



Fitzjohn's Primary School

# **Pupil Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

**Reviewed:** September 2023

**Next Review Date:** September 2024

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

We want to ensure that all pupils receive a full-time education to maximise opportunities, attainment, well-being and wider life chances for everybody to realise their potential. We aim for an environment, which enables and encourages all members of the school community to strive for excellence and enjoyment in education. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually.

At Fitzjohn's Primary School our objectives are to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers, and the wider community the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for effective learning and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

## **Attendance target**

Fitzjohn's Primary School intends to maintain its high levels of attendance each year. Our current target for 2022 – 2023 is 95%.

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Minimum attendance targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

We will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling, and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the country.

Throughout the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Home - School bulletin and we ask for your full support.

## **Term dates**

School term dates are published in advance and can be found on the school website.

Whilst every effort is made for common term dates across the council, there are times that term dates may differ if you have children attending more than one school.

Please check the term dates on each school website and do not assume each school will have the same term dates.

They are also available from the school office and will be regularly highlighted in the school newsletter.

Staff training days (inset days) are included in the term dates schedule. Parents or carers will receive written notice of any changes in term dates. Those changes would also be published in the calendar on the weekly school newsletter.

## **Why Regular Attendance is important:**

### **1. Learning**

We know from experience and from studies that regular absence and poor punctuality can have a detrimental effect on a child's learning. When a pupil is absent or arrives late it disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning not only of that pupil but also that of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a penalty notice or prosecution.

### **2. Safeguarding and access to support services**

At Fitzjohn's Primary School, we believe every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places your child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses:

Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

To allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

It is also important for parents to let school know of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances. If you are uncertain about what would be considered a vulnerability, please speak with .....Fitzjohn's Primary .....

Other people you can contact about attendance issues are:

- Your child's class teacher
- Inclusion Lead
- Other school staff

Contact the school office if you are uncertain how to contact someone.

We will see advice on attendance concerns from Camden's Pupil Attendance Service and where appropriate we will seek consent to refer to other support services that can help support pupils and their families to improve attendance.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils, and all members of school staff.

**To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Provide parents / carers with details on attendance in the school newsletter.
- Report to parents at least half-termly on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment and progress.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates, and outings/events.
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

## **Telling the children about the importance of good attendance and punctuality**

Children receive guidance from teachers on an individual, class and school level about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. If a child has concerns about their attendance or punctuality, they are encouraged to speak to their class teacher.

Children are encouraged to walk and cycle to school and to get to school on time before the bell goes.

Children are encouraged to go to bed at an appropriate time so that they are not tired the next day. They are encouraged to prepare for the school day on the night before as much as possible, so they are not rushed in the mornings.

There are incentive schemes in place to promote good attendance and punctuality amongst the children.

School to endeavour that the school council is consulted with on an ongoing basis to help promote and develop initiatives to improve school attendance and punctuality.

## **The Law relating to attendance and safeguarding**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

*the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:*

*(a) to age, ability, and aptitude and*

*(b) to any special educational needs, he/ she may have either at school or otherwise*

**Compulsory School Age:** A child is compulsory school age from the beginning of the next term after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

This policy is written in relation to the following acts of Parliament and guidance relating to attendance:

- Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- We will also take account of all new legislation and initiatives.
- [DFE School attendance guidance](#)

## **Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why, information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

### **Authorised Absence**

An authorised absence is where the school has either given permission in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered is accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical appointments - appointments should always be made outside school times where possible
- Unavoidable cause (which is expected to be an emergency and unavoidable)
- Days of religious observance
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment

### **Unauthorised Absences**

An unauthorised absence is where either no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school.

This includes:

- Parents / Carers keeping children off school to assist with translation
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a late mark – See lateness section
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

If an absence is recorded as unauthorised the school may refer this to the Local Authority's Pupil Attendance Service. The Local Authority can use various sanctions to promote regular attendance such as issuing a penalty notice fine or initiate court proceedings. (Further information below)

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, it can sometimes be that they are reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers, and the child wherever possible. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

## **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil is a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that level, is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral support system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

If your child has or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence you will be asked to provide evidence for any future absence. This may be medical evidence for illness which can be in the form of prescription, appointment cards, medicine packaging or hospital letter. Where we have concerns about your child's health, we may ask you to talk to the school nurse or for permission to contact their GP or other medical professionals for advice.

## **Absence Procedures**

### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and give an expected return date. You need to call at least every second day thereafter to advise school of your child's progress.
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us.
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who may arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

### **If your child is absent, we will:**

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Headteacher if absences persist.
- Consult with the Pupil Attendance Service if attendance moves below 95% and at least 10% or more of the absences are unauthorised.

Please see the school escalation table and suggested roles and responsibilities

## **The School Attendance Officer (SAO)**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems affecting or likely to affect attendance together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consult with the Pupil Attendance Service. If other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. They may also apply for an Education Supervision Order through the Family Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Pupil Attendance Service.

## **Other school staff who may deal with attendance are:**

Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher/Inclusion Lead, Admin Assistant

## **The role of Governors**

There is a School Governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance and who is responsible for school attendance policies and issues. It is their role to be aware of general attendance issues and along with the whole Governing Board inform and oversee school attendance performance initiatives.

Reports and statistics and initiatives to improve school attendance will be shared and consulted on with the Governing Board and documented in Governors meeting minutes (made available to all parents) and the Governors Annual Report.

## **The Headteacher's Role**

The Headteacher will consider every request for leave on its individual merits. Ultimately the Headteacher will be the final arbiter of the authorisation of any leave.

The Headteacher oversees the collection and reporting of attendance data and the publication of statistics and reports on attendance to parents, pupils, governors and to Camden Council. Data used to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohort who need it most. Data will also inform the annual review of schools attendance policy and practice. An attendance audit is carried out and reported in August of each year. This is available to the local authority and the Department of Education (DfE)

## **The role of the attendance lead**

The attendance lead will work with the headteacher to devise a working attendance policy, reviewed at regular intervals and based on school attendance data. They will monitor weekly attendance patterns and trends and identify whole school strategies and support for children who are missed school.



## **The role of teachers**

All class teachers / tutors have a responsibility in keeping an attendance register. This is a legal document and must be completed accurately. It is a legal requirement that the attendance register must be marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Absences are coded according to the information received from the parent of the child.

The class teacher / tutors monitor the register daily and is encouraged to be attentive and discerning to any emerging patterns of absence and lateness or any alarming changes in this area.

Class teachers / tutors encourage patterns of punctuality and good attendance by praising those children who came to school each day and arrive on time.

The class teacher / tutors report any concerns about a child's attendance or punctuality to the School Attendance lead and the Headteacher. This can sometimes then be referred to the LA if a Penalty Notice or legal action is being sought.

Ensure that information about absences is passed on to the appropriate person.

Welcome back pupils after an absence.

## **Legal sanctions and actions**

The school will make every attempt to contact the parent or carer by telephone and in writing. In the first instance we would invite them to discuss the problem. If this is unsuccessful the school may give warning of referral to the LA. A referral may be made to the LA under the following circumstances:

- 10 days of continuous unauthorised absence
- More than 10 days of authorised leave
- A term time holiday taken without permission
- A pupil who has been more than XX minutes late (after the close of registers) on a minimum of eight occasions in a rolling eight-week period.
- 95% or less attendance and with 10% or more unauthorised absences

Penalty notices are issued to each parent or carer for each of their children for example two parents with three children would receive a total of six penalty notices, one parent with two children will receive a total of two penalty notices. Each penalty notice is £60 if paid in the first 21 days, from days 22 to 28 the fine doubles to £120 for each penalty notice. The Pupil Attendance Service has asked us to point out that it is not possible to pay these fines by instalments or lower the cost when they have increased, or to just fine one parent. Payment can be made online and instructions on how to pay are included on the penalty notice. Any problems with paying online should be discussed as early as possible with the Pupil Attendance Service by ringing 020 7974 7161.

If a penalty notice is not paid or the Pupil Attendance Service feels that that the level of absence warrants court action the local authority will arrange for a court hearing. There are a range of sentencing options available to the magistrate including the maximum penalty of a fine of up to £2500 per parent for each offence as well as the possibility of up to three months in prison.

### **What happens after a long absence?**

The school is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of pupils returning after significant periods of absence and will support the smooth reintegration of pupils both academically and socially. In such circumstances the school will work with parents, carers and pupil towards an agreed reintegration plan which may include opportunities for counselling and feedback, peer support and mentoring, along with an agreed review period.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information / instructions and news for the day. Late arriving pupils can also disrupt lessons, and this can be embarrassing for the child. This can encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at 8.55am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. They should be in the playground by 8.50am.

Registers are marked by **9.05am** and your child will receive a 'late' mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time, they will receive an unauthorised absence mark that shows them to be on site but **not** counted as a present for statistical / legal purposes. This means the possibility of a Penalty Notice(s) if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Headteacher and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

The school day ends at 3.20pm (KS1) 3.30 pm (KS2). Where parents continually fail to make arrangements to pick up their children at the end of the school day the school may have to consider referring the matter to Social Services, Early Help and/or Camden's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that s/he collect their children from school on time every day.

### **Exceptional Leave in Term Time**

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time.

Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any monetary savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

All applications for a leave of absence must be made in advance to the Headteacher and will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances. In deciding the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. The Headteacher will be the final arbiter as to the authorisation of any leave.

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the school.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Your child's school place may also be at risk. Previous good attendance or your child's education ability are not considered when the school make the decision. If you have siblings at other schools you must seek permission from all the schools, and it is possible that one school may grant it, and another may not.

If exceptional leave is agreed you will receive a letter from the school. If you do not get a letter DO NOT, assume that permission has been granted. Only the headteacher can decide if they will grant exceptional leave – **no one else in school has permission to do so** and leaving an application form is not permission to take leave.

If leave has been granted and a child returns late outside of the agreed dates either before or after, the school will reserve the right to unauthorise the entire period of leave taken.

If parents have any comments, concerns, or complaints regarding the school attendance policy these can be addressed in writing to the Headteacher or an appointment can be arranged for discussion with the Headteacher. If any parents wish to work with the school in partnership to promote and implement good school attendance practice this is encouraged and applauded. If a parent believes the school can support or assist them in their child's school attendance, we would be happy to accommodate this.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Pupil Attendance Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 0207 974 1653 or you can email [pas@camden.gov.uk](mailto:pas@camden.gov.uk)

**The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

Head teacher: Rob Earrey

Governor: Ruth Katz

Attendance lead: Rob Earrey

**Summary:**

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

**Date of Policy /Review:**

September 2022

**Not currently applicable**

**Impact of Covid 19 on our attendance policy.**

Government advice on attendance during the pandemic is subject to change at short notice. Any changes that impact on our policy and or Local authority legal responsibilities will be shown on our website and via school newsletters.

Our current changes as of [insert date] are:

Staggered start

Staggered finish

We will work closely with the Pupil Attendance Service (PAS) and other Camden and health support agencies to ensure that children are able to access education.

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school and the impact of Covid 19 please speak to [insert name, telephone number and email] so we can look at what additional measures or support can be put in place.

## Absence escalation day-table

Absence	Action	Outcome
Day 1	If no reason received: first day contact – telephone call / text / email. (Remember to ask for expected return date and for regular updates if absence more than one day).	Parent provides acceptable reason – authorised absence (AA). Reason provided is unacceptable - unauthorised absence (UA) Unable to contact family – check if child is identified as vulnerable –refer to Attendance / Safeguarding Lead
Day 2	If no response at day 1 – repeat above – if no contact, then consider trying emergency contacts	If contact made – as above school decide if absence should be AA or UA. If no contact made refer to Attendance Lead & check with support staff / school friends, consider home visit.
Day 3	If no response at days 1 & 2. Carry out home visit.  If parents have responded but absence is UA issue school warning letter	Home visit – if no response leave note – if appropriate check with neighbours (mindful of data protection). Parents provide evidence for absence then AA if don't UA
Day 4	If no contact from family or emergency contacts	Check with senior school to see if known and ask for advice.
Day 5	If no contact from family or reason provided is unacceptable -issue school warning letter	Penalty Notice Warning to be considered.
Day 7	If no contact – home visit  If contact but absence UA	No contact a) leave notes b) speak to neighbours c) checks with local authority. If continued UA refer to senior school staff– Pupil Attendance Service for Penalty Notice Fine
Day 10	Continuous absence – no reason provided	Notify Local Authority PAS and continue to implement procedures to address absence

### Please note schools should have letters for:

- 3-day absence without good reason – parents asked to respond in writing or telephone call – warn that they can be issued with penalty notice if no response
- 5-day absence without good reason – parents asked to respond in writing and provide evidence of reason for absence. Penalty Notice Warning can be sent.

**If the child is considered to be vulnerable then this process needs to be escalated – always make sure you have a list of vulnerable children and who on SLT is the appropriate contact for example the SENDCO or the Designated Safeguarding Lead**

who may have other pertinent information that requires home visit or action on the first day of absence.

### Absence escalation percentage table

Percentage	Responsibility	Action
94% - 96%	School Action: Attendance Lead / Attendance Officer	Review attendance – consider is absence authorised (is it one period of absence of several individual days - look for patterns) If authorised may decide to monitor. If unauthorised – write to parents advising them of attendance level and of concerns / expectations and possible next actions.
91% - 94%	School Action	Review attendance – consider if authorised – is evidence being provided If unauthorised has it reached the threshold for Penalty Notice Warning. Is a home visit / school attendance panel appropriate?
90% or below	School Action + PAS / other agencies where appropriate.	Review attendance – consider if absence is authorised – review reason and pattern. If child has a medical condition is a referral to Medical Needs Service appropriate. If they are subject to CP plan or other safeguarding concerns raised, then discuss with Designated Safeguarding Lead / allocated Social Worker. If low attendance is authorised due to exclusions have all inclusion options been considered (primary may seek advice from the re-integration service. Home visits should be made to ensure vital information is not missed. Consider absences using Emotional Based School Avoidance guidance.
		At less than 90% attendance a child is a Persistent Absentee and absence requires further investigation and possible statutory intervention depending on reason for absence. Long term illness should have been referred to Medical Needs Team; exclusions to School Inclusion Service.

Schools must notify the Local Authority of children who are absent for 10 consecutive days without authorisation. Email [pas@camden.gov.uk](mailto:pas@camden.gov.uk)

**School Key Contacts [insert as separate page and update when needed or have this as a page on your school website]**

Attendance Lead:  
Name: Rob Earrey  
Telephone number 02074359797  
Email head@fitzjohns.camden.sch.uk

Attendance Officer / Admin Officer  
Name Linda Read  
Telephone number 02074359797  
Email admin@fitzjohns.camden.sch.uk

Class teacher contact details are available from the office

Deputy Head/Inclusion Lead  
Name Debbie Moss  
Telephone number 02074359797  
Email d.moss@fitzjohns.camden.sch.uk

Governor for attendance  
Name Ruth Katz  
Telephone number 02074359797  
Email care of: admin@fitzjohns.camden.sch.uk

DFE guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

States

The policy should be easily accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, including being published on the school's website. Parents should be sent it with any initial information when pupils join the school and reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is updated.

As the barriers to attendance evolve quickly, the policy should be reviewed and updated as necessary. In doing so, schools should seek the views of pupils and parents