



## Attendance policy

### **Rationale for good attendance at school**

Good attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (end of Year 6) and Key Stage 4 (end of Year 11) have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

All schools have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community.

There are 190 days of learning in a school year and every one is important. Regular attendance is an essential foundation of raising pupil attainment and progress. Absence from school can seriously disrupt pupils' continuity of learning; not only do they miss out on taught lessons, but many children find it difficult to catch up when they return to school.

Research shows that poor or irregular attendance places children at risk and in some cases can result in them being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. It is widely recognised that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/understanding-the-educational-background-of-young-offenders-summary-report> for research evidence).

*This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department for Education document 'Working together to improve school attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities'.*

To manage and improve attendance effectively, all schools are expected by the Department for Education to:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe

## **Aims of this policy**

- To ensure that everyone within the school community understands their responsibilities in promoting excellent attendance and punctuality
- To make the school's expectations for attendance and punctuality clear to parent/carers and explain the rules around absence and lateness
- To outline what parents/carers need to do when they want to request an exceptional absence from school
- To outline what parents/carers need to do when absence from school is unavoidable (how to report absence and what to expect the school to do in response)
- To outline what the school will do when absence is not satisfactorily explained by parents/carers
- To outline what the school will do when a child's attendance / lateness is a cause for concern
- To explain the roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA) and the Education Welfare Service (EWS)

## **The school's expectations for attendance and punctuality**

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. Frogwell Primary School, and the law, expects all pupils to attend school on time every day the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Frogwell school day is 08:50 until 15:00 (gates and classrooms are opened for arrival from 08:40).

Each school day consists of two sessions (morning and afternoon). Schools must take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## **Who to contact at school regarding attendance and punctuality**

If you have concerns about your child's attendance or punctuality and need some support or advice, please contact any of the following people:

- Your child's class teacher for an initial discussion
- Our Pastoral Support Assistant, Miss Wakeham (via the school office or via email on [attendance@frogwell.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@frogwell.wilts.sch.uk) )
- Our Pastoral Support Manager, Mrs Galvin (via the school office or via email on [jessica.galvin@frogwell.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:jessica.galvin@frogwell.wilts.sch.uk) )

The school's senior leader with strategic responsibility for championing attendance and improvement and overseeing school policy is the Headteacher, Ms Rachel Neville. Ms Neville's role is not in the day-to-day management of absence, but for overall leadership responsibility for the school's work on absence and attendance (contact via the school office).

## **How will school celebrate good attendance?**

The school will not present individual certificates/awards for 100%; this is because the reasons for absence are rarely down to children alone at primary age, and also because we feel it is unfair to penalise children who have illness or genuine absence reasons in front of their peers.

We will use class-average attendance data to celebrate the highest-attending classes each week, and at the end of each term. The class with the highest attendance will win a simple reward such as a few minutes' extra playtime.

Where attendance has been a concern and the family have made significant improvements over time, we will recognise this wherever possible through means such as letters home.

### **Late arrivals at school**

There are two types of 'late' mark in the register:

1. Children arriving between 08:50 and 09:15 will be marked as 'late before the register closes'
2. When a child is late after the register is closed (after 09.15), then this is legally classed as a session of unauthorised absence

However, the consequences of a child being later for school are far more than just a mark in the register. Any child walking into a class this late can feel:

- Anxious because they know they have missed whatever has already happened in the first few minutes of the day
- Embarrassed because they have to be seen arriving late (possibly again) by their peers
- Anxious that they have missed the input and cannot understand what is expected of them and the teacher cannot stop and go through it again as there are 20+ others who were in class on time
- Angry because it may not have been their fault but they have the consequence of the lateness to deal with

All of these things are upsetting and unsettling for a child of any age.

If a child arrives 15 minutes late every day for a year they may well have missed a full year of phonics teaching, spellings or mental maths.

Parents/carers should be aware that if a pupil accumulates 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence or unauthorised leave of absence within a specified 6-month period, the school must notify the Local Authority and a Penalty Notice will be issued by the LA to each parent for each child where that applies. This includes unauthorised absences as a result of lateness after 09:15.

### **Absence from school**

There are only a very small number of acceptable reasons for children to be absent from school:

1. When the child is genuinely too ill to attend (low-level coughs and colds should not generally require an absence)
2. When the Headteacher has granted a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

### **Absences requested in advance**

There is no entitlement for any leave of absence in term time. Absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances, such as:

- Close family bereavement
- Religious observance
- Wedding or funeral of an immediate family member
- **Urgent** medical or dental appointment (every effort should be made to secure routine appointments and check-ups out of school hours or during the school holidays)

- Absence, within reason, for an external exam such as instrument grades or ballet and to attend specific elite events e.g. National Youth Orchestra or a representative sporting event
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence (where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this absence code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least two weeks in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.)

All requests for leave of absence must be made in writing at least two weeks before the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school.

Please note that family holidays will not count as a reason to authorise absence in term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning, with the exception of the children of armed forces personnel who are on leave from active service. Armed forces personnel in this situation must still apply for leave in writing at least two weeks in advance.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will automatically be marked as unauthorised.

The school may ask to see evidence of external exams/elite event participation as part of the authorisation process, e.g. piano grade exam letter etc.

### **Absence for healthcare appointments**

Parents/carers will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible (e.g. hospital appointments), parents/carers will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment (e.g. attending school before/after the appointment rather than automatically being absent all day).

The school may ask to see evidence of medical/dental appointments as part of the authorisation process, e.g. appointment letter/card, text messages confirming the appointment, etc.

### **Illness absence**

In general, children who are too ill to attend school should stay at home while they recover; absences in these cases will be coded as 'I' in the register (illness) which is an authorised absence.

Very minor ailments such as mild coughs and colds should not usually require a child to be away from school. Where a child has had a poor night's sleep as a result of illness and is therefore unable to attend the morning school session, parents/carers should make every attempt to bring them in later in the day once they have rested to minimise the amount of learning time missed.

Sickness and diarrhoea is a common illness that keeps children away from school. Where sickness and/or diarrhoea is severe and prolonged (i.e. repeated vomiting), the child should stay away from school for 48 hours. One-off episodes of vomiting (e.g. as a result of a migraine or coughing) where it is clear there is no 'bug' can be treated differently and the child can return to school as soon as they are well enough.

Parents/carers should be aware that the school does not have to authorise illness absence without medical evidence where there are concerns about a child's attendance due to repetitive absences as a result of illnesses. Cases where a child is repeatedly absent for short periods due to illnesses are likely to be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

#### Reasons for absence which will **not** be authorised

Absences will be classed as unauthorised in the following cases (not an exhaustive list):

- Any absence where no reason is given, or the reason given is unacceptable to the school
- Shopping trips
- Absences for a birthday
- Absence due to the illness of the parent/carer
- Absence due to community relations problems
- Transport reasons (other than where the pupil is on Local Authority transport)
- Where an illness absence has been reported but it is later discovered that the pupil was on a holiday / break
- Any absence immediately before and during statutory assessment periods without evidence from a medical professional
- Any absence from school on the day before or after a school holiday period without evidence from a medical professional

NB: it is the Headteacher's decision whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised. If in doubt about whether an absence would be authorised or not, please do check with the school in advance by applying for absence.

#### **Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities**

The school recognises that some pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult. The school will seek to put in place reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any Education Health and Care plans or Individual Health Plans that have been implemented. The school will seek additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA Education Welfare Service if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return
- Where appropriate, encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils/staff during their absence (e.g. through home-school communication)

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments
- Implementing a pastoral support plan
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through an early support assessment
- Using an internal or external specialist
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out
- Temporary late starts or early finishes
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence
- Small group work to support catch-up
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs

## **School absence management procedures – day to day systems**

### **Parent/carer absence reporting**

Parents/carers are expected to report all absences to the school using the methods outlined below. Please do not rely on verbal messages to staff on the door/playground as absence reporting and follow-up is managed via the school's pastoral and admin teams, plus busy duty staff do not have the time to pass messages along.

All absences should be reported by 09:00:

- 1) Via the school website [www.frogwell.co.uk](http://www.frogwell.co.uk). Go to the 'Parents' tab and choose 'REPORT AN ABSENCE'. This will take you directly to a simple online form where you will fill in your child's name, class, the date and give the reason for the absence.
- 2) Via email to the dedicated email address [attendance@frogwell.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@frogwell.wilts.sch.uk)

It is essential that a clear and specific reason for the absence is given, not just "my child is ill/sick".

Parents/carers need to inform the school if a child's absence is due to a traumatic event which the school needs to deal with sensitively on the child's return.

Phone calls to the office should only be used if the above options have failed for some reason because voice mails are often unclear and hard to understand.

### **School follow up**

- Where the parent/carer has contacted the school using the proper channels (see above), they can then expect a follow-up phone call from a member of the school's pastoral or admin team later in the day. The purpose of this call is to check on the child's welfare, offer any necessary support, discuss a likely return date and agree contact arrangements between home and school for subsequent days of absence.
- Where the parent/carer has not contacted the school, a text message will be sent informing the parent that the child is not in school and requesting that they make contact immediately.
- School will continue to attempt to make contact with the parent/carer if no response is forthcoming.
- If no contact can be made after a reasonable period of time, the school may carry out a home visit to check on pupil welfare as part of our safeguarding responsibilities. This is particularly likely where there have been concerns about a child's poor attendance in the past, where there is

current or recent Social Care involvement, or where the family has specific vulnerabilities known to the school.

### **What the school will do when absence is not satisfactorily explained by parents/carers**

If absence is not explained satisfactorily by parents/carers, it will automatically be recorded as unauthorised.

### **What the school will do when a child's attendance / lateness is a cause for concern**

The school monitors attendance rates throughout the year and will analyse where pupils have attendance rates that are too low. 'Good' attendance is considered to be 96% and above. School will send routine attendance letters to parents/carers of all children periodically throughout the year, even where attendance is good or where the reasons for absence are known and genuine. This is to ensure parents are kept informed and are aware of their own child's attendance levels.

Where attendance drops to 95% or lower, the school will send a letter to alert you to this. By sending you a letter we are simply notifying you in order to raise your awareness. This is "best practice" and gives you the opportunity to consider whether there is an issue that needs addressing or whether your child has simply had several incidents of unavoidable illness and you feel confident that the attendance will improve without support. At this stage, the school will aim to work with the family to provide appropriate support and intervention in order to bring about improvement to the child's attendance rate.

This might involve:

- Parents/carers (and sometimes pupils) meeting with the pastoral and/or teaching staff to work together to address any in-school barriers to good attendance
- Referrals to services and organisations that can provide support for barriers beyond the school's control
- Agreeing actions and targets for improvement and reviewing these regularly

### **How the school will respond to Persistent Absence or cases where absence has intensified**

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the school to work in tandem with the Local Authority and other relevant partners. Absence becomes 'Persistent Absence' when attendance falls to below 90%. 90% attendance equates to roughly 20 school days missed across the whole year, but Persistent Absence will be identified much earlier in the school year. Between September and Christmas, if a pupil misses roughly 14 school sessions (7 days), their attendance will drop to below 90% and will be legally classed as Persistent Absence. Where this level of absence is not explained by genuine illness or authorised exceptional circumstance, a referral will likely be made to the Education Welfare Service.

- Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary Early Help Assessment.
- Where engagement in support is proving challenging, the school may hold more formal meetings with the parents, and pupil where they are old enough to understand (School Attendance Meeting – SAM). This is likely to be led by the senior leader responsible for attendance and may include the school's point of contact in the Local Authority Education Welfare Service. These meetings will clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future, but should also be an

opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

Parents/carers should be aware that if a pupil accumulates 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence or unauthorised leave of absence within a specified 6-month period, the school must notify the Local Authority and a Penalty Notice will be issued by the LA to each parent for each child where that applies.

### **Where voluntary support has not been effective or engaged with and absence is severe or prolonged**

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, the school will work with the Local Authority to:

- Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

In all cases, the school will monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, all parties should work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Responsibilities of parents/carers**

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs which they may have. Most parents choose to fulfil this responsibility by registering children at a school.

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance (s7 Education Act 1996).

Parental Responsibilities:

- Ensure that their child attends school every day, on time, appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn'. (i.e. not too tired or too hungry to learn.)
- Work in partnership with the school to help their child/children gain an appreciation of the importance of attending regular school attendance and punctuality.
- Work in partnership with the school to take an active interest in their child's school career, to support and reinforce school policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evenings and other meetings where necessary.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies (as and when appropriate) to resolve issues relating to non-attendance including engaging with formal support offered to prevent the need for legal intervention.



- To acknowledge that they have been in receipt of, and will support, the school's Attendance Policy.
- Notify the school if their child is absent, in line with the school's stated procedures.
- Parents are advised to avoid arranging medical or dental appointments during school hours unless there is an emergency.
- Parents must seek permission from their child's Headteacher (or authorised representative) by submitting a written application in advance of any request for leave of absence. Frogwell Primary School's timescale is in line with the Local Authority recommendation that requests should be made at least 2 weeks in advance of the requested absence. Each request will be considered individually and should meet the circumstance of being 'exceptional' if authorisation is being considered. NB: It is the Headteacher's decision to register an absence as either authorised or unauthorised.

### **Responsibilities of the school**

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for managing concerns or issues which may lead to non-attendance.

The DfE places the following expectations on schools as detailed in the DfE Guidance published May 2022 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities':

- To develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- To have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand
- To accurately complete admission and attendance registers
- To have robust daily processes to follow up absence (this should be understood by everyone in the school community and communicated to any cover staff to ensure procedures are consistently applied)
- To have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
- To be proactive in identifying pupils at risk of poor attendance and work with each identified pupil and parents to understand and address the reasons for absence. Schools should be sensitive to the needs of the individual pupil and parent. This should be reflected in the ways in which attendance issues are addressed. For example, schools should recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications. They should also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school and work sensitively and proactively with parents to ensure a consistent approach to attendance management,
- To signpost and support access to services where out of school barriers to attendance are identified
- To work with partners in the multi-agency effort to improve attendance
- To hold formal conversations with parents where there is lack of engagement to improve attendance and be clear about the potential for legal intervention.
- To work with the local authority where legal intervention may be appropriate
- To work with other schools in the area such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings and to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance
- To maintain the same ambitions of attendance for pupils with medical conditions or SEND and work to maximise attendance
- Where a pupil is open to social care to notify the pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences and if the pupil's name is to be deleted from the register

### **Responsibilities of the school's Governing Board**

The DfE places the following expectations on academy trustees and governing bodies as detailed in the DfE Guidance published May 2022 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities':

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends and help school leaders focus improvement efforts in the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance

### **Responsibilities of the Local Authority**

The DfE places the following expectations on local authorities as detailed in the DfE Guidance published May 2022 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities':

- To rigorously track local attendance data
- To have a School Attendance Support Team which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools regardless of type
  - Communication and advice – bringing schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between school and trusts within the area
  - Targeting Support Meetings – hold termly (3 x per year) conversations with schools using attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils
  - Multi-disciplinary support for families – provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole family support and unblock barriers to attendance
  - Legal intervention – take forward legal intervention where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
  - Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker
- The local authority discharges its statutory duty to ensure regular school attendance through
- Education Welfare Officers within the Education Welfare Service. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.
- The functions of the School Attendance Support Team will primarily sit within the Education Welfare Service although strategic support for attendance may also be provided by other local authority teams such as School Effectiveness
- The primary responsibility of the Education Welfare Service is to promote the excellent attendance
- of all pupils in Wiltshire schools, thereby contributing to raising pupil attainment
- The Education Welfare Service will work in close partnership with all maintained schools independent schools and academies (subject to specific agreements) in Wiltshire and other statutory and voluntary agencies to promote regular school attendance and support schools to discharge their responsibilities to ensure regular attendance.
- All schools in Wiltshire will have a Targeting Support Meeting 3 times per academic year. Attendance data will be used to prioritise schools with higher numbers of persistent (less than 90% attendance) and severely absent (less than 50% attendance) pupils.
- Whilst each school will have access to a link Education Welfare Officer, the allocation of that resource will be targeted according to identified need using attendance data including persistent absence data.

- To enable the local authority to monitor and support the attendance of children with a social worker, attendance oversight and discussion will be mandatory in assessment and subsequent planning by social workers
- The local authority will use the full range of parental responsibility measures available to support and enforce attendance where parents have not voluntarily engaged with the support from the school. This will include the use of parenting orders, education supervision orders, penalty notices and prosecution.

### Children Missing Out of Education

Wiltshire LA has a Children Missing Out of Education (CMOE) panel which meets regularly throughout the academic year. The panel is made up of colleagues from Targeted Education Services, Children's Social Care, Young People's Service (YOT), Special Educational Needs and Disabilities team, Performance Management.

The purpose of the panel is to ensure that the LA is meeting its statutory obligations under s19 Education Act by ensuring that all pupils in Wiltshire have access to appropriate education and determining whether there is a LA duty to make provision in some cases.

The panel may also provide robust support and challenge to schools and professionals where it appears that pupils are not attending school regularly and in line with DfE guidance and best practice.

The panel will regularly review pupils who:

- Are known to have a reduced educational provision (REP) in place – particularly those who are subject to extended
- Have episodes of illness which exceeds 15 school days. It is important to note that Wiltshire secondary maintained and academy providers have a Service Level Agreement in place with the local authority which devolves funding for them to meet this element of the s19 Education Act duties.
- Experience multiple suspensions
- Do not appear to be in receipt of suitable education under arrangements made for them by their parents (Electively Home Educated)

### **Monitoring arrangements**

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and Governors to monitor and review this policy annually, or sooner if there is any change to statutory requirements.

<b>Policy agreed:</b>	September 2023
<b>Policy published:</b>	September 2023
<b>Next review:</b>	September 2024

