

Fairhouse Primary School



Attendance Policy

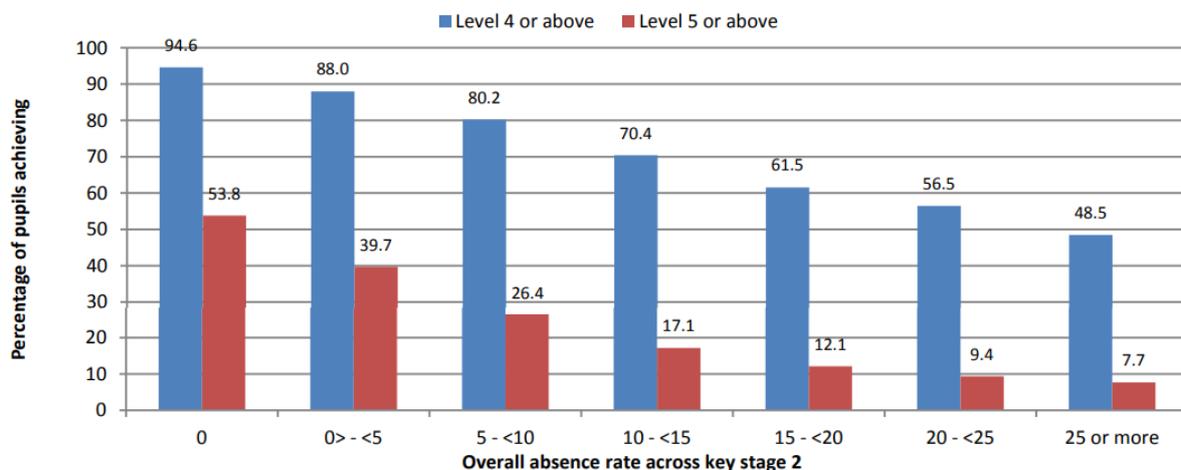
Updated: Autumn 2018

To be reviewed: Autumn 2020

Statement of Intent

At Fairhouse Primary School we expect pupils to achieve at least 97% attendance. The school is currently aiming to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent (less than 90% attendance).

Regular school attendance is important for pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Fairhouse Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all its students. Being absent from school means a lost learning opportunity, which is highlighted in the results from the DfE Attendance: impact on attainment study conducted in 2004. It clearly shows a direct correlation between attendance and the children's SATs results. (This uses the previous benchmark where a child achieving a level 4 was deemed to have met national age related expectations.)



Problems that affect a pupil's attendance will be identified, investigated and in partnership with parents and pupils, a resolution will be attempted as soon as possible. Parents are expected to attend meetings with Aquinas / Fairhouse Primary School / Essex Local Authority where attendance is of concern. Intervention letters will be sent to parents when attendance falls below 95% as part of the school's attendance procedure.

Fairhouse Primary School aim to:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure that the majority of pupils achieve 96% or better attendance to ensure access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Ensure continuity and progression in learning to enable pupils to meet age related standards and make good progress in all subjects.
- Improve pupils' ability to work as part of a team and foster good relationships in the community.
- Monitor and support pupils where attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents/carers to resolve any barriers to learning due to poor attendance.
- Involve outside agencies as and when necessary.
- Encourage and reward good attendance and punctuality.

Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures regarding attendance

School

- The session times for Fairhouse Primary School are:

KS 1 and 2 morning session	:	8:40am – 12.20pm
KS1 afternoon session	:	1:20pm – 3.00pm
KS2 afternoon session	:	1:20pm – 3.10pm

Pupils must be in class ready to learn before 8.50 am when registration closes. Pupils arriving after 8.50 am will be registered as late. If a pupil arrives after 9:10 am, they will be registered as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

- Pupils who receive a late mark or unauthorised absence due to lateness, will be required to attend lunchtime catch up class. This class is for the children to catch up on any work they have missed due to their lateness.
- The school will inform parents of any changes in the school's routine on our website and in our newsletter.
- The school will consider all leave of absence requests. The decision will be made by the Headteacher. Leave of absence will only be granted if it is believed to be very exceptional circumstances. If not granted, and the leave is still taken, it will be classed as an unauthorised absence.
- We will ensure teachers, support staff and, particularly the inclusion team are available for informal contact and by appointment for more lengthy discussions.
- The school will ensure concerns regarding attendance are brought to the attention of parents. Attendance may be discussed at parents' evenings.
- We will always offer parent/carers and children support and guidance to address any barriers to attendance. When a child's attendance is causing concern, parents/carers are contacted by the school and invited to a meeting with a member of school staff or Aquinas to discuss the issues preventing regular attendance. An action plan will be made at the meeting to help improve attendance in the future. If attendance fails to improve from this point, it may result in Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.
- The allocated governor for Safeguarding is responsible for monitoring attendance.

Pupils

- Pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Pupils must be in class and ready to learn by 8.50 am.
- Late arrivals must inform the office or pupil services of their arrival.

Parents and Families

- Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence by 9.15am to provide a reason for the absence. Parents/carers are also expected to contact the school on each subsequent day of absence.
- If the school are unable to contact the parents/carers, a home visit by school staff will be arranged. If there is no response, the school may ask for a welfare check to be completed by social services or the police.
- If parents/carers are unsure on how long their child should be absent due to illness, they should contact the school office, who have guidelines provided by the Health Protection Agency.
- Where possible, parents/carers are encouraged to book medical or dentist appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, children are expected to attend before and after appointments.
- Leave for medical or dental appointments may be authorised where medical evidence has been received from the parents. This can be in person, in writing, by telephone or an appointment card.
- An appointment card will only be accepted as authorisation for the session the appointment falls in. Any further absences will need evidence such as medication or a doctor's note.
- In some cases of absence due to medical reasons, the school may request that medical evidence (such as appointment cards or prescribed medication) is provided. Failure on the part of the parent to provide such medical evidence will result in absences being recorded as unauthorised.
- Unexplained absences or continued absence will be reported to social services and Missing Education Child Employment Service (MECES) for assistance. **If school does not have any contact to explain an absence, the child will be reported missing on the tenth day of absence.** Prior to this, a member of staff or an attendance advisor from Aquinas may conduct a home visit.
- Parents/carers are expected to work alongside the school and MECES/Aquinas to help resolve any attendance issues.

Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES) previously known as Education Welfare Service

- MECES carries out statutory duties on behalf of the Local Authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance.
- The school may refer a pupil to MECES where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. MECES will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/carers and could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

Aquinas

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the school staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful where parents are willing to engage.

If difficulties are not resolved in this way, the school may refer the child to Aquinas. Aquinas works alongside the school's internal attendance team to help the school promote good attendance, reduce absence (including persistent absence). They conduct weekly attendance reviews for all pupils, identify individual concerns and recommend the appropriate action. The process of intervention implemented by Aquinas is solely designed to overcome any identified barrier to a pupil's school attendance without the need for legal action. The process is primarily aimed to work with parents to firstly inform them of concerns, and then engage with them to identify and resolve any barriers to their attendance. It is only where all support-centred measures have failed to make an impact and the unauthorised absences continue, that legal action in the form of penalty notice will be considered. Aquinas is accredited by Essex Police under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) with the power to issue penalty notices. Aquinas also works very closely with MECES and is a member of The National Association of Social Workers in Education (NASWE) and a signed member of a Whole Essex Information Sharing Framework (WEISF).

Rewards/Celebrations/In school interventions

Fairhouse Primary School has a wide range of initiatives to reward those with good attendance:

- Attendance is linked into the school's behaviour system. Pupils receive weekly points for attendance and punctuality.
- Every week, if a child has been in and on time every day for the whole week, they will receive a token. They will then get to place this token into one of our four token pots in the main reception. Each pot has a reward written on the front of it. When the pot is full of tokens, the whole school will receive the reward.
- At the end of each term, all children who have 100% attendance for that half term will be entered into a prize draw. A winner will then be selected at random in an assembly.
- Pupils who need to improve upon their punctuality or attendance may have a sticker chart to complete in class. When they arrive on time in the morning, they will be given a sticker to put on their chart. They will also gain a sticker for being in school the whole day. They will then be given 10 house points for each sticker they have on their chart. If they have managed to get all the possible stickers for the whole week, they will gain an extra 50 bonus house points. The children will then get to keep their chart at the end of the week.
- At the end of each half term, the children will take home an attendance traffic light letter. Depending on the child's attendance over the half term, they will receive a gold, green, amber or red letter. Children with 100% attendance will receive a gold letter. Children with 97-99.9% will receive a green letter. 94-96.9% will receive an amber letter and children below 93.9% attendance will receive a red letter. The letter will also state how many

minutes education the children have missed over the half term due to lateness.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not the parent/carer) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information regarding the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised Absences

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for an understandable reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised) medical or dental appointments which unavoidable fall within school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents / carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for a non-infectious illness or injury that would not prevent their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark on their attendance register.
- Shopping trips.
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- Their own or family birthdays.
- Holidays taken during term time without leave. Extended periods can lead to a penalty notice being triggered by the local authority.
- Day trips.
- Other leave of absence in term time, which has not been agreed by the Headteacher.

Application for Leave of Absence

Leave of absence is not a legal right. ***There is no automatic entitlement in law to a leave of absence during term time.*** The school strongly discourages parents from taking their children out of school in term time. If, under very exceptional circumstances, parents/carers wish to request a leave of absence, they should write to the head teacher at least four school weeks in advance of the proposed date, stating the circumstances of the request.

Whilst the head teacher is able to authorise requests, which are deemed 'exceptional', please be aware that the vast majority of time taken out of school will be classified as unauthorised. Should a parent/carer wilfully remove their child from school after the head teacher's refusal to authorise the absences, the head teacher will refer the case to Aquinas or Essex Local Authority – Missing Education and Child Employment Services (MECES). If the leave of absence is then taken with disregard

to the outcome of the application, a Penalty Notice in accordance with Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004 may be issued.

School Attendance and the Law

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.' The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. They no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing four weeks prior to the holiday on the prescribed form provided by the school. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the local authority may issue a penalty notice.

Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued

Penalty notices apply to pupils of statutory school age and may be issued where there has been unauthorised absence. Parent/carers will receive a warning letter at least ten days prior to the issue of a penalty notice. The penalty for each parent is £60 for each child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to ensure that the child attends school punctually and regularly could lead to legal action being taken against the parent. This could result in each parent/carer receiving a fine of up to £2,500 or up to 3 months imprisonment.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education. We monitor all absence and the reasons that are given thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark, we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a school based meeting and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Local Attendance Adviser, Home School Liaison Worker, Local Authority, Family Solutions or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising standards.

The **school expectation** is that the minimum acceptable attendance is set at 96%.

