

Folksworth Church of England (VC) Primary School

Attendance Policy



Inspiring a love of learning through
the bonds of family, faith and friendship.

Date: July 2023

Review date: July 2024

'A cord of three strands is not easily broken.' Ecclesiastes 4:12

Folksworth Church of England (VC) Primary School is at the heart of the village that it serves and as such we treasure the close bonds held with our church, families and community. Together we endeavour to inspire a life-long love of learning enabling everyone to flourish.

(school vision statement)

Introduction

Folksworth Church of England Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless due to illness or exceptional circumstances which should be discussed with the headteacher.**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Aims

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- Work in partnership between home and school to achieve high attendance for pupils.

The National Perspective

The Department for Education states that '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. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less'.



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The government expects schools to:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to a full time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

The government expect parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age, who are registered at school attend regularly and for all pupils to be punctual.

100% - 99%	Excellent - Well done! This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and support a positive work ethic.
98%-96%	Good - well done strive to build on this
95% -91%	Becoming unsatisfactory - Please work with the school urgently to improve the situation.
90%-86%	Poor - absence is causing concern.
Below 85%	Unacceptable - absence IS causing SERIOUS CONCERN. It IS affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child's learning. We will work with you and the Local Authority Attendance Team to improve your child's attendance. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance at regular intervals throughout the year.
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate excellent attendance as part of our Celebration assemblies. The year group(s) with the highest attendance figures are awarded 'Buttons' a cuddly toy dog who spends the week in their classroom. Where there is more than one class this time is equally split during the week.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse, The Local Authority or a Child and Family Support Worker.

Understanding Types of Absence

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

Authorised Absences

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine 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 unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.



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Authorised absences include those where:

- (i) A child is ill or receiving medical attention
- (ii) The day is set aside for religious observance - notified in advance;
- (iii) Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness);
- (iv) Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances – agreed by the Headteacher which will be logged;
- (v) Approved Sporting Activity.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged **out of school hours wherever possible**.

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 which may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court.

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- no explanation is provided by parent (s)/carers by 9.30am on the day of the absence;
- an explanation is received before 9.30am on the day of the absence but does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The following activities are examples of what would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- holiday
- minding the house;
- caring for relatives;
- awaiting repair people;
- shopping;
- a birthday or family celebration
- having other siblings that are ill within the household.

There are clearly some grey areas. The guidance from the County Council and the Department for Education makes it clear that only **exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised.

Homework in the form of missed lessons will not be provided for unauthorised absence.

Leave of Absence under Exceptional Circumstances

At Folksworth Church of England Primary School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- during assessment and test periods in the school's calendar affecting your child.
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.



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If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Parents should complete an 'Absence from School Request form' to apply for leave (see appendix 3).

Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, a penalty notice may be issued where it meets the criteria set out by the Cambridgeshire Local Authority.

Late Arrival

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage late arrivals:

The school day starts at **8.45 am**. Classroom doors open from 8:40am. Registers are taken between **8:45am and 8:55am** and your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time. Children arriving after 8.45am are required to come in to school via the school office if accompanied by a parent or carer, the parent/carer will sign them in and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded. The school may send home 'late notes' in order to keep parents and carers informed.

At **9.15am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of being issued with a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the headteacher, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

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 and we need a parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

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, Local Authority, Family Worker or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising attendance.

School Attendance and the Law

By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education. Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

There is no 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



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circumstances” and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Folksworth Church of England Primary School, other than at the end of year 6 parents/carers are required to complete a ‘Pupils moving from *school*’ form which can be obtained from the school office. This provides school with the following information: Child’s name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our pupils.

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency.

Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

- (i) Do all they can to ensure their child arrives on time. We will monitor persistent late comers and action may be taken.
- (ii) Notify the school on the first day if their child is unwell with details of the illness and an estimation of the likely length of absence;
- (iii) Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's motivation to attend school. Do not keep children off school while any issue is being resolved.

In return the school will:

- (i) Contact home on day 1 of absence if no explanation has been received from home by 9:30am;
- (ii) Contact home over any unexplained absences;
- (iii) Follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child’s attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;
- (iv) Involve the Class Teacher and Teaching Assistants to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;
- (v) Regularly and consistently remind pupils of the importance of good attendance and punctuality through whole school assemblies;
- (vi) Reward good or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

The Process of Recording & Monitoring Absences

- Registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Where the reason for an absence has not been provided, the absence will be recorded as ‘N’.
- Parents and carers should contact the school by 9.30am on the first day of absence to account for their child’s absence; this does not need to be supported by a letter. Such calls will be recorded on the school management system (ScholarPack). Where an absence has not been explained by 9.30am the absence will be recorded as N until there is a reason confirmed.
- If the parent does not make contact with the school the school office will contact parents to determine the reason for the absence and to be satisfied the child is accounted for; although the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- A report will be provided to the Headteacher every month highlighting where attendance has fallen below 90% or where there has been a pattern of absence or continuous lateness.



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- Where attendance or punctuality is established as a concern the Headteacher will send a letter and the Headteacher may choose to discuss the situation with the Local Authority Attendance Advisor.
- 'Absence from School Request Forms' for exceptional circumstances will be considered by the headteacher in line with this policy. Where appropriate, an interview arranged, more information requested or the form returned advising parents of her decision.
- Where a child is transferring to another school, their attendance record will be shared with new school and they are expected to attend up until they are on roll at a new school.
- The Headteacher will report attendance regularly to the Governing Body and provide an annual summary, in the Summer Term Head teachers report.

Registration Procedures

Each day the playground gates open at 8:30am. The classroom doors open at 8:40am and close at 8:45am. Pupils should enter the school and come into the classroom during this time window.

Procedure for Registering

The class teacher will take the register between 8.45am and 8:55am. A child arriving after the gate has shut but before 9.05 am should come into school through the main entrance.

The registers close at 9.00 a.m. and any children who arrive after this time will be marked as late for that session, either with a 'L' or 'U' mark dependent on the reason for the late arrival. An 'N' will be applied if they do not arrive at all. Expected absences would show as the appropriate code on the electronic register.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of any child, including a child who is subject to a child protection plan, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. As a result, the school will make swift arrangements to contact the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

The afternoon register is taken as soon as possible after lunch and no later than 1:30pm. Any unexpected absences will be investigated by the school office.

Procedure for School Office

Parents should email or telephone the school by 9.30am on the morning of the day of absence to inform the school that their child will be absent. They are asked to state a reason. These absences are recorded on the school management system (Scholarpack).

By 9:00 a.m. the registers should be completed to enable the School Secretary to check if any parents should be called to establish reasons for absence.

When established, the reasons provided for any absence will be recorded on the MIS. Any 'N' codes will be updated to show the appropriate code for the absence.

The most common codes (other than the late codes referred to above) are:

- C (Circumstances)
- G (Unauthorised Holiday)
- I 01 (Illness/ recuperation from an operation)
- I 02 (Confirmed case of Coronavirus)
- M (Medical/dental appointment)
- O(Unauthorised absence)
- V (School trip / visit)
- Y (Forced and Partial Closure – school office only)
- # (schools closed to pupils – school office only)
- X (Other Coronavirus related reasons)

The electronic registers remain accessible via the management information system for the duration of the child's time at Folksworth Primary School with comments explaining absence attached. Any letters explaining absence filed in the child's school file.



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Registers

Registers are legal documents. It is essential that school staff consistently apply the procedures outlined in this policy together with the codes for registration and that the correct codes are used to record absences from school.

Registers can be checked by the Local Authority Attendance Advisors to ensure they are kept accurately by teachers and to assess the reasons and frequency of any absences below 90%.

The distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence should also be clear and consistent.

In the case of an emergency evacuation, registers are held in each classroom by the teachers and can be accessed online using ScholarPack. Up-to-date paper copies are also kept in the 'red bag' used in the event of evacuation.

Any issues surrounding attendance/punctuality should be discussed with the parents/carers at one or both of the parent teacher consultations. In particular parents should be notified if attendance is below 95% or a pattern of frequent late arrival is emerging.

Parents' Responsibilities

Children should be ready to enter the classroom at 8.40- 8:45 am. They should wait with their parents in the playground until the doors open but they should not access the school site before 8.30 am unless they have prior permission to do so.

Parents/Carers should make the school office aware of any reason for a child's late arrival (i.e. if they are likely to arrive after 8.45 a.m.) or absence as soon as possible but no later than 9.30am.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance.

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time, every day.

All school staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.



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Appendix 1

Date

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are now required to review pupil attendance more frequently.

You may find the following helpful as at times parents are not aware of how absences add up. We appreciate parents do not want to keep children off school and at times it is unavoidable – for example to avoid spreading infection.

I am writing to all families where attendance is below 90%. This is the same as missing one day a fortnight which obviously has an impact on learning and progress.

I felt you would want to know that your child's attendance this half term has been _____%.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Norbury
Headteacher

Manual monitoring

RECORD OF LETTERS SENT

YEAR 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 (circle the appropriate year)

PUPIL'S NAME	DOB	DATE LETTERS SENT			NOTES
		FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	



FOLKSWORTH C OF E (C) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Application for Leave of Absence from School During Term Time



School Section – Please read this following information carefully

As a parent or carer you are strongly urged to avoid leave of absence from school during term time. Should this be absolutely unavoidable then you should fill in this form and return it to the school prior to the absence. **We expect attendance at school to be 100% unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.** The Government implemented new legislation that came into effect from September 2013 which means that schools may only authorise leave of absence in **exceptional circumstances**. These exceptional circumstances must be linked directly to the child and not the wider family in order to be authorised. A parent/carers does not have any right to leave of absence during term time and if your request is refused the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. **If you should choose to take your child/ren away from school when leave of absence has not been authorised, this could result in legal action being taken or a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.**

A Penalty Notice involves a fine of £60.00 per child, per parent/carers if paid within 21 days, rising to £120.00 per child, per parent/carers if paid within 28 days. Should a parent/carers on whom a notice is served fails to pay the full amount of the fine within the specified time he/she will be liable to prosecution in a Magistrates Court where on conviction a sentence or a fine of up to £2500.00 or up to 3 months in prison may be imposed.

Penalty Notices may only be served in accordance with the terms of the County Council’s local Code of Conduct, a copy of which is retained by the school.

Should leave of absence be taken after permission has been withheld then this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This will appear both in the school register and in your child’s report. Persistent unauthorised absence may result in the involvement of the Educational Welfare Office and possible legal proceedings.

Parents Section

I request that leave of absence is granted for :

1st Child’s Name Class

2nd Child’s Name Class

3rd Child’s Name Class

Names of any other siblings and school they attend:

(First date of absence) to (Last date of absence)

Please explain the exceptional circumstances that require a leave of absence during term time:

.....

Parent/Carer Signature..... Date

Office Section

Number of previous applications granted this academic year Authorised Unauthorised

Headteacher Signature Date

Notes

School Record Entry (ScholarPack)..... Date



ATTENDANCE MATTERS

If pupils aren't in school, they can't learn.

High rates of absence are associated with low academic achievement and increased chances of being drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour.

Survey of 30,000 16 year olds showed that persistent truants are less likely to be successful in their GCSEs (Youth Cohort Student 2002 DES)

What you can do to help?

- make sure your child attends regularly and punctually
- contacting the school with the reasons for absence
- contact the school if your child is unwilling to attend school. The school can usually resolve most difficulties
- avoid taking holidays during term time

What your child will miss?

- A significant and disproportionate amount of teacher's time is taken from the class while they work with pupils who have missed important steps.
- In addition, those in the same workgroups as absent pupils will invariably have their learning held up
- Work missed cannot be covered again by the teacher
- Links that are missed will affect future learning and may lead to confusion.

□□□□□□□□

There are 190 school days in the year, leaving 175 other days for holidays, family events etc.

95% attendance means that your child has missed two weeks of their schooling

90% attendance means they have missed 19 days – nearly four weeks.

85% attendance means they have missed nearly six weeks – that's almost half a term.



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