactory explanation
- Students whose attendance record includes episodes of truancy
- Students whose attendance at school seems to be affected adversely by a possible failure in parenting

4. Form Tutors

As a matter of student safeguarding, form tutors are responsible for training their students to arrive punctually at morning tutorial and registration sessions. In connection with this, form tutors are responsible for making their students aware of and for employing stepped sanctions in order to speedily rectify poor punctuality as soon as it occurs.

It is the responsibility of Form Tutors to initiate and lead any intervention necessary to ensure that their students attend morning tutorial, registration sessions and weekly assemblies.

Whilst there is no expectation that form tutors will 'chase' issues of attendance where their earlier interventions have not had an impact, this policy recognizes the position of form tutors as integral to the regular attendance and well-being of our students. It is the responsibility of form tutors therefore, to build positive relationships with their students through well-planned, stimulating activities during each tutor period.

Form tutors are responsible for the maintenance of an accurate tutor group register. In order to do this, form tutors must monitor their students' lesson-by-lesson attendance on a weekly basis as a minimum. Where there is a concern, where a form tutor is in the process of establishing a positive culture among his/her students, or where anomalies have risen, it is expected that this process is carried out overtly on a daily basis.

Form tutors must satisfy themselves that they are aware of the reason for absence of any of their students when that student returns to school, if they have not already been informed by the attendance officer.

Form tutors may authorise the absence of a student in their tutor group if they have received a satisfactory explanation for the absence, as described above. Form tutors must train their students to assist in this process by directing their parent or carer towards the appropriate section of the student's day book.

In order to authorise an absence the form tutor must insert the appropriate code in the student's registration record. Heads of House, the Attendance Officer and the Attendance and Welfare Officer may also authorise absences, as described above. However, the tutor group register remains the responsibility of the form tutor.

When authorising a student's absence as a result of information from parents and carers, form tutors must always inform the Attendance Officer and Head of House of any reason why the student is expected to be absent for more than a few days, eg serious illness or injury.

Form tutors who are concerned about the attendance record of a student to the extent that the student-focused actions they have taken have not had a positive impact, must raise the issue speedily with their Head of House. It is the joint responsibility of both parties to agree actions that they believe will remedy the problem. These actions must be recorded on the student's file and parents informed.

It is the form tutor's responsibility to review progress in relation to any remedial actions within short time frames and to apply praise, rewards or sanctions as appropriate, informing parents and Head of House about progress.

The Attendance Officer will also provide weekly lesson-by-lesson attendance reports for every tutor group in order to assist form tutors in their duty to monitor their student's attendance throughout each day.

5. Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer is the principal point of contact for parents wishing to report their child's absence or query their attendance. As such, the Attendance Officer is responsible for recording absences as authorised if a non-suspicious telephone message has been received and if none of the exceptions referred to above apply.

The Attendance Officer is responsible for maintaining up-to-date Year Group and Whole School attendance records, and for producing and distributing the reports referred to above, in addition to such reports as are requested by the Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher responsible for the implementation of attendance strategy.

The Attendance Officer/AWO is responsible for producing Attendance Certificates and reports on student attendance as and when requested by senior members of staff.

6. Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWO)

The AWO will keep under review and prepare a report on the attendance issues for each House as they are discussed at Inclusion Panel in the monthly rotation for each House. The attendance of vulnerable groups such as Looked After Children are always presented whether they are at risk or not.

Information from primary schools is collated and students identified as attendance concerns will be contacted by the AWO in writing or via a home visit during the summer holidays. The AWO will also contact primary schools directly, where necessary, and consult/share information with the primary Attendance and Welfare team based at Laurence House.

The AWO will work across phases to ensure safeguarding where vulnerable students have vulnerable siblings in primary schools. This will be achieved through family work and where necessary referrals to the Family Support Panel and the Early Intervention Locality Panel to access specialist provision.

The AWO has a role in bridging achievement gaps through involvement with "hard- to-work-with" families. Help and input will be given to increase the participation and engagement of non-supportive families.

The AWO will work with local police/PCSOs, Community Wardens and neighbouring schools to help promote social cohesion with regard to students being in school and safeguarding.

The AWO acts as a mentor to pupils with attendance issues. This will be extended to include regular, scheduled Attendance Support meetings with pupils with attendance issues and their parents/carers where appropriate.

The AWO works with the inclusion team where attendance is an additional factor for vulnerable students, eg those facing bereavement, and works in partnership with other agencies to secure resources and outcomes.

It is the role of the AWO to monitor and support students educated in off-site provision, and their families. To ensure safeguarding, the AWO liaises closely with providers of off-site provision and conducts regular visits to providers

Holidays in term time

Holidays during term time are to be discouraged. Parents will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement. The school will consider authorising up to 10 days' absence (or more in very exceptional circumstances) but parents must apply for permission in writing, in advance, with full details.

The Headteacher or nominated Deputy Headteacher will assess the factors referred to in the written request and decide whether to authorise it or not. In the event of a decision not to authorise, the parent or carer may appeal, in writing to the Chair of the governing body.

In cases where the school is aware that a student has been absent from school in order to attend a holiday without the school's authorisation, the school will inform the LA Attendance and Welfare

Service with the intention that the imposition of a fixed penalty on the parents or carer be considered.

Attendance Awards

The school will use the following system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance;

- cinema
- commendations
- half-termly, termly and annual certificates and letters home for individuals and form prizes for groups
- good attendance references to potential employers/colleges
- e-praise credits

Attendance Sanctions

The school reserves the right to use any of the following sanctions to fulfil its obligations with respect to school attendance:-

- Form tutor detention
- Subject Department detention
- House detention
- AWO involvement and referral
- Parenting Contracts
Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent commits an offence if his or her compulsory school age child who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly. This can result in the school offering the parent the opportunity to enter into a parenting contract following a pupil's truancy under section 19 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (with The Governing Body)
- Penalty Notices issued by the school
Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent commits an offence if his or her compulsory school age child who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly. This can result in the school issuing a penalty notice under section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (by Headteachers and deputy and assistant heads authorised by them)
- Parenting orders or penalty notices can also be issued by the Attendance and Welfare Service on behalf of the LA
- Prosecution by the Attendance and Welfare Service on behalf of the LA