

# **Field Junior School**

## **Attendance Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

At Field Junior School, we want the whole school community – governors, staff, parents and pupils to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality. Good attendance helps the children to maximise their learning. This policy will support us all to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

### **2. Parents and carers**

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

The Government has the expectation that all children will achieve at least 95% attendance. Those falling below this level will be monitored by the school.

#### **Parents should -**

- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- inform school on the first day of absence, of the reason for their child's absence from school.
- If a child's absence persists beyond 48hours - inform the school of this on the third day of absence.
- maintain regular communication with school staff where necessary
- send a letter to school explaining the absence on the child's return.  
(for reasons of data protection email communication should not be used)

Parents will also ensure that school is informed of any changes of contact details

#### **The expectations for pupils:**

- All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually

- Pupils must remember to hand any note giving reasons for absence to the relevant person
- Pupils are expected to be ready to learn

### **3. The School**

Field Junior School has the responsibility for supporting the attendance of our pupils and for tackling problems that may lead to non-attendance.

We are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity.

We are also required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

Only the headteacher can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the headteacher to accept it, if she does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence.

If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

- At Field Junior School attendance information is collated and monitored by the administrative assistant in the school office.
- The headteacher holds overall responsibility for attendance.

#### **At Field Junior we will:-**

- work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole - as one of their key tasks
- follow up any issues relating to unexplained attendance
- follow up any issues relating to persistent absence issues – this will take the form of face to face contact or written communication
- work with families to address cases of persistent absence
- support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance
- be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and pupils. We recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications or may be reluctant to come into school and we will offer appropriate support in these situations.
- Our attendance policy will be regularly reviewed and clearly communicated to all parents, pupils and staff.

#### **4. Punctuality**

Field Junior School is keen to instil in our pupils excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness is monitored alongside attendance by the school.

School begins promptly at 8.50am each morning and school ends at 3.20pm. Registration is completed as soon as the children come into class for both the morning session and after lunch.

When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open, he/she will be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session (half day).

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she will be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, his/her presence on site should be recorded by a parent/carer in the yellow book at the reception desk. This information is important for purposes of emergency evacuation, etc.

#### **5. Hertfordshire Attendance Team**

Field Junior School is supported by an Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who works in close partnership with the school to.

- identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This will include the regular examination of attendance registers
- agree on focused, time-limited action that needs to be taken by the school and/or the AIO.
- identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters
- advise the school on strategies for improving attendance
- assist schools in identifying Persistently Absent (PA) pupils and those at risk of becoming PA and ensuring that effective plans of action are in place
- AIOs may undertake early intervention (pre-referral) work prior to a case being accepted. This may include the following:
  - telephoning or writing to the parents about their child's absences or lateness
  - attending a meeting with parents arranged by the school to emphasise the need for good attendance and the possibility that, if there is no improvement, the AIO will become formally involved.

Once a case has been accepted, the AIO will undertake direct work with pupils and their parents. This can include:

- arranging meetings between the school, parents and pupils

- making home visits to assess the situation and determine what action needs to be taken
- offering specific support to parents and individual pupils, either at school or elsewhere
- facilitating meetings
- enabling the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies.
- Attendance Improvement Officers will usually work with children whose absences have not been authorised. However, AIOs may, on occasion, work with children whose absences have been authorised

## 6. Authorisation for Absence

Due to changes contained in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, the Headteacher no longer has the discretion to allow up to 10 days in a school year for family holidays or extend leave for parents to visit their country of origin.

Government regulations state that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave only for exceptional circumstances.

However, we do understand that there are a few circumstances under which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend. We expect parents to contact the school at least 2 weeks **in advance** to make a request. Written applications will be considered on an individual basis and parents may be expected to attend an interview with the Headteacher to discuss their request. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school, if any leave is granted and this should be for **the shortest possible time**. Authorisation is not guaranteed.

**Any absence not agreed as exceptional, or not requested in advance, will be marked as unauthorised.**

## 7. Rewards

We value excellent attendance and reward those children who achieve 100% attendance with termly school certificates.

We also recognise those children who achieve excellent or significantly improved attendance throughout the year with Hertfordshire attendance certificates in our end of year awards assembly.

We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

## 8. Sanctions

As a school, we would hope to achieve positive attendance behaviours without recourse to sanctions. However, the school has the right to consider a penalty notice

A penalty notice is an intervention that can be applied in cases of unauthorised absence, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so.

It can also be used as a sanction at an early stage before attendance problems become entrenched and where the Local Authority considers a prosecution would not be appropriate as a first action.

Penalty notices may be issued where a child has 15 sessions (half days) unauthorised absence over a two-term period (this can include unauthorised holiday absence).

A penalty notice may be issued if the school/police or Attendance Improvement Officer considers that issuing a penalty notice could avoid further absence

In such cases, the school will send a formal warning to the parent prior to applying for a penalty notice.

Amount and payment of penalty

- a) £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice.
- b) £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice.

**The penalty is issued to each parent for each absent child.**

If the Penalty Notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period the LA has the power to prosecute.

The Governors reserve the right to consider recommending legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

## 9. Monitoring and review

- It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor overall attendance; they will receive termly reports from the Headteacher on attendance.
- The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for ensuring that it is followed.
- The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- The rates of attendance will be reported in the school prospectus

- Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office.
- If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher for further action.

The Governing Body will review this policy every three years, or earlier if considered necessary.

## **Appendix 1**

### **What is authorised and unauthorised absence?**

#### **A. Absence can be authorised:**

- if the child is ill
- if the child had to attend a medical appointment that could not be organised out of the school day.
- for a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's family belongs (one day only)
- for an exceptional circumstance such as a family bereavement or to take an external examination.

#### **B. Unauthorised absence:**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent for all or part of a session. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Absence is unauthorised if:

- no explanation is forthcoming
- the explanation for absence is unsatisfactory and does not meet criteria for authorisation
- the Headteacher has concerns about a child's level of attendance or rate of progress.
- the child stays at home to look after other children.
- the child arrives after the registers have closed (after 9.00)