



Attendance Policy

Fenstanton and Hilton Primary School

Reviewed By: The Full Governing Body

Date of Review: September 2023

Date of Next Review: September 2025

Policy adopted from Cambridgeshire County Council's model policy.

Principles

Fenstanton and Hilton Primary School aims to work together with parents/carers and Local Authority (LA) Attendance Officers (LAAOs) to ensure that all children registered at school attend every day and on time, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. We aim to improve the achievement of pupils by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality by creating an ethos in which attendance and punctuality are recognised and seen to be valued by the whole school. Whilst the school aims for all children to reach 100% attendance, we see 95% attendance as the minimum expectation for all students.

Our policy aims to:

- Emphasise the importance to all pupils and families that maximum attendance at school is vital for achieving a pupil's full potential.
- Reinforce the notion that every child has a right to access education and that parents/carers are responsible in law for the regular and punctual attendance of their child.
- Stress the need for home and school to work in partnership to achieve high attendance.
- Promote a consistent approach across the school towards attendance matters.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties linked to attendance at school and in the LA.

Parent/carer Responsibilities

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that children of statutory school age (the term after the child turns five) attend school on a regular and full time basis. Permitting an absence from school without good reason is an offence. A pupil whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed the equivalent of two whole terms of learning.

Parents/Carers must:

- Ensure all children registered at Fenstanton and Hilton Primary School attend regularly and punctually every day unless prevented from doing so by illness or medical appointment.
- Inform school in advance of any medical appointments during school time. (Parents may on occasions be asked to provide supporting evidence from the hospital, doctor or dentist, such as appointment details card/letter/text message in relation to the time requested.)
- Ensure their child arrives at school in time for registration. (Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as unauthorised.)
- Inform the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that any problem can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Follow application procedures regarding a request for leave of absence during term time, which should only be taken in exceptional circumstances.
- Report any change of contact details to the school office to ensure the school has the most up-to-date contact information for pupils and families.

School Entry and Registration Timings

Reception to Year 6:

- The school's gates are opened for site entry at 8.40am
- All classroom doors are opened for pupils entry at 8.50am.
- The school gates are locked once all parents/carers have left the site, at approximately 9.05am.
- Once the gates are locked, entry to the school is via the main entrance.
- Registers are open at 8.50am and closed at 9.05am. Pupils who arrive at school after this time will be recorded as 'L', late, on the register.

- Pupils who arrive at school after 9.15am, without an unavoidable reason, will have their lateness recorded as 'U', unauthorised late, which impacts on their overall attendance level.

Preschool:

- Staff meet children to enter preschool at 9.00am
- Preschool children are registered to mark their attendance but attendance codes are not used in the same way as they are for children in Years Reception-6.

Lateness

Where pupils show a persistent pattern of lateness, parents/carers will initially receive a letter informing them of the school's concerns. This will advise parents/carers to speak to a member of staff to help address the issue. Should the lateness continue, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss their child's lateness and attendance.

If there is no improvement, despite the school's attempts to support, a referral could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAO) for pupils who are of statutory school age.

Reporting a Pupil Absence

Parents/carers must contact the school (Tel: 01480 375055; Email: office@fenstanton.cambs.sch.uk) on the first and every subsequent day of absence as soon as possible after 8.30am, when the school office opens.

For any pupil not present at the close of registration, and the reason is still unknown, a member of school staff will attempt to make contact with the parents/carers of the pupil after the registers have closed at 9.05am. School staff will attempt to reach all contacts held for a pupil, until a reason for absence is known. Where school staff have not been able to reach a contact, this may result in school staff visiting the home address for a welfare check. If a pupil cannot be located, our school may phone the NSA helpline on 01223 715682. This non-school attendance helpline is monitored by a trained and experienced Local Authority Attendance Officer.

For absences relating to a medical appointment, supporting evidence may be requested to authorise the absence. This can be a text message which identifies who the appointment is for, a letter headed from the medical professional, or an appointment card. Absences will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment. Children who fail to return to school within a reasonable time following their medical appointment may be recorded as having an unauthorised absence.

Illness

We use this NHS guide - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/> - to support parents/carers in determining whether or not their child should remain off school due to illness. Guidance on COVID-19 is included within the guidance.

School Responsibilities

All members of the school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness. The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil. Where there are concerns, parents/carers will always be informed by letter and or telephone conversation and given an opportunity to come into school to meet with designated staff.

If applicable, support strategies with a monitoring period will be put in place to help improve the attendance or lateness of a pupil. Should a pupil's attendance or lateness continue to be a concern despite the support strategies in place, with no improvement to the expected level set by school, a

referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) for statutory aged pupils. This could result in a penalty notice/fine, or prosecution being issued by Cambridgeshire County Council, as per section 444 Education Act 1996. This may result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

Lateness and attendance is monitored daily by the school's office staff, who will:

- Scrutinise registers daily, monitoring authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons provided for pupil absence and lateness.
- Raise concerns with Parent/Carers of identified patterns of lateness with an initial 'Late Letter'.
- Contact parents by telephone, email, or letter to establish a reason for a pupil's absence if the reason is unknown.
- Raise concerns with Parent/Carers once attendance has fallen below the threshold set of 95%.
- Communicate through formal letter regarding attendance, in the following steps:
 - Step One. Informal contact. This can be via telephone or a brief conversation at the start/end of the school day by any member of staff, to ascertain barriers to accessing education and offering support;
 - Step Two. A letter advising Parent/Carers of our concerns regarding the level attendance and/or lateness;
 - Step Three. A formal Parent Contract Meeting to be held in school, with Parent/Carers to discuss concerns and, working together, identifying support which can be offered. Targets will be set to improve the attendance and/or lateness. These targets will be reviewed at the end of an agreed monitoring period.
 - Step Four. Should the targets set at step three not be met following a review, despite every attempt by the school to support the family, a request for the issue of a penalty notice/fine or prosecution could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) for children of statutory school age.
- Liaise with other external organisations in relation to a pupil's attendance and/or lateness.
- Monitor pupil attendance within specific and identified groups.
- Monitor pupil absences for those with additional medical needs.
- Follow procedures when deleting a pupil from roll
- Meet with LAAO, who will also monitor the registers and follow up any identified concerns.
- Monitor absences for illness and requests for leave to attend medical appointments.
- Monitor and act upon requests for term time leave of absence and ensure parents/carers are informed of procedures in relation to authorised/unauthorised leave.
- Complete a 'Request for Children Missing From Education Investigation' form via https://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Request_for_children_missing_from_education_LA_intervention where necessary.

Local Authority Responsibilities

The local authority (Cambridgeshire County Council) holds the statutory responsibility for school attendance for pupils in all Cambridgeshire schools. Education Welfare Officers act on behalf of the LA to promote attendance and, in partnership with schools, enforce attendance through the use of legal sanctions when necessary.

A Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) will;

- Liaise with schools to help identify children whose attendance is unacceptable.
- Write to parents requesting their attendance at planning meetings, parenting contract meetings and Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) meetings as appropriate.
- Hold planning meetings with schools and parents to assist with the planning to meet attendance targets.
- Carry out home visits when appropriate.

- Carry out assessments and broker supportive interventions from a range of external agencies such as the locality team (family work, youth support) when necessary.
- Request the imposition of legal sanctions such as penalty notices, parent contracts, education attendance orders and fines.

Authorised leave:

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason such as illness or a medical appointment.
- Religious Observance - only day(s) exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which a pupil and/or their Parents/Carers observer will be authorised.
- A leave of absence may be authorised due to a short and exceptional, unavoidable circumstance.

Unauthorised leave:

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school, even with the support of the Parent/Carers, such as shopping, hair appointments, visiting family or birthdays.
- Medical appointments where supporting evidence of appointment details have not been provided when asked for will be marked as unauthorised absence.
- Unexplained absence, where no reason for absence has been provided by the Parent/Carer, will be marked as unauthorised absence.
- A leave of absence that has not been authorised due to not being considered an exceptional circumstance will be marked as unauthorised. If this leave of absence is six consecutive sessions (AM/PM) or more in length, the school will notify the Local Authority, who may issue a fine.

Term-time holidays

The school strongly discourages holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. Fenstanton and Hilton Primary School follows DfE guidelines, which took effect from September 2013, which state that requests for long-term leave can only be granted in 'exceptional circumstances' and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. No term time leave will be granted, or deemed granted, without a formal request on the appropriate forms and a written response given. Interviews following a request may be conducted prior to any decision being made. The school will not authorise any holidays retrospectively and may follow up any reported illness that we feel may have been a term time holiday.

Guidance for Parents – Term Time Leave

Parents do not have the right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term time holiday. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted before the leave is taken. Parents/carers must complete a Term Time Leave Request form and provide any supporting evidence, if applicable, with their request.

If the school suspects Term Time Leave has been taken but parent/carers have not completed a Term Time Leave Request Form, we will write to all parents/carers giving them an opportunity to clarify the reason for absence and provide supporting evidence. Failure to respond to or provide supporting evidence will result in a referral to the Local Authority for unauthorised leave from school.

Exceptional circumstances (*definition of exceptional: rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis. Examples of an exceptional circumstance might include, but are not limited to:

visiting a dying relative; the death of a family member; attendance at a funeral or any unavoidable one-off event.

Penalty Notice

The fine for a penalty notice is £60 per child, per parent/carer, increasing to £120 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents/carers may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child/ren. This could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent.

Parents/carers who take unauthorised leave during term time or whose child has a pattern of unauthorised absence over any 4 week period could be subject to the issue of a penalty notice or prosecution.

The definition of parent in relation to a Penalty Notice includes Step-parents and the partners of parents who live in the same household.

If 3 or more term time leave Penalty Notices have been issued over a 3 year period then prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996, may be considered as an alternative to a Penalty Notice fine being issued. Where a parent takes a child out of school during term time for an extended period (20 days or more), not authorised by the school, prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996, may also be considered.

Appendix A - School Register Code Descriptions and Meanings

The DfE offers a comprehensive set of register codes which all schools are required to use.

These codes are as follows:

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreed)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Not counted in attendance
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in attendance
Y	Enforced and partial enforced closure	Not counted in attendance
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in attendance
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in attendance

Class teachers are only required to use a limited number of the codes. The office and head teacher should be consulted before entering codes that are different to those on the default settings via the electronic registration system.