

FOX WOOD SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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It is a parent's duty, under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to enable their child of 'compulsory school age to receive an efficient, full time education'. A child is of compulsory school age from age five, when a child should attend school from the start of the term commencing on or after his/her fifth birthday. A child is of compulsory school age throughout the school years. We encourage good attendance from the start of a child's time in education.

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.'

The government expects schools and Local Authorities to:

- *Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence*
- *Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled*
- *Act early to address patterns of absence*
- *Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.*
- *All pupils to be punctual to their lessons*
- *School Attendance, Department for Education, November 2016*

Aims

- To improve the overall attendance of children at school.
- To improve children's attainment through good attendance.
- To encourage parents to ensure that children arrive at school on time.
- To make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school, including parents, pupils, teachers and governors.

To achieve these aims for our pupils, we are committed to the following:

- a welcoming, stimulating and safe learning environment
- For all staff to feel happy to come to school to work with pupils, developing them to their full potential
- To have high expectations of our pupils and all staff
- To have a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum
- To recognise and celebrate achievements in all areas of school life
- To have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum and school life

- To have high quality teaching using a variety of teaching strategies
- To have a range of resources that are effectively used to support and challenge learning
- To provide experiences, which will develop our pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural understanding
- To support, guidance and training for all those who teach and work with our children
- To foster and maintain links, and promote learning, with our wider community

Legislative Framework

Parents and carers of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 (sec 444) to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Education Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education that is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area.

Expected Levels of Attendance

Attending school regularly and on time has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for pupils. Research shows that attendance and punctuality are important factors in school success. Children who have good attendance at school are more likely to grow into happy and healthy adults. They are more likely to gain good personal outcomes, and are more likely to live their 'best lives' as a result. Even missing 10 days of school has a noticeable impact. We also know that children who are vulnerable are protected by attending school, where they can feel safe, have a warm meal and play with their friends. We believe that our pupils have the same right as any other child to the very best possible educational experiences, and we want to look after everyone in our community and make sure they can flourish. That's why here at Fox Wood School we take attendance seriously.

Fox Wood School day runs from 9am to 3.25pm and pupils are expected to access the full educational day. Absence from education or regular late arrivals can reduce key learning opportunities for pupils, including a structured day and arrival routine through our 'ready to learn' programme. This programme assists pupils in gaining and maintaining a calm alert state to fully access their academic lessons and learn effectively.

Introduction

Fox Wood School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. As a school we aim to achieve 92% attendance.

Fox Wood School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on Safeguarding, Bullying and Behaviour. This policy also takes into account the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

Jade Ashton, our Pupil Support Manager and the Senior Lead responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school works closely with Rachel Johnson our Pastoral Support Officer to implement the attendance policy here at Fox Wood School. Rachel meets regularly with our Attendance Officer to monitor attendance and punctuality within Fox Wood School, creating direct opportunities to further support families and pupils to achieve high levels of attendance within their education.

We appreciate that some of our pupils may have to miss some of their time in school, due to their complex medical needs. Whilst we do not want to put any additional pressure on families who are navigating such situations we are absolutely committed to our aspirations for all of our pupils, and therefore we will work closely with families and health professionals to give every opportunity for pupils even with the most complex medical needs to be able to engage in learning, and to be supported to attend school as much as possible. Many of our children with complex health needs have excellent attendance, and this is very much our ideal goal.

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present;

- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This is a legal requirement for all schools.

3. Categorising absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers. Where parents have not informed school then a phone call to the parents will be made on the first day of absence.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

- **Illness** – In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment letter etc.
- **Medical/Dental appointments** – Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school. A number of clinics are held in school including dietician, medicals, orthoptist and ophthalmist in order to decrease the necessity for appointments in school time.

However it is recognised that due to the complex needs of a proportion of the pupils at Fox Wood School there may be increased absences in order to attend hospital appointments.

- **Other Authorised circumstances** – This is related to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example, family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part-time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.
- **Excluded (No alternative provision made)** – Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.
- **Family Holidays and Extended Leave** – Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. Parents do not have an

automatic right to remove their child from school during term time, and holidays will not be authorised as stated in LA guidance.

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing. Where a request has been granted the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur
- That the child's place may be withdrawn if the family do not return as expected.

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupils off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child will lose their school place.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil still goes on holiday, the absence will be **unauthorised**.

Only in exceptional circumstances will absence of more than 10 school days be agreed. In such cases, consideration will also be given to cultural needs and family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parents will be required to justify why the holiday needs to be taken during term time, and will be expected to agree contact arrangements during the planned absence.

Religious Observance

Fox Wood School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority

- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedure have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.

Fox Wood School will follow Warrington Borough Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

Roles and Responsibilities

Fox Wood School believe that improved attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community. As such, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- As per school policy - annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through yearly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department of Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

The School's Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource.
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through yearly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

Request that Parents will:

- Contact the school office if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists, etc outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home learning tasks, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home, or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time.

Using Attendance Data

Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

For the purpose of monitoring attendance pupils will be categorised into SLD, ASD and PMLD as pupils in the PMLD category are likely to fall below attendance targets due to the complex medical needs of the pupils.

Support Systems

School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that effect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussed and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Fox Wood School will consult with Warrington Borough Council and follow the guidance related to legal sanctions.

The Headteacher will report on attendance termly to the Governing Body.

Home School Learning

In some circumstances pupils may need to continue their education at home for short or long periods of time due to medical needs or unique circumstances.

It is important that our pupils stay engaged in learning activities as much as possible **if** they have to remain at home. This will provide a purpose to their day, keep them busy and will also ensure that they do not lose vital skills.

In the event of self-isolation, school closure or your child being given a clinician's letter requesting that they remain at home, the 'Home Learning' Evidence for Learning tab will provide you with resources that you can use with your child. The resources are split into those more suited to sensory learners, and resources specific to learners with Autism or learning difficulties. There are also more general resources that you may find useful.

As you know, we use the Evidence for Learning App to capture the varied and wonderful learning opportunities and 'wow' moments for your child. It acts as a 'window into school' so you can keep up to date with your child's progress. .

If your child remains at home on any of the days they are usually in school, teachers will set regular tasks for you through Evidence for Learning. Please take photographs and videos of your child completing these tasks and add some notes if possible. This learning will add to your child's overall attainment journey and teachers can 'tag' it into the corresponding curriculum areas.

Our "Home Learning Plan" contains further details about the work that will be set for your child. Your child can also take part in live lessons with their class daily to remain engaged and continue to make progress should they need to remain at home