

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Formby High School
Determined to Achieve

Rationale

The law requires parents or guardians to ensure their child receives suitable, full-time education, either through regular attendance at school or alternative arrangements.

All schools have a statutory duty to record student attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made on the attendance register for all students of compulsory school age who are on the school's roll.

This policy aims to promote excellent attendance and punctuality amongst all students. Whilst the responsibility for good attendance and punctuality lies with parents, the school understands the importance of working in partnership with parents to ensure all students attend school regularly and arrive on time.

Formby High School will encourage excellent attendance for all students by offering an environment in which students feel valued and part of the school community. Excellent attendance underpins our stated aims that all students should feel that school provides a safe and pleasant environment for effective learning and that they are able to achieve their academic potential.

Students can only maximise learning and other opportunities if they are at school, every day the school is open. Absence is not acceptable unless it is unavoidable or authorised by school.

Definitions of Key Terms

Authorised Absence – student absence that has been approved by school and coded accordingly as an acceptable reason has been provided (for example, illness, to attend a family funeral or an unavoidable medical appointment during school time). Details of illness must be provided to the school and medical evidence may be requested.

Unauthorised Absence – student absence that has not been approved by school and coded accordingly as the school does not consider the absence to be reasonable (for example, a shopping trip, a family holiday, any form of truancy or where a suitable medical reason cannot be provided).

Parent(s) – where parent(s) is used this relates to the person(s) who have parental responsibility for the child (parent(s), legal guardian(s) / carer(s)).

Persistent Absenteeism – a student who has an absence level of 10% or above and is deemed to be missing a considerable amount of school that will have a detrimental impact on his / her learning.

Vulnerable Children – this term is inclusive of Looked After Children, Previously Looked After Children, Pupil Premium, SEND (including those with an EHCP), children on plans or those who have previously been on one.

Year Group Leader – the Climate for Learning Leader, Achievement Leader or Progress Leader assigned to a year group.

Policy Aims

Formby High School aims to:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school, including students, parents, teachers and governors.
- Develop positive and consistent communication between home and school on all matters concerning attendance and punctuality.

- Recognise and respond accordingly when a student's attendance causes concern.
- Recognise and respond to the needs of individual students when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence, including giving specific attention to ensure students from vulnerable groups are offered the support they need.
- Set targets to improve individual student and whole school attendance levels, through a systematic approach to analysing attendance related data.
- Work in collaboration with the Local Authority regarding support for parents whose children's attendance levels are causing a concern.

Policy Statements

- The school will comply with the latest Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006) which were updated on 1 September 2016 and the non-statutory School Attendance Guidance for Maintained Schools, Academies, Independent Schools and Local Authorities (September 2018).
- The implementation of this policy will support the school in meeting its safeguarding obligations to all students and it recognises equality of opportunities for all.
- All students are expected to maintain attendance of as close to 100% as possible and arrive punctually to school. This is considered to have significant advantages in promoting good learning and progress.
- Excellent attendance and punctuality are highly valued – the school will recognise and celebrate excellent attendance and punctuality of students.
- The school will work in partnership with parents and carers to address higher than expected levels of absence or repeated failure to arrive at school on time.
- Annually, the school will set a target for student attendance.
- In order to safeguard the welfare of all students, the school will contact parents using the 'first day response' method if their child is absent from school without explanation.
- The same principles and expectations apply to all students at Formby High School, including those in Sixth Form.
- The school will report regularly to parents on their child's attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents must:

- Encourage and support their children to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Support the approaches adopted by the school and, where appropriate, work in partnership with the Pastoral Support and SEND Teams to ensure their child attends school regularly and arrives on time.
- Inform the school by telephone or email before the beginning of the school day on the first morning of their child's absence.
- Ensure the school is kept fully informed of any change to contact details. This will ensure that the school is able to maintain accurate student records and make immediate contact with parents in the event of a child's unexplained absence from school.
- Provide medical evidence for absence due to illness if their child's attendance is an ongoing cause for concern or if the authenticity of illness is in doubt.
- Where possible, make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours. If this is unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance and provide evidence of the appointment.

Students must:

- Arrive at school punctually, ensuring they are in their tutor room or the assembly hall in readiness for the start of the school day.
- Follow the school's procedures if arriving late.

- Take responsibility for completing classwork and homework missed during a period of absence. If necessary, the student should discuss this with his / her year group leader who will assist in collating work.

Form Tutors and Teachers must:

- Ensure that attendance registers are completed accurately and submitted on time during morning tutor period, at the start of assembly and for each timetabled lesson.
- Ensure attendance registers remain up to date and any unexplained absence is followed up promptly using the 'where is my student' (WIMS) email address. This will alert relevant members of staff in order to secure the whereabouts of the student
- Monitor the attendance of students within their tutor group / teaching group and alert their year group leader and Assistant Headteacher (Attendance) of any students who may be causing concern.
- When necessary, contact parents to discuss any concerns regarding attendance.
- Follow up absence notes on a student's return to school.

Year Group Leaders must:

- Provide parents with a record of their child's attendance if requested.
- In conjunction with Assistant Headteacher (Attendance) and the Attendance Officer, monitor the attendance of all students within their year group to identify students for whom intervention strategies are required.
- Implement appropriate strategies, including engagement with parents, to bring about improvements in the attendance of any students with whom the school has concerns.
- Regularly monitor, review and update the list of students whose attendance is causing concern.
- Respond accordingly if students have more than two periods of absence in a half term.
- Promote and recognise good attendance when opportunities arise, including during morning tutor period and year group assemblies.
- Support students whose attendance or punctuality is a cause for concern.

Attendance Officer and Attendance Administrator must:

- Carry out robust 'first day response', including establishing a priority routine for vulnerable children, especially those on plans, to ensure appropriate safeguarding.
- Liaise daily with alternative providers for relevant students to ascertain and follow up attendance.
- Inform parents when, due to a child's level of attendance, absences without medical evidence will not be authorised.
- Seek to provide support for parents where their child(ren) has attendance below expected levels.
- Conduct home visits if necessary, including to meet with parents / carers and / or collect students who are absent from school without authorisation.
- Identify and act where a student's attendance falls below 90% (making them a persistent absentee). This will involve tracking and monitoring the attendance each week, contacting parents and setting targets to improve attendance.
- Inform parents of potential penalties where there have been periods of unauthorised absence and / or persistent punctuality concerns.
- Organise School Attendance Panels to create Attendance Action Plans to formalise significant concerns about a student's attendance. This will contain improvement targets with set timescales and an overview of responsibilities.
- Inform Sefton's Attendance and Welfare Service when a student's attendance or punctuality has been causing concern and all other avenues such as the School Attendance Panel have failed to bring about improvements.

Assistant Headteacher (Attendance) must:

- Lead on the school's attendance strategy and the implementation of this policy.
- Provide clear guidance and direction to all members of staff with responsibility for securing good attendance.
- Communicate attendance and punctuality expectations clearly to parents and students.
- Monitor attendance data on a regular basis, providing timely information to the Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team.
- When requested by the Headteacher, produce attendance reports (for the whole school, cohorts or individual students).
- Determine the relevant interventions to improve attendance for individual students and cohorts of students.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions used to improve attendance.

Headteacher must:

- On an annual basis, present a target level of attendance for the school year to the Governing Body for approval.
- Receive regular feedback from the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team on matters concerning the attendance and punctuality of students.
- Report regularly to the Governing Body on the attendance of students at school and the effectiveness of strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- Consider requests for leave of absence on a case by case basis and in light of the existing statutory regulations and the individual circumstances concerning the request.
- Inform parents as to whether or not a request for leave of absence has been approved.
- Promote and recognise good attendance and punctuality amongst students, staff and parents.

Governing Body must:

- Monitor and review the school's Attendance Policy.
- On an annual basis, approve a target level of attendance for the school year.
- Provide a representative to sit on the school's Attendance and Punctuality Panel.

Processes and Procedures

Informing School of an Absence

If a child is absent, parents / carers must contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence (if possible before the start of the school day). If the absence is longer than originally reported, it is expected that parents will maintain contact to keep school updated on their child's illness and expected date of return.

If a student is absent from school, a member of the school's Attendance team will telephone and may visit parents / carers on the first day of absence if they have not already contacted school. Further contact may be made if absence persists.

Lateness

Students are expected to be in their tutor rooms or the assembly hall in readiness for the beginning of the school day at 8.55am. Those students who arrive at school after this time will be marked as late. If a student arrives after 9.10am, he/she must sign in at the main office. Students in Year 7, 8 and 9 who arrive after 8.55am without good reason will be issued with a behaviour point. Students in Year 10 and 11 who arrive after 8.55am without good reason will be issued with a school detention.

At 10.10am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, any student who arrives after this time will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence until a suitable explanation regarding the absence from school is provided by parents.

Individual teachers will address concerns regarding the punctuality of students to their lessons and will be supported, as required, by their Curriculum Leader and/or year group leader.

Taking Registers and Recording Absence

The statutory absence codes will be used to code absence. All staff with responsibility for completing registers should do so in a timely and accurate manner. The register should be called at the start of each tutor period / lesson.

Registers that are not completed correctly or in a timely manner will be identified by the Attendance Administrator and an email will be sent to the relevant member(s) of staff requesting that it be completed with a copy of the email provided to the Assistant Headteacher (Attendance).

Absence will be coded as 'N' until a written or verbal explanation has been provided, at which point it will be coded accordingly. Parental notes explaining absence will be retained on the student file. Where a note has not been provided, the absence will be followed up with a telephone call to parents.

Where the authenticity of an absence is in doubt, or a pattern of absence causes concern, then the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. A member of the school's Attendance Team, Pastoral Support Teams and/or the student's year group leader will contact parents for clarification or to request medical evidence to support this and future absences.

Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, the absence may remain unauthorised. Such circumstances could include but are not limited to a student:

- leaving the school premises with permission
- not attending school to go shopping
- not attending school as it is their birthday or the birthday of a family member
- not attending school to visit a relative
- not attending school due to attending a hospital appointment for another family member
- not attending school due to returning home late from an event the previous evening
- not attending due to looking after younger siblings
- attending a medical appointment in the AM or PM and not attending school before or after

Recognising and Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

The school will adopt a range of strategies to encourage and reward excellent attendance, including the issuing of rewards points, inter-tutor group competitions and a regular prize draw for students with 100% attendance. Regular communications to students and their parents will promote good attendance and outline the educational and social benefits of regular attendance at school.

Monitoring Procedures and Responding to Concerning Attendance and Punctuality

The school will implement a range of systems for monitoring attendance and ensuring the procedures within this policy are being followed.

Patterns of attendance and punctuality will be monitored by the Attendance Officer and any student whose attendance begins to drop or has an increasing number of 'broken weeks' will become a cause for concern. The Attendance Officer will alert the Assistant Headteacher (Attendance) and the relevant year group leader to discuss an appropriate course of action.

Where deemed necessary, the school will implement a range of strategies to promote improvements in a student's attendance and punctuality. These may include offering support, writing to parents, setting targets, conducting a home visit, an invitation to attend the school's Attendance and Punctuality Panel or referral to the Local Authority for support and intervention. The Local Authority may request the

student and his / her parents attend the Local Authority School Attendance Panel (see Appendix One).

Data relating to attendance and punctuality is analysed weekly by year group leaders, to be discussed at line management meetings with the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team. Where significant issues or themes emerge, they will be discussed at Pastoral Forum or by the Senior Leadership Team.

Requests for Leave of Absence

Legislation prevents the Headteacher from authorising any holidays taken during term time unless in exceptional circumstances (for example, attending a funeral of a close relative). Taking students out of school for family holidays is not acceptable and will not be authorised. Parents who choose to take their children out of school without permission must be aware that the absence will be coded as (G) family holiday (not agreed) or (O) unauthorised absence. In addition, the school will request Sefton Council issue Fixed Penalty Notices to the parents of any students taken out of school for five days or more of unauthorised holiday.

If parents are requesting leave of absence for non-school-based activities (such as performances, sporting events, etc) a Leave of Absence Request form should be completed in advance of any planned absence. In such cases, the Headteacher may authorise up to five days per academic year for such purposes.

Requests for leave of absence should be made to the Headteacher by completing a 'Leave of Absence Request Form' (see Appendix Two) and submitting it, along with an explanatory letter, at least 10 school days in advance of the date of intended absence.

Legal Proceeding

The school will seek to adopt a range of strategies and will work in partnership with parents to promote excellent attendance and address poor attendance. Where such measures do not have the intended outcome, the Governing Body reserves the right to pursue legal proceedings, including requesting that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Charge Notice Fine (£60-120). To ensure consistent and equitable application, the local delivery of the fixed penalty notice scheme will be managed by the Sefton Attendance and Welfare Service. In the event of a Penalty Charge Notice being issued, it will need to be paid in full separately by both parents within 21 days and will rise to £120 if paid between 22-28 days. If the Penalty Charge Notice is not paid within 28 days, parents can be prosecuted under section 444, the Education Act 1996.

The circumstances in which a penalty notice for poor or non-attendance may be issued include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Unauthorised leave of absence during term time (of at least 10 school sessions per term or 18 over two consecutive terms)
- Parentally condoned absence
- Unwarranted delayed return from leave of absence (without school agreement)
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed
- Persistent truancy from school

The option of fixed penalty notice will only be considered when all alternative strategies have been applied and not resulted in the necessary improvements.

Reintegration of Students Following a Significant Period of Absence

A child who is returning to school after a long period of absence will be supported by his / her form tutor, year group leader and subject teachers to ensure he / she is able to catch up with missed work. For a short period of time, it may be necessary for the student to complete additional homework through

attending the school's study clubs.

Each individual case will be dealt with accordingly and it may be necessary to put reasonable adjustments in place; for example, a phased or partial return initially. A copy of any temporary reduction in timetable will be sent to the Local Authority and will have a time limit as well as parental agreement.

For a student returning to school who has a mobility issue, priority will be given to his / her health and safety and that of his / her peers. Prior to returning to school, a meeting will be arranged with the student and his / her parents to determine which (if any) reasonable adjustments will be implemented.

Support for Students who have Difficulties Attending School

A number of children miss long periods of school through, for example, sickness or emotional based school avoidance and may feel especially vulnerable when they do eventually return. It is vital, therefore, to make the transition back to full-time schooling as smooth and trauma-free as possible.

Ideally, the return of the long-term absentees will be carefully planned in advance with the student, parents and relevant members of the Pastoral, SEND and/or Attendance Teams. A written programme or plan will be agreed and, where possible, a phased or gradual return adopted. A copy of any temporary reduction in timetable will be sent to the Local Authority and will have a time limit as well as parental agreement. Consideration will also be given to the student's timetable to determine what is immediately possible and manageable, and whether any adjustments are required.

The relevant member of staff from the Pastoral, SEND or Attendance Teams will co-ordinate, monitor and review arrangements for the student's return.

To ease the return of the long-term absentee and ensure the gaps in learning are minimised, subject teachers of the absent student will be notified by email and will be responsible for providing meaningful work on Class Charts and ensure it is marked on a regular basis.

Complementary Education

Sefton Complementary Education Service currently provides an education to:

- Students who cannot attend their own school for a period, due to issues relating to their health; either physical, mental or psychological
- Pregnant school girls or nursing mothers (during maternity leave, nine weeks before the expected due date and nine weeks after delivery date)

Where a student is unable to attend school on a long-term basis, a referral may be made to the Complementary Education Service and the school will submit the following relevant information:

- the referral to Monitoring and Placement Group
- a completed Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT)
- a completed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Support Plan
- a written report detailing the recommendation from a health professional

Where a student is offered a cycle of support with the Complementary Education Service, he/she will remain on roll at Formby High School and will be reintegrated as soon as practicably possible.

Home Visits

Schools have a safeguarding duty for all students and in cases where we are unable to make contact regarding a student's absence, a home visit will be carried out. The purpose of conducting a home visit is to identify the reason and duration of the absence and to ensure the student is safe. If the parents /

carers are not home, the visiting member of staff will make appropriate enquiries and leave a visit card. Home visits are also a useful way of addressing problems that cause poor attendance as they open a positive dialogue between parents / carers, students and school, allowing for necessary support to be provided. Given the potential benefits, it may be the case that home visits are arranged with families as part of an Attendance Action Plan or similar.

Child Missing Education

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. The Local Authority will be notified of any student who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more after making reasonable enquiries. In accordance with Sefton Council's Children Missing Education Procedures, the Local Authority will also be notified of any student who is to be removed from the admission register.

APPENDIX ONE: LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PANEL

What is the purpose of the School Attendance Panel meeting?

The purpose of the School Attendance Panel meeting is for you and your child to meet with Representatives from the Local Authority to identify the reasons for absence and to work together to improve attendance.

What will happen at the School Attendance Panel meeting?

The reasons for absence will be identified and different strategies to improve attendance will be considered:

- A supportive action plan in the form of a parenting contract will be agreed.
- An attendance target for improvement will be set.
- The student's attendance will then be closely monitored for a period of 12 school weeks.

If the parent fails to attend without reasonable justification this could result in a Penalty Charge Notice being issued to parents/carers or court proceedings under the 'Single Justice' process. Under section 444, a **Penalty Charge Notice will be issued for £60 to parents**. This will be issued to both parents even if one of the parents does not live with the student. Each parent will have 21 days to make payment. This will rise to £120 if the initial fine is paid between 22 and 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. **There is no right of appeal by parents against the penalty charge notice.** Failure to pay the Penalty Charge Notice Fine will result in further legal action being taken by the courts with possible outcomes of a fine (maximum is currently £2,500), a community order or three months in prison.

What happens next?

Whilst the intention of the School Attendance Panel meeting is that the child's attendance will improve, if the attendance deteriorates by the target review date the Local Authority may recommend legal action is taken. This could include prosecution in the Magistrates' Court, Education Supervision Orders or Parenting Orders.

Issuing Penalty Charge Notices: Each parent receives a penalty charge notice for each child who has unauthorised absence. The penalty is £60 or £120 depending on how soon payment is made. So, if there are two parents and two children the total penalties could be up to £480. Failure to pay the penalty charge notices in Sefton may result in prosecution.

Taking parents to court for unauthorised absence: Under the Education Act 1996 Section 444(1), the court can fine each parent up to £1000 per child, order payment of prosecution costs and/or impose a Parenting Order.

Taking parents to court for persistent unauthorised absence: Under the Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A), the court can fine each parent up to £2,500 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs, impose a Parenting Order and/or sentence you to a period of imprisonment of up to three months.

Under the 1989 Children Act the Local Authority has the power to issue an **Education Supervision Order (ESO)** and place a child under their supervision on the grounds that the child is not being 'properly educated' and is in danger of 'significant harm'. The Local Authority can issue an order if the child is persistently absent from school. The Local Authority appointed 'Supervisor' can give 'directions' to the parents on how the child should be educated and work with the parent to ensure the child attends school regularly.

Under the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act, if a student continues to have attendance issues after a parent has been convicted, the courts can also issue a **Parenting Order**. This legally requires the parents to participate in a programme of parenting support and counselling. If the unauthorised absence continues, a new case will be brought against the parent/s but previous parental failure to engage with the school and Local Authority can be cited.

APPENDIX TWO: LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM