



**Policy Document
Promoting Good School
Attendance**

September 2013

Fairfields School

Policy for Promoting Good School Attendance

Aim Statement

Fairfields School aims to encourage every pupil to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance in order to take full advantage of the learning experience available to them.

Statutory Framework

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below).

Rights and Responsibilities

Maintaining good attendance at Fairfields School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – pupils, parents, governors and all staff.

Parents/Carers

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, are ready for transport, properly dressed and equipped. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents are requested to notify the school on the first day of absence before 8.45am. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received from the parent. Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance.

Parents whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication.

School

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff (not just teaching and pastoral staff). The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

- Build positive relationships with parents/carers
- Encourage parents/carers to sign the home school agreement
- Create an ethos that school attendance will enhance the pupils learning and well being.

Name of Pupil: _____

FAIRFIELDS SCHOOL

HOME - SCHOOL AGREEMENT

The Parents / Guardians

I / We shall try to:

- 1) See that my / our child goes to school regularly and arrives on time (understanding that this is my legal responsibility).
- 2) See that my child is ready when the transport arrives / arrives at school on time.
- 3) Support the school policies and guidelines.
- 4) Support my child in opportunities for home-learning.
- 5) Attend annual reviews and discussions about my child's progress.
- 6) Get to know about my child's life at Fairfields.
- 7) Read and respond to communications from my child's school.
- 8) Make the school aware of any concerns or problems that might affect my child's learning or behaviour, through the appropriate procedures.
- 9) Treat all staff and others with respect.
- 10) Refrain from engaging in negative activity regarding the school on social networking sites.

Name / Signature(s) of Parent / Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Fairfields School

The school will try to:

- 1) Care for your child's welfare, safety and happiness, treating your child with dignity and respect.
- 2) Ensure that your child achieves his / her full potential as a valued member of the school community.
- 3) Provide teaching of the highest possible standard.
- 4) Provide a balanced curriculum and meet the individual needs of your child.
- 5) Achieve high standards of work and behaviour through building good relationships and developing a sense of responsibility.
- 6) Keep you informed about general school matters and about your child's progress in particular.
- 7) Be open and welcoming at all times and offer opportunities for you to become involved in the life of the school.
- 8) Contact parents if there is a problem.
- 9) Respond to parental questions and concerns sensitively and promptly. Open lines of communication.
- 10) Maintain a professional relationship / partnership between home and school.

Name / Signature of Class Teacher: _____ Date: _____

The Pupil (when and where appropriate)

I shall try to:

Do my best in school.

Name: _____ Date: _____

The school is aware that there may be special reasons for variations in arrival times such as medical appointments.

Registration

Registers will be taken at 8.45am and 1.00pm and will be marked in red or black in accordance with the list of symbols as set out in the register and within this document.

Registers will close at 9.00am and at 1.15pm. For details of marks and procedures please see the sheets in Appendix 1.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school more than 30 minutes after the register is called and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil will be recorded as an 'unauthorised absence' for that session.

All class teachers will take registers in each of their classes and will notify the Head of Department if absenteeism is a cause for concern. These concerns will then be passed to the Headteacher.

The School Business Manager or an Administrative Officer will inspect all registers regularly in order to ensure that the correct procedures are being followed, and that totals are being calculated and entered.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

The Headteacher will decide whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. The absence log will be checked by her daily.

Fairfields School will decide on how an absence is to be recorded in accordance with the latest guidance from the Department for Education and Employment. This states that:

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- the pupil was ill 'or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause'
- the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belongs
- out of county respite care
- the school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home, and no suitable arrangements have been made by the Local Education Authority for any of the following:
 1. the child's transport to and from school
 2. boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school, and

3. enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions as stated in the Education Act 1996, Section 444(6) are met
 - there is a family bereavement
 - the pupil is excluded
 - the pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion

Absence should be **unauthorised** if:

- no explanation is forthcoming
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be authorised in exceptional circumstances)
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (eg. a birthday)
- the pupil is away from school on a family holiday for a period of time longer than that negotiated with the school (normally a maximum of two weeks)
- the pupil is on a family holiday without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday and instead seek retrospective approval on their return

Holidays

Parents are urged strongly to avoid taking family holidays during term time. Indeed, parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday.

As of September 2013 headteachers can no longer sanction such activities.

Procedures for following up absence

- If a pupil is absent without an explanation being received, the class teacher will try to ascertain the reason via transport etc. The Headteacher will decide on any action to be taken. If the absentee is a pupil about whom there are already concerns, the Education Welfare Officer or Headteacher will make every effort to contact the parents immediately. The school office will phone the parent on the first day of absence and every subsequent day.

- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent (Unauthorised), the Headteacher may contact the Education Welfare Officer, Social Services or the parents and invite them to attend a meeting at school.
- If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence and fails to bring a note or if the explanation offered by a note is unsatisfactory, the office will contact the parents when informed by the teacher.
- If a pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer and further action taken.
- Notes from parents will be initialled by the class teacher and kept on the pupil's file. All telephone messages or home school book messages regarding absence/lateness should be used to amend registers and if possible recorded.
- Absence lists are kept in the office and are updated using the fire list.

Strategies for promoting attendance

- Fairfield's School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupils' needs.
- Attendance data will be monitored regularly and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievements, support and inform policy/practice and monitor the late arrival of transport.
- Where pupils' attendance is a cause of concern, strategies will be used to help parents improve pupils' attendance.
- Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, the school brochure, parents' evenings, etc) of the importance of regular attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be re-integrated back into school upon their return.
- The Headteacher will make an annual report to the school's governing body on attendance matters.
- Staff will, when appropriate, liaise with other services and agencies when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The school will have contact with an Education Welfare Officer in order to identify how best to support pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

- Attendance figures will be published in the School Brochure. We will strive to achieve the 95% figure required by Ofsted.
- If pupils are ill for a period of more than one week the school will contact the parents in order to offer support.
- Where possible the school will gather comparative data with other special schools on attendance figures.

This policy will be reviewed in line with our agreed school cycle.