

Attendance Policy

Finchale Primary School



January 2025

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ATTENDANCE POLICY: KEY CONTACT LIST

Name	Role	Contact details
Miss Natalie Ward	Head Teacher	01913865187
Mrs. Helen Rice	Wellbeing Co-ordinator	01913865187
Mrs. Julieann Sludden	Office Manager	01913865187
Mrs. Kate Hall	School Administrator	01913865187
Mrs. Margaret Sleeman	Deputy Head Teacher	01913865187

Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Miss Natalie Ward	Head Teacher	01913865187
Mrs. Helen Rice	Wellbeing Co-ordinator	01913865187
Mrs. Margaret Sleeman	Deputy Head Teacher	01913865187

You can also contact your child's teacher.

OUR VISION AND ETHOS FOR ATTENDANCE

Finchale Primary School seeks to ensure that every pupil receives an education which maximises opportunities to enable them to realise their true potential. At Finchale we aim to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but which also builds resilience and aids their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils, improving attendance is everyone's business. This requires the commitment and collaboration of all staff, teaching and nonteaching, our governing body, the local authority, and relevant external agencies.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, our school and appropriate partners will work together with families to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and by putting appropriate support in place.

WHY IS REGULAR ATTENDANCE SO IMPORTANT?

Being in school every day that it is open is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best results.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage. Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

At Finchale we also recognise that sometimes pupils are absent for unavoidable reasons such as medical conditions, mental health or wellbeing issues or for family reasons. We are committed to supporting families when this occurs by providing appropriate work that can be completed at home or in hospital to ensure learning can continue.

This policy is supported by our other policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Equalities Policy Statement

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

EXPECTATION

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked. Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or, if appropriate, an agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across our school.
- We aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

2. Attendance Data

We aim to maintain our high standard of attendance at school, usually above 96%. In the autumn term 2022, our attendance was in the top 10% of all FFT schools in the country and we aim to maintain this by:

- Monitoring attendance and taking action whenever we see reason for concern.
- Continually sharing our high expectations in terms of attendance within the school community.
- Ensuring that we rigorously assess any requests for leave of absence and implement our policy and procedures.

3. Listening to and Understanding Barriers to Attendance

We understand that medical issues can affect attendance and in such cases we will work with families to support ongoing education. Another barrier may be social or emotional issues such as anxiety. We will work with families to provide appropriate support to address any aspects within our control and to signpost external help for those aspects out with our control or expertise. Key staff within school access appropriate training to ensure we understand barriers to attendance and are aware of strategies and approaches which can help.

4. Facilitate Support

We will ensure we provide, access or signpost appropriate support for families.

This may include:

- Inhouse support provided by staff within school including the Head Teacher, teachers LSAs or our Wellbeing Co-ordinator.
- Referring families to external services such as Piece of Mind, Think Families, Early Help or the Family Support Worker.
- Obtaining additional help and guidance for our own staff through the Local Authority Attendance Management team.

5. Formalise Support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. We will make it clear that, depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

6. Enforce

When all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly. This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a Leave of Absence for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. A Leave of Absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent. Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

HOW TO REPORT AN ABSENCE

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

At Finchale we promote good attendance by communicating our high expectations regarding attendance, by providing a safe and welcoming community which encourages children to come to school and by monitoring our attendance so we can intervene when appropriate.

Communication

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date. It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, we will contact families to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example, medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, email or letter and invite you to a meeting to discuss your child's attendance.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved. The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

On the first day of absence

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone our school office (01913865187) giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then we will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why. This is also to ensure your child's safety.

Appointments with doctors and dentists should be made outside of school time whenever possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary and come in before and/or after the appointment if they are well enough.

Periods of extended absence

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify our school to update them. If a phone call is not received, we will contact parents/carers to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare. If we receive no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that our school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parents provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence. Our overriding aim is to ensure all pupils access school as much as they can and to work together with families to achieve this.

Punctuality:

Registration time is at **9am** at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 15 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 15 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs). If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions we will contact parents/carers to discuss the reasons for this and to see if any support is required.

If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason then we will meet with parents to discuss appropriate support, either from school staff or through a referral to external services to help resolve the matter. If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality we will seek external support and if necessary, initiate formal and/or legal procedures.

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

PUPILS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS

We understand that some pupils may have additional needs which make attendance more challenging for them and/or their families. Our main aim is to support families to achieve good attendance for our pupils and we are mindful of the Equality Act 2010. At all times we will work with families and external agencies where appropriate to provide appropriate support. This may include providing work to be completed at home when a child is unable to attend or may include liaising with the Home and Hospital team to ensure appropriate work can be set.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

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