

# FORGE VALLEY SCHOOL



## Attendance & Punctuality Policy

FVS values and principles

'Where learning comes first' in a 'caring' and 'inclusive' environment and where everyone 'aspires' to do their best

Every child deserves to be safe, happy and healthy.

Every child, young person and adult in FVS should have the chance to make the most of their talents and fulfil their potential.

This policy is written with these statements in mind.

Policy development:

This policy has been developed by building on our own best practice and that of other educational networks. It has been developed in consultation with governors, parents, staff and pupils and is accessible through the Forge Valley website

**Ratified by governors: 30<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

**Due for review: 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Member of staff responsible: Dale Edwardes**

# **ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY**

## **Aims**

Forge Valley School is committed to maximising educational opportunities and achievement for all pupils. For pupils to gain the best from their time at Forge Valley School, it is vital that they achieve excellent attendance and punctuality. We strive for 100% attendance for all pupils. Forge Valley School actively promotes good attendance and discourages unjustified absence. Forge Valley School recognises that promoting good attendance and punctuality prepares pupils for the disciplines of adult working life.

## **Guiding Principles**

- We emphasise that it is the responsibility of everyone in the school to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Forge Valley School needs to ensure that all its pupils access a full-time education which meets their needs and allows all to realise their potential.
- We will strive to provide a safe and caring environment where each pupil can engage in all opportunities offered.
- We will work with pupils and their families to ensure every pupil attends regularly and punctually.
- We will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents/carers who give a low priority to attendance and punctuality.
- We have an effective system of communication with parents/carers together with appropriate agencies to provide mutual information and support.
- We will continue to develop ICT-based attendance recording systems in order to provide accurate information and to use suitable tracking strategies to recognise any trends that can damage good attendance and learning.
- We will support all aspects of the Education Act 1996 and the Children's Act 2003: 'Every Child Matters' by implementing this policy in a consistent manner.
- We will have regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and reasonable adjustments will be made for young people.

## **What you can expect from Forge Valley school:**

- We will promote good attendance and punctuality and will investigate any unexplained and/or unjustified absence.
- We will work closely with parents/carers where pupil's absence is cause for concern.
- We will support pupils to achieve good attendance and punctuality.
- We will support pupils returning to school after prolonged absence. (see below for details)

## **What Forge Valley School expects from Pupils :**

- To attend regularly and on time
- To be punctual to all lessons
- To ensure that they register for all timetabled lessons and inform the Attendance Officer (at Pupil reception) if they are not able to be registered.
- To ensure all messages and notes from parents/carers are taken to the Attendance Officer (at Pupil Reception).

## What Forge Valley School expects from Parents/Carers:

- To ensure their child attends regularly, punctually, dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn.
- To ensure their child attends every day the school is open unless they are too ill to do so.
- Parents/Carers should not keep their child away from the School for any reason other than illness or other authorised explanation (see overleaf).
- Parents/Carers should not arrange holidays during term time
- To immediately inform the school Attendance Officer if their child is unable to attend (by 8.40am where possible), including the reason for absence and expected date of return, and to confirm in writing on their child's return. Absence notes are provided in the pupil planner.
- **If no indication of a return date has been given, parents/carers should contact the school on each day of absence.**

## Registration

- The law requires the register to be taken twice a day – at the start of the morning session and once in the afternoon session. This is at 8:40am and 1:00pm each day
- Pupils are expected to have arrived by 8:35am in order to be ready for the start of Tutor Time at 8:40am.
- Pupils are registered at the start of every lesson of the day.
- Registers close at 9:15am in the morning and 1:55pm in the afternoon, after which pupils will be marked as unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory explanation has been received.
- The register is marked using the DfE Attendance and Absence Codes (see Appendix 1).
- Guidance on applying the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 can be found in 'Advice on School Attendance' published 2012 by the DfE.

## Punctuality

- The School gates close at 8:40am.
- Any pupil arriving after this time should sign in at Pupil Reception, giving their reason for being late. The pupil's planner will be stamped and parents will receive a text message advising of their child's lateness.
- Pupils arriving at first lesson without a stamp in their planner must be directed back to Pupil Reception to sign in.
- Pupils who are late will receive a Stage 3 Detention
- Repeated lateness will be reported to parents/carers through contact by the Attendance Officer, the schools EWO and could ultimately be addressed in a formal parent meeting to address punctuality.

## Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has given approval for absence in advance or where the explanation given afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for the absence. Parents/carers may not authorise absence; only the school can do this.

- Parents/carers should contact the school Attendance Officer (by telephone or email) on the morning of absence (preferably before 8:40am), giving a reason and an expected date of return. This should be followed up by a note on the child's return.
- Absence may be authorised for such reasons as:
  - illness
  - unavoidable medical/dental appointments
  - exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement
  - days of religious observance (see Appendix 2)

- exclusion
- involvement in a public performance
- Absence will not be authorised for such reasons as:
  - looking after brothers/sisters/unwell parents/carers
  - birthdays
  - days out
  - shopping trips
  - Family holidays where permission has not been granted (please note, family holidays during term time will not normally be approved).
  - Special occasions, where the school does not agree that the absence should be granted.
- **Medical/dental and other appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, pupils should, where practically possible, come to school before the appointment, sign out and return to school after the appointment.**
- Following an explanation from parents/carers regarding a pupil's absence, the school will decide whether or not it accepts the explanation and authorise/unauthorised accordingly.
- Absence which hasn't been explained will remain as unauthorised.
- Parents/carers should not take their children out of school for days out, to attend sporting events, etc.

### **How we respond to Absence/Lateness**

- If a pupil is absent from period one without contact from a parent/carer to explain the absence, the school will contact parents/carers. We take our safeguarding responsibilities seriously and will always do our best to contact parents/carers to ensure that they are aware of their child's absence. Contact will either be via automated message, which will attempt to text message the phone numbers the school has for priority 1 and 2 contacts, or will be a direct phone call. Parents/carers are expected to contact the Attendance Officer at the school upon receiving this message to inform us of the reason for their child's absence.
- If no response is received to the automated text message the school will write to parents/carers requesting an explanation.
- All absence notes will be retained.
- Where a pupil's absence is cause for concern, the school will write to parents/carers and/or invite the parents/carers into school or visit parents/carers at home.
- Where no sustained improvement in attendance is demonstrated despite interventions from the school, parents will either be contacted by the schools Education Welfare Officer or a referral will be made to the Multi Agency Support Team, where improvements in attendance will be expected. Fixed Penalty notices may be issued in line with the Local Authority's Code of Conduct.

### **Persistent Absence (PA)**

A pupil becomes a Persistent Absentee when they miss 10% of their schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Any pupil whose attendance has reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority for intervention. Intervention may be via:

- An action plan to improve attendance, following a meeting between relevant school staff and parents/careers.
- Where parents/careers fail to co-operate with support and strategies provided by the school, further advice may be sought which could lead to legal sanctions being imposed.

Persistent Absence data is communicated to the Local Authority via the School Census on a termly and annual basis.

## **Term Time Leave**

Any absence, including absence for holidays, interrupts the continuity of pupil's learning. Parents/carers are strongly urged not to take pupils out of school for holidays during term time. There is no entitlement for parents/carers to take their child (ren) out of school for such a reason. Leave of absence during term time will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and must be applied for in advance. Parents must request a form from the Attendance Officer which should be completed at least 3 weeks in advance of the proposed absence. Where such an absence has not been granted, the absence will be unauthorised.

Please note that the school has the right to serve a Fixed Penalty Notice on parents/carers who insist on taking their children out of school without authorisation. Fixed Penalties require each parent to pay a fine of £60 per child if paid within 21 days or £120 per child if paid between 21-28 days. Please refer to the School's Term Time Leave policy for more details on this specific type of absence.

## **Re-integration following Long-term Absence**

Where a pupil has been absent for a prolonged period of time, perhaps due to illness, the school will:

- Welcome the pupil back to the school and value their return.
- Provide support for the pupil in consultation with parents/careers to enable a successful return to the school.
- Ensure that all relevant staff are informed of the circumstances.
- Work with other agencies, where appropriate, to ensure a successful outcome.
- Consider a personalized programme of return if appropriate.
- Nominate a key member of staff to monitor and review the pupil's return.

## **Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality**

- It is the belief that all pupils are more likely to attend regularly if the curriculum is engaging and personalized to meet their needs. The curriculum is monitored and revised on a regular basis so that it meets the ability needs of all pupils.
- Pupils are regularly informed of their attendance levels and, if appropriate, how they can improve.
- Pupils whose attendance falls below 92% will be set targets for improvement and progress towards these targets will be regularly reviewed.
- Good and improved attendance and punctuality will be promoted and rewarded.
- Pupils, parents/careers and staff are regularly reminded about the importance of good attendance.
- Parents/careers are encouraged to contact the Attendance Officer at any time to discuss their child's attendance.
- Regular meetings will be held with the appropriate members of staff/external agencies to identify and support those pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern.
- Pupils who have been absent for extended periods of time will be supported as appropriate to re-integrate back into the school.
- Effective links are made with primary schools to facilitate the smooth transition to Forge Valley School.
- A rewards system is in place for pupils who make improvements and for those that are consistently in school on time.

## **Attendance Data and Targets**

- The school's target is 95.5% attendance.
- The target for all pupils is to strive for 100% attendance. Only by achieving full attendance can pupils expect to achieve their full potential.
- Attendance data will be collected and analyzed and used to inform the school's attendance practices and interventions.
- Individual pupil data will be analysed and monitored to enable early intervention.
- Attendance data is provided on a termly basis or as required to the Governing Body.
- Attendance data and persistent absence data is communicated to the Local Authority and is published via Raise Online.

## **Statutory Requirements, the Law and the Local Authority**

- Registers are legal documents; regulatory requirements placed on schools regarding the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.
- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers are responsible to ensure their child receives a suitable education.
- Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, a parent who fails to ensure their child attends the school at which they are registered, is guilty of an offence.
- The school works together with the Local Authority to ensure that parents/carers fulfil their responsibility. There are a range of legal sanctions that may be imposed for dealing with unauthorised absence: Fixed Penalty Notices, Parenting Contracts and Orders, Education Supervision Orders or referral to the Magistrates Court which can recommend fines (up to £2500) or up to 3 months in prison.
- All sanctions are used to improve attendance and punctuality and reduce absence.

## **Staff Roles and Responsibilities:**

All members of the school have a role to play in improving attendance and reducing absence.

### **Subject teachers**

- Welcome and value the attendance of all pupils to lessons.
- Will ensure all pupils are accurately registered.
- Will ensure that pupils know the register is being taken.
- Will identify pupil absence to lessons and take appropriate action.
- Will identify any absence trends or concerns and will raise these with the appropriate members of staff.

### **Form Tutors**

- Will discuss absence and attendance weekly with pupils.
- Will identify any absence trends or concerns and will raise these with the appropriate members of staff.
- Will work with identified pupils, setting targets to improve attendance and monitoring progress towards those targets.
- Will ensure that all absence notes or verbal messages are sent to the Attendance Office.
- Discuss attendance with parents/carers at Learning Reviews.

### **Year Managers**

- Will monitor absence and attendance regularly.
- Will discuss absence and attendance concerns with pupils and set targets for improvement.
- Will contact parents/carers where attendance concerns have been identified.
- Will support pupils to improve their attendance.
- Will work with other members of staff to share information and support pupils and their parents/carers to improve attendance

- Will review pupils that are either persistently absent or at risk of falling into this category on a regular basis with Education Welfare Officer, and the Attendance Officer.
- Will work with outside agencies, including the Local Authority, where appropriate to improve attendance of individual pupils.

#### **Attendance Officer**

- Will monitor registration on a daily basis.
- Will receive calls and messages from parents/carers regarding pupil absence.
- Will contact parents/carers regarding pupil absence.
- Will identify absence trends or concerns and raise these with the appropriate members of staff.
- Will discuss attendance concerns with parents/carers and liaise with relevant members of staff.
- Will review pupils that are either persistently absent or at risk of falling into this category on a regular basis with Pupil Support Leaders, and the Education Welfare Officer.
- Will provide data to the Head Teacher, Senior Leaders and the School Governors on a regular basis.

#### **Education Welfare Officer**

- Will review pupils that are either persistently absent or at risk of falling into this category on a regular basis with Pupil Support Leaders, and the Attendance Officer.
- Will work directly with parents/carers where attendance concerns have been identified.
- Will support pupils to improve their attendance.
- Will work with other members of staff to share information and support pupils and their parents/carers to improve attendance.
- Will work with outside agencies, including the Local Authority, where appropriate to improve attendance of individual pupils.
- Will administer the range of legal sanctions appropriate in each case of poor attendance, in partnership with the Local Authority.

#### **Inclusion Manager**

- Will take the lead on raising the profile of attendance throughout the school, including improving attendance and reducing persistent absence.
- Will promote attendance through assemblies.
- Will monitor absence and attendance regularly.
- Will identify any absence trends or concerns and will liaise with the appropriate members of staff.

#### **The Head Teacher and the School Governors**

- Will ensure that the school attendance policy is implemented and regularly reviewed.
- Will ensure the whole school ethos promotes excellence in attendance and punctuality.
- Report to the Local Governing Body on attendance.
- Monitor the curriculum to develop ways of improving the provision of educational experience.
- Utilise attendance data to inform strategic planning.

# APPENDIX 1

## DfE ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS (Adopted September 2006, and amended Feb 2013)

| CODE     | DESCRIPTION   | MEANING                             | FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES      |
|----------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| /        | Present (AM)  | Present                             |                               |
| \        | Present (PM)  | Present                             |                               |
| <b>B</b> | Off-site Educational Activity   | Approved Education Activity         | Counted as physically present |
| <b>C</b> | Leave of absence authorised by the school   | Authorised absence                  |                               |
| <b>D</b> | Dual Registered – at another educational establishment                              | Approved Education Activity         |                               |
| <b>E</b> | Excluded (no alternative provision made)  | Authorised absence                  |                               |
| <b>F</b> | Extended family holiday authorised by the school                                    | Authorised absence                  |                               |
| <b>G</b> | Family holiday (NOT authorised by the school <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement) | Unauthorised absence                |                               |
| <b>H</b> | Family holiday authorised by the school   | Authorised absence                  |                               |
| <b>I</b> | Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)                                   | Authorised absence                  |                               |
| <b>J</b> | Interview   | Approved Education Activity         | Counted as physically present |
| <b>L</b> | Late (before registers closed)  | Present                             |                               |
| <b>M</b> | Medical/Dental appointments   | Authorised absence                  |                               |
| <b>N</b> | No reason yet provided for absence  | Unauthorised absence                |                               |
| <b>O</b> | Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)                    | Unauthorised absence                |                               |
| <b>P</b> | Approved supervised sporting activity   | Approved Education Activity         | Counted as physically present |
| <b>R</b> | Religious observance  | Authorised absence                  |                               |
| <b>S</b> | Study leave   | Authorised absence                  |                               |
| <b>T</b> | Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence   | Authorised absence                  |                               |
| <b>U</b> | Late (after registers closed)   | Unauthorised absence                |                               |
| <b>V</b> | Educational visit or trip   | Approved Education Activity         | Counted as physically present |
| <b>W</b> | Work experience   | Approved Education Activity         | Counted as physically present |
| <b>X</b> | Non-compulsory school age absence   | Not counted in possible attendances |                               |
| <b>Y</b> | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (Enforced Closure)                | Not counted in possible attendances |                               |
| <b>Z</b> | Pupil not yet on admission register   | Not counted in possible attendances |                               |
| <b>#</b> | Planned whole or partial school closure   | Not counted in possible attendances |                               |

# **APPENDIX 2**

## **Religious Observance**

Authorised absence may be granted for religious observance, for example, Eid. The Department for Education definition is as follows:

**“Absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals.”**

If the religious body has not set the day apart, there is no requirement for the school to approve the absence or grant leave of absence.

Individual religions and their religious observance are too numerous to detail in this document. Parents should contact the school to request leave of absence for all religious observance.