**The Forge Short Stay Secondary School**

**Attendance Policy and Procedures**



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| Policy Author: | D Smith  |
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**Introduction**

At The Forge Short Stay Secondary School our ambition is for all students to strive for 100% attendance. We set expectations of excellent attendance for all pupils and expect pupils to be in school every session and every day that school is open. We consider this paramount to pupils achieving their full potential and enhancing lifelong outcomes.

Our Attendance Policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of pupils and is an integral part of our school ethos.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance we will work together with parents/carers, pupils and relevant partner agencies to remove any barriers and build strong and trusting relationships. Promoting and ensuring excellent attendance is everybody’s business within our school and community.

**Aims**

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by ensuring every pupil has access to a full-time and efficient education to which they are entitled. The Forge School acts early to address any patterns of irregular attendance aiming to create a culture in which the importance of good school attendance is understood, valued, and supported by all.

By providing a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn is the foundation of securing good attendance. Working together to put the right support in place at the right time, all school staff, parents/carers, pupils, and partners can work together to remove any barriers affecting attendance.

This policy sets out our school’s position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents1 must follow to report their child’s absence from school and to remind them of their legal duty, to ensure their child attends school regularly.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently, considering the individual needs of our pupils and their families who may have specific barriers to attendance.

At The Forge we follow the DfE Working together to Improve School Attendance Approach.

**The Forge School Expects**:

All students to:

* Arrive to school between 9-9.15am appropriately prepared for the school day
* Attend the School on each day that the School is open
* Inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that affects their attendance at the School.

**All partners should work together to:**

**EXPECT**

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.

One of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and a sense of belonging. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

• Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved and as part of the wider school community.

• Raise pupils’ awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

• Provide support, advice and guidance to parents, pupils and staff.

• Work in partnership with parents and carers, including regularly informing them about their child’s absence and attendance levels.

• Work with external agencies where required, such as health, the LA and local organisations to support our pupils, parents and school.

• Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge learning gaps.

• Celebrate good and improved attendance and punctuality.

**Why is Attending School Regularly So Important?**

Evidence shows pupils with excellent school attendance are more likely to reach higher standards of achievement and be at less risk of exposure to crime and other safeguarding risks.

Pupils who attend regularly are more likely to achieve better results than their peers that do not, both at Key Stage 2 tests in the Primary phase, and in GCSE’s at Secondary.

Excellent attendance enables pupils to be part of the school community and develop a sense of belonging. This further supports each pupil’s development socially, morally, and ethically, enhancing personal well-being.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **If attendance over the school year is:**  | **A pupil will miss this many days:**  | **And this many lessons:**  |
| 100% | 0 | 0 |
| 95% | 10 | 50 |
| 90% | 19 | 95 |
| 85% | 29 | 145 |
| 80% | 39 | 195 |
| 75% | 49 | 245 |
| 70% | 58 | 290 |

**Safeguarding and Attendance**

The Forge School will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil’s attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues.

In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when the school has made all reasonable enquiries and cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil’s welfare and safety.

**Using data to support improvements in attendance**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason. For pupils who miss more than 50% of possible sessions they are defined as ‘severely absent’.

The school will ensure that data is routinely monitored to identify emerging attendance issues and will seek to prevent any pupil becoming persistently or severely absent. This will include: identifying the individual needs of pupils; working closely with families and wider support services to remove barriers to attendance; and where a formalised approach in conjunction with the local authority is required in line with the DfE guidance.

**Understanding Barriers to Attendance**

In relation to understanding barriers to attendance, we will ensure all pupils and parents are treated with dignity and staff will model respectful relationships to build a positive understanding between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. In communicating with parents, we will highlight the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing to enhance understanding of what good attendance looks like. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance we will identify who is best placed to work with them to address issues.

We will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school’s control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the school to work in conjunction with relevant partners.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. In working with parents to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers such pupils may face and will put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

In line with DfE expectations reduced timetables will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for a limited period, to support pupils to reintegrate back into education and access full time provision.

The school is committed to share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and external partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

**Effects of Late Arrival at School**

When a pupil arrives late to school, they miss important events such as assembly, tutor period, teacher instructions and introductions. Children can often feel embarrassed having to enter a classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Minutes late per day:** | **Equates to days of teaching lost in one year:** | **Which means this number of lesson have been missed:** |
| 5 mins | 3 Days | 15 Lessons |
| 10 mins | 6 Days | 30 Lessons |
| 15 mins | 9 Days | 45 Lessons |
| 20 mins | 12 Days | 60 Lessons |
| 30 mins | 18 Days  | 90 Lessons |

**Attendance Register**

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

/ = Present in the morning

\ = Present in the afternoon

L = Late arrival before the register has closed

C = Authorised absence

E = Excluded but no alternative provision made

H = Authorised holiday

I = Illness

M = Medical or dental appointments

R = Religious observance

B = Off-site education activity

G = Unauthorised holiday

O = Unauthorised absence

U = Arrived after registration closed

N = Reason not yet provided

X = Not required to be in school

T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

V = Educational visit or trip

P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity

D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment

Y = Exceptional circumstances

Z = Pupil not on admission register

K = Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority

Q = Unable to attend the school because of access arrangements.

Y1 = Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

Y2 = Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel

Y3 = Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Y4 = Unable to attend due to whole school being closed

Y5 = Unable to attend due as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Y6 = Absent in accordance with public health guidance or Law

Y7 = Unable to attend because of other unavoidable Cause

C1 = Leave of Absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance (Or employment paid or unpaid, Continue to use W for Works Experience)

C2 = Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

**Authorised Absence**

‘Authorised absence’ means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away from the school or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

The following information outlines the main circumstances where absence may be authorised by the school.

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by parents/carers following the school’s absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some exceptional circumstances, the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil’s GP directly to help support the needs of the individual pupil.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order best support the child or young person and to be able to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

If a child is going to be absent from school for any reason please contact the school by 8:30am on that morning via telephone 01527 597 936. If a child is absent for more than one day, the parents should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child’s condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

**Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Our school supports pupil mental health and wellbeing following DfE guidance Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance.

Parents who have concerns about their child’s mental wellbeing can contact our school’s Attendance/Designated Safeguarding Lead for further information on the support available.

Online Mental health support and advice can be accessed through the NHS website.

**Medical/Dental Appointments**

Parents should always try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are urgent or unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day of schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult, and signed out in the ‘signing out’ book. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

**Religious Observance**

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day’s absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

**Suspensions**

If the school decides to send a pupil home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an Exclusion. The school will follow the current DfE’s statutory guidance on exclusions.

Any exclusion must be agreed by the headteacher.

The school will notify the parent of the exclusion in writing. If the pupil is a Child in Care, the school will notify the pupil’s carer, social worker and the Virtual School. In other instances, where a pupil is open to Children’s Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

The pupil must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult, and signed out in the ‘signing out’ book. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

**Leave of Absence Requests – ‘Exceptional Circumstances’**

The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.

In line with DfE expectations only very exceptional circumstances will warrant an authorised leave of absence. The school will review each application individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Attendance/Designated Safeguarding Lead/Governors [insert/delete as appropriate]. If any leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school’s discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times.

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least four weeks before the absence. Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing. Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage we will follow the necessary protocols. (Please see our school’s Safeguarding Policy for more information).

All term time absence for children in care should be discussed at the child’s Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting, in advance where possible, to be considered alongside social care staff and the Virtual School. This permission should be gained before school is approached for approval. The school will contact social care/the Virtual School in relation to any requests made for term time absence for a child in care.

**Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absence is where a school has not been given a reason or is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it remains the school’s decision whether to authorise an absence or not.

Unauthorised absences may include:

• Absences which have never been properly explained

• Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark

• Absences for shopping, birthdays or day trips

• Absences whereby parents are stating they are waiting at home for a washing machine to be mended, or a parcel to be delivered

• Long weekends and holidays in term time (unless very exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing, in advance by the school)

• In the case of term time leave - if a pupil is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

**Persistently and Severely Absent pupils**

A pupil is classed a ‘persistent absentee’ if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

A pupil is classed as ‘severely absent’ if they miss 50% or more of their school across the school year for whatever reason.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Parents will be informed accordingly.

**Children Missing Education**

Our school will add and delete pupils from roll in line with Regulation 8 Education law. The school will use the Worcestershire children’s services portal to report any children leaving our school, on part time timetables, attending irregularly, or joining the school outside of usual transition phases. If we have any CME related concerns we will follow this up with the support of the local authority.

**Support for Poor School Attendance**

Sometimes pupils can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and pupils to be open and honest with us about the reason for the pupil’s absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way.

When we have concerns about the attendance of a pupil, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child’s attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child’s attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. In some cases, this may result in a formal attendance action plan or parenting contract being drawn up.

If our school is unable to work in partnership with parents to overcome any barriers preventing regular attendance we may refer a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions. We will show all the steps we have taken to support parents and pupils and that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. This will be evidenced via the sending of a warning letter and school records will be shared with the Local Authority.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school will take a holistic, early help approach to the issue and will involve other agencies if deemed necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies, or, fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a penalty notice or other legal sanction.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil who is absent, we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

**Following up Unexplained Absences**

Where no contact has been made with the school the school will contact parents by text, email, telephone or letter to try and establish the reason for a child’s absence. When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence. If we are unable to establish the reason for absence we will make the absence as unauthorised, using the O code. If we are concerned about a pupil’s absence and are unable to contact the parent/s, we may contact the pupil’s emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the pupil’s whereabouts and safety.

**Schools will notify the Local Authority of children who are absent for 10 consecutive days without authorisation.**