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# FOREST HILL SCHOOL POLICY

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## STUDENT ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

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*September 2019*

*Review: as required, or if a situation  
arises that necessitates amendment*

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## **Introduction**

Attendance is at the heart of educational achievement and central to the wellbeing of our students. It is essential that all students attend regularly and on time and that, they access all of the opportunities that the school offers.

Students who do not have excellent attendance are at risk of a whole range of factors that may lead to poor outcomes including low attainment, vulnerability to exploitation or abuse and social exclusion.

Excellent attendance is also a means by which vulnerable students are regularly monitored and tracked and as such forms a vital aspect of our Child Protection protocols.

## **Procedures**

This policy reflects the Local Authority Attendance Guidance and Procedures for Schools Policy and the Statutory Framework.

## **Principles**

- Every student has a fundamental right to be educated
- Parents, carers, teachers and students have a duty and responsibility to ensure full attendance at school

## **Aims**

- To encourage that and support students to take full advantage of their educational opportunities by attending school regularly;
- To recognise the external factors which influence student attendance and work in partnership with parents, carers, the schools' Attendance and Welfare Officer, attendance staff and other agencies to address difficulties;
- To create a culture in which attendance is valued and celebrated and where students want to be punctual to school and to lessons, are keen to attend and know that they are missed when not attending school.

## **Objectives**

- To identify patterns of non-attendance and poor punctuality at an early stage and work to resolve any individual difficulties.
- To provide an effective and efficient system for the monitoring and reporting of attendance and punctuality.
- To devise strategies for tackling individual attendance and punctuality concerns.

## **The school day**

Monday	8.30*am - 2.35pm
Tuesday to Friday	8.30*am - 3.00pm

\*We encourage students to arrive to school by 8.20am each day.

Students should:

- Attend school every day
- Be punctual every day

Parents should:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence by telephone before 8.30am.
- Inform the school in advance of any known absence and provide written evidence.
- Ensure that no holidays are taken during term time. Permission to remove a student from school during term time must be sought in writing from the Headteacher. This is only likely to be granted in exceptional circumstances.
- Check their son's attendance and punctuality record regularly using the school's Information Management System.
- Provide a written explanation, if a student is absent or late.
- Discuss with the tutor, Year Leader or Attendance and Welfare Officer any concerns about attendance or punctuality.
- Inform the school of any personal changes which may interfere with a student's education.
- Provide school with accurate and up to date contact numbers, ensuring that any changes are quickly and accurately communicated to the school ([attendance@foresthillschool.co.uk](mailto:attendance@foresthillschool.co.uk))
- Attend Parents' Evenings where academic progress and target setting are discussed fully, including any concerns about attendance and punctuality.

### **Absence from School**

Notification must be provided by parents/carers for all absences from school on a daily basis. Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Parents/carers must contact the school on the first and any following days of absence by 8.30am;  
By phone on 020 8699 9343 (24/7 automated voicemail service - option 1)  
By email on [attendance@foresthillschool.co.uk](mailto:attendance@foresthillschool.co.uk)

If the school is not informed of an absence, the attendance team will phone, text or email the parent/carer for an explanation. If the pupil is absent with no contact from home for more than one day, this will be recorded as a safeguarding concern and other relevant agencies may be contacted.

### **Authorised Absence**

Authorised absences are either a morning or an afternoon away from school for a valid reason. This includes serious illness and urgent medical/dental treatment. The school may request medical evidence regarding illness/appointments. The school may or may not authorise an absence for illness even if an explanation has been given from a parent/carer. After 5 days or more, a letter will be required from a GP signed and dated with the reason for and the duration of the absence. Letters regarding absences and, where applicable, medical certificates should be given to the school office.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

Any absence where the school does not receive information from the parent/carer or when the reason for the absence is one that the school cannot authorise because it is not a valid reason for non-attendance will count as an unauthorised absence.

For example:

- Keeping a student off school without a good reason e.g. waiting for the gasman, shopping or caring for younger siblings.
- Truancy from a whole session (a morning or an afternoon).
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Students who arrive at school too late to get marked in the register on time.
- Taking unauthorised holidays in term time.

Parentally condoned unauthorised absence and persistent absence (below 90%) will be referred to the Lewisham Attendance Welfare and Inclusion Service and is likely to result in the parent/carer being served a Penalty Notice (£60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days) or summons to court.

Unauthorised absences could also result in a referral to Children's Social Care. This is because ensuring regular school attendance is a parent's legal responsibility and failing to ensure a student attends school on a regular basis could be considered a safeguarding matter, and one which potentially puts the student at risk.

### **Medical appointments and illness**

Parents/carers are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time. Medical or dental treatment that is either urgent or cannot be made outside school hours can be authorised. An appointment card/letter must be shown to the school.

A student who is out of school for medical/dental appointments will be marked as 'M' which is an authorised absence. Students should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary and are therefore expected to attend for some of the school day, rather than miss the whole day.

Students unable to attend school for extended periods for medical reasons (certified by a medical practitioner) may be referred to the Local Authority Medical Programme/Hospital school. Additionally, the school may support students with health difficulties by drawing up an individual Health Plan with the support of medical professionals.

### **Special Leave/Special Occasions/Family Emergencies or Bereavement**

Schools can now only grant leave in 'exceptional' circumstances, which is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Our policy is to **refuse** all applications for holidays during term time.

### **Days of Religious Observance**

Such absences can be authorised in accordance with Local Authority Guidelines.

### **Punctuality**

A student arriving late may seriously disrupt not only their continuity of learning, but also, that of others. The school has a legal duty to promote excellent punctuality. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend on time, every day.

All students must arrive by 8.25am. Any student arriving after 8.30am will be coded as (L) for Late. The registers will close at 10.00am; students who arrive after the closing of the register will be marked as (U) Unauthorised Absence.

All students coded, as late (L) or (U) twice in any week (Friday to the following Thursday) will be issued a 30-minute late detention with their Head of Year. If a student fails to attend the 30-minute detention, this will be escalated to a one-hour School Detention with a member of the senior leadership team. If patterns of persistent lateness are demonstrated, parents will be invited to a meeting at school or referred to the Local Authority.

### **School Practice**

The school office staff play a crucial role in recording attendance and logging absence accurately. They are also at the forefront of the daily communication between home and school.

The school office team should:

- Be the first port of call for daily communication with parents logging the information they are given accurately.
- Ensure that the school's Truancy call goes out each day to the parents of any student who has not arrived in school.
- Ensure that daily communication is sent to the parents of any student arriving late to school each day.
- Monitor staff use of SIMS and follow up any gaps or errors.

The tutor is at the forefront of addressing attendance in the tutor group. In support of this, all tutors should:

- Complete the register accurately using the appropriate symbols, during registration.
- Be aware of attendance and punctuality as a key feature of students' education and achievement and communicate this to students through the pastoral programme, individual meetings and via the academic reporting process.
- Monitor attendance and punctuality of those in the tutor group carefully on a daily basis and discuss any attendance concerns directly with the student in the first instance.
- Speak to students returning to school following an absence and pass on any concerns to the Head of Year.
- Consult with the Head of Year about any student who is falling below 97% attendance and punctuality.
- Follow the *Lateness to Lessons* guidelines.
- Apply any agreed strategies to improve attendance and punctuality of any student with attendance concerns
- Review, with the Head of Year, any agreed interventions to assess any effectiveness in improving attendance and punctuality.
- Direct records of communication concerning attendance and punctuality to the Head of Year and school office.

### **Dealing with missing marks**

Situations may arise when a boy is marked present for most of the day, but is marked absent for one or more lesson. It is vital that these gaps are investigated thoroughly and closed appropriately, and tutors play a crucial role in doing this.

The expectation is that tutors will review the register for their tutor groups at least on a weekly basis and adopt the following approach:

- If the student claims he was present during the lesson the register was marked absent, the tutor sends him to the relevant teacher for confirmation of his presence - eg a note.
- If this is forthcoming then the tutor changes the register mark from absent to present.
- If the relevant teacher does not confirm this, then the tutor does not change the mark. This should then be escalated to Head of Year.

Tutors should not feel pressured to change marks on the basis of a student's word alone.

The Head of Year (HOY) should:

- Ensure a climate and culture that is more likely than not to lead to excellent attendance and punctuality for all students.
- Ensure that 100% attendance and punctuality targets are set for the year group and these are communicated to all concerned.

- Reinforce, whenever possible, the value of excellent attendance and punctuality with students (through assemblies and rewards).
- Monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the year group and liaise with tutors, parents, the School Attendance and Welfare Officer, the Inclusion Team and external agencies regarding any attendance and punctuality concerns
- Agree with tutors the strategies to be employed in addressing attendance and punctuality and support tutors in the implementation and monitoring of these strategies.
- Ensure accurate documentation and records are kept on all aspects of attendance and punctuality.
- Follow the *Lateness to Lessons* guidelines.
- Be accountable to line managers for the attendance and punctuality trends in a year group.
- Work with the Schools' Attendance and Welfare Officer and with the Local Authority's Attendance and Welfare Officer to share knowledge and information and to design support interventions for students whose attendance falls below 97%

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT), working as Line Managers should:

- Discuss with the Head of Year the targets and strategies for their year group. The targets should be challenging and ambitious.
- Monitor the attendance and punctuality trends for all year groups and assist in the evaluation of any interventions employed.
- Work with the Year Learning Co-ordinator on improving attendance and punctuality through any additional intervention, e.g. letters home, meetings etc.
- Follow the *Lateness to Lessons* guidelines.

The Governors will:

- Receive a termly report on the overall school attendance, which will indicate trends over a period.
- Receive information on strategies used and the effectiveness of measures undertaken.

Subject teachers should:

- Complete all registers accurately at the start of the lesson using the appropriate symbols,
- Take appropriate action in relation to absent students who are unaccounted for or who are late for their lesson.
- Follow the *Lateness to Lessons* guidelines.

Faculty Leaders should:

- Set a climate for and communicate the value of excellent attendance and punctuality to all lessons.
- Support subject teachers to establish why lesson absence and poor punctuality is occurring
- Liaise with HOY's about lesson absence and poor punctuality and develop support for students for re-integration in the case of persistent absence.
- Follow the *Lateness to Lessons* guidelines.

The School Attendance Officer will support school attendance by:

- Working closely with school staff, specifically: Tutors, Heads of Year, Office Staff, The Inclusion Team & SLT.
- Undertaking primary/secondary transfer interviews and visit identified year 6 students with poor attendance and punctuality
- Liaise closely with HOYs and the SLT to develop strategies for and monitor students whose attendance has fallen below 98%.

- Liaise closely with HOYs and the SLT to develop strategies for and monitor students whose punctuality becomes a concern
- Make home visits when required
- Liaise with the Inclusion Team to design individual support for students who are reintegrated following long-term absence
- Prepare data required by the Local Authority for audit meetings
- Make referrals to the Local Authority and prepare papers to support court action.
- Attend court-warning meetings when required.
- Authorise students to be off rolled under the guidance of the Deputy Headteacher
- Make Child Protection referrals when required in liaison with the Designated

The Safeguarding Lead will:

- Work alongside the SLT to provide a statistical breakdown of figures when required.
- Provide meaningful data to all stakeholders including Governors.

### **Protocols for addressing poor attendance**

All support plans and interventions are reviewed on a two-weekly cycle and decisions made as to whether enough improvement has been seen or whether the student should be escalated to the next level.

Trigger points for intervention:

- If a pupil's attendance falls below 96.9% the tutor will have a discussion with the pupil to explore any extra support required to improve attendance.
- If attendance falls below 94.9% the Head of Year will contact home to discuss any extra support required to improve attendance
- If attendance does not improve (and/or falls below 92.9%), a meeting involving the Head of Year and Attendance Welfare Officer will be required to agree and formalise a plan to improve attendance. This will involve setting targets that are reviewed on a regular basis.
- The persistent absence threshold (attendance of 90% or less). If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil is classified as a persistent absentee.
- Persistent absence (attendance of 90% or less) will be reviewed by the Schools Attendance Welfare Officer and the Head of Year and will require formal meetings in school. A continued lack of improvement will further involve the Local Authority and statutory legal action.
- The key purpose of any meeting is to make sure that there is a clear plan to support the improvement of attendance.
- The pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local level through the DfE's school absence national statistic releases. The underlying school-level data is published alongside national statistics. We compare our data to the national average, and share this with governors.

## Lateness to lesson guidelines

<p><b>Students should be...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ready</b> to learn and on time to all lessons</li> <li>• <b>Respectful</b> of others as they move through the building</li> <li>• <b>Safe</b> in how they move through the corridors at all times</li> </ul> <p><b>Support Staff should be...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the <b>safety</b> of students by being visible and helping supervise the corridor</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers should be...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ready</b> by having a <i>Do Now</i> task on the board and having resources ready</li> <li>• Ensuring the <b>safety</b> of students by being on the door and supervising the corridor</li> <li>• Placing an L on the register for lateness for pupils coming in after the first 5 mins of the lesson (or after the second bell in registration or P5).</li> <li>• Following up with a detention and contact with home if students are late persistently to your lesson i.e. two lessons in a row</li> </ul>	<p><b>Faculty Leaders should be...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that teachers within their Faculty are complying with the Lateness to lesson Guidelines</li> <li>• Ensuring that there is adequate and appropriate supervision around the faculty area</li> <li>• Monitoring the punctuality of students within their Faculty</li> <li>• Supporting teachers with students who are persistently late by imposing sanctions and talking to parents</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tutors should be...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ready</b> with a <i>Do Now</i> at tutor time and ensuring students are <b>safe</b> by supervising the corridor</li> <li>• Checking the Tutor Group register for the previous week &amp; addressing persistent lateness with students in their tutor group.</li> <li>• Intervening where necessary e.g. by contacting home or recommending them for late report with HoY</li> </ul>	<p><b>Heads of Year should be...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that tutors within their Year are complying with the Lateness to lesson Guidelines</li> <li>• Monitoring lateness to lesson and addressing persistent issues</li> <li>• Flagging to Faculty Leaders if students are persistently late to certain lessons</li> <li>• Putting in place interventions for persistent lateness e.g. late report. Failure to successfully complete a week on late report will lead to a school D (target 20/25)</li> </ul>	<p><b>SLT should be...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that FLs &amp; HoYs are complying with the Lateness to lesson Guidelines</li> <li>• Patrolling the corridors during lesson changeover and at the end of break &amp; lunch times</li> <li>• Challenging students who are out of class after the start of lessons and sanctioning persistent offenders</li> <li>• Intervening with students whose punctuality continues to be a concern after interventions from FLs /HoY</li> <li>• Detain target students for the total number of minutes that they are late each day Failure to successfully complete a week on SLT report will lead to a school D (target 20/25)</li> </ul>

### Do not...

- ...keep students after the pips for the next lesson have gone
- ...send students for notes if they are late to your lesson
- ...leave students standing outside your classroom if they are late