

Furrowfield School

Attendance Policy



2025 – 2026

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation about school attendance through our whole school approach that values good school attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Supporting every child to have access to full-time education
- Building and maintaining a strong relationship with families to enable targeted support to better school attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Promoting the importance of arriving to school and lessons on time to support punctuality

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The Governing Board of Trustees

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy

2.2 The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

2.3 The designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The designated Senior Leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

2.4 The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Head Teacher
- Working with relevant school staff to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Deputy Headteacher (Head Teacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

2.5 Form Tutors

Form Tutors are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9:05 (am registration) and 12:45 (pm registration).

2.6 School Office Staff

School Office Staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on Bromcom
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the most appropriate member of staff to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

2.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day or their timetable session on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:30 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, advising staff on when they are likely to return to school
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, medical appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. All other appointments should always be made outside of the school day or the students timetabled session

2.8 Students

Students are expected to:

- Arrive to school on time
- Attend every timetabled session on time

3. Recording Attendance

3.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all students onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name of the person who made the amendment.

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive at school by 8:45 on each school day or by the time their timetables sessions starts.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45 and will be kept open until 9:15. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:35 and will be kept open until 13:05.

3.2 Unplanned Absence

The student's parent/carers must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30 or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office on 0191 4954700 (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the student's parent/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or another appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified.

3.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment by email furrowfieldschool@gateshead.gov.uk or phone 0191 4954700.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Section 5 provides information on which term-time absences the school can authorise.

3.4 Lateness and Punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- The school will use the [U] code for arrivals after 30 minutes from the start of the session

Where patterns of lateness are identified, parents/carers will be contacted by phone in the first instance to discuss the reasons for lateness and offer advice or support in improving punctuality. Where the problem of lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting where an Attendance Support Plan may be initiated. Please note that lateness beyond the closure of registers will be coded as an unauthorised absence (U code).

3.5 Following up Unexplained Absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may conduct a Home Visit or make contact with external services that may be able to offer support in making contact with parents/carers
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session. Following this time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised using the relevant absence code
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the local authority

3.6 Reporting to Parents/Carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels at Parent/Carer reviews and within termly reports. Attendance information will also be communicated within the Attendance Stage 1 letter or ahead of an Attendance Stage 2 or 3 meeting.

4. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

4.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Head Teacher will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head Teacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least six weeks before the absence, and put in writing (letter or email) to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher may require evidence to support any request for a leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

Other valid reasons may include:

- Parental employment circumstances
- Compassionate circumstances
- Other one-off unusual circumstance or events (for example immediate family wedding, prison visits)

4.2 Term time absence for holidays

Any request for leave of absence due to holidays in term time will not be authorised.

The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure and recreational circumstances, and therefore there is no entitlement in law to time off in term time. Young people who are absent from school fall behind in their learning. They miss out on school events. Many find it difficult to catch up. In addition, school staff have to divert their attention away from other young people to support those who have fallen behind due to a holiday-related absence.

In the case of unauthorised leave of absence, incurring 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 days) within 10 school weeks, consideration will be given if a referral should be made to the Local Authority for a fixed penalty notice to be issued or prosecution where repeated penalty notices have been issued. Where the threshold has not been met in the case of persistent avoidance, for example, repeated absence for birthdays or other family events, the school will have discretion to refer the case to the Local Authority. If in an individual case, the Local Authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met.

4.3 Extended Leave

When a child is absent from school for an extended period (i.e 15 school days or more) parent/carer should advise the school of the temporary address.

4.4 Legal Sanctions

The Local Authority may issue Notices to Improve and penalty notices or refer to court for prosecution in line with the National Framework where absences were unauthorised and support has been provided but not worked or engaged with or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g., an unauthorised holiday in term time).

A penalty notice is an out-of-court settlement intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence. This can be a combination of any type of unauthorised absence, all taken within any 10-school-week period that may span different terms or school years (e.g., 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

From Autumn Term 2024, the Local Authority will only issue 2 penalty notices to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular student will be charged £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same student is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution.

5. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Staff working with students at Furrowfield School use regular opportunities to promote positive attendance with students. Strategies include:

- Attendance Placemats whereby students record daily attendance, Year to Date attendance and whether this has changed since the previous week, personalised half termly attendance targets
- Celebrating success within tutor time and at half termly events
- Through attendance focused assemblies

Regular opportunities are also used to promote positive attendance with parents/carers. Strategies include:

- Providing parents with information regarding attendance through the Stage 1, 2 and 3 letters
- Individualised target setting using the Attendance Improvement Plan

6. Attendance Monitoring

Detailed attendance information is shared with SLT each week and provides the following information:

- Week on week comparison of year groups and cohorts including changes since the previous academic year
- Year to Date comparison of year group and cohorts including changes since the previous academic year

- Week by week and year to date Individual student tracking including student position on the staged response to absence
- The number of students above 90%
- Identification of key students whose attendance is approaching 90% or 50%
- Weekly reports are published to the Senior Leadership Team that analyses year group and cohort data. This data compares week on week and year on year trends.
- An attendance tracker is also shared that displays current interventions that are tailored to the individual student.

6.1 Monitoring Attendance

Furrowfield School will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority levels through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

6.2 Analysing Attendance

Furrowfield School will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

6.3 Using Data to Improve Attendance

Furrowfield School will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to Form Tutors and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with students and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

6.4 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of students whom the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

Where absence exceeds 10% the following staged response will be followed:

Stage 1: letter sent to parents/carers detailing absence and the need for improvement. Students remain at the Stage 1 level for the remainder of the academic year unless absence increases whereby Stage 2 will be triggered.

Stage 2: parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting with a Senior Leader. Students will be placed on an Attendance Improvement Plan for two to four weeks. Following this time period, a review meeting will take place. Where a further increase in absence occurs, the student will move to Stage 3. If after the agreed period of monitoring, the student's attendance increases, no further action will be taken but the student will continue to be monitored. If absence increases at a later date within the Academic Year, parents/carers will be invited to attend a Stage 3 meeting.

Stage 3: this stage is usually initiated at a Stage 2 review meeting by a Senior Leader where absence has increased. The Attendance Improvement Plan continues for a further two to four weeks. Following this time period, a review meeting will take place. Where a further increase in absence occurs, a referral may be made to the Local Authority Legal Intervention Team. If after the agreed period of monitoring, the student's attendance increases, no further action will be taken but the student will continue to be monitored. If absence increases at a later date within the Academic Year, parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting where a referral may be made to the Local Authority Legal Intervention Team.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum each year by Kirsty Allan (Deputy Head Teacher). At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

8. Support

The school will:

- Build relationships with students and families to encourage regular school attendance.
- Analyse and use data and relationship knowledge to prevent regular absence.
- Using resources (School-based and external services) to intervene early with support.
- Use targeted support for persistent/severe absences.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

10. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

- [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#)
- [Support for students where mental health issues are affecting attendance \(Effective practice examples\)](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024](#)

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following registration is effective from the 19th of August 2024 - [‘Working Together To Improve School Attendance 2024’](#)

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	The student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	The student is present at the afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	The student arrives late before the register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	The student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school.
K	Off-site educational activity	The student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the local authority.
D	Dual registered	The student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered.
P	Sporting activity	The student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school.
V	Educational trip or visit	The student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school.
W	Work experience	The student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	The student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances.
C1	Leave of absence	The student should be participating in a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence – Part-time timetable	For compulsory school-age students who are on an agreed part-time timetable
E	Suspended or permanently excluded	The student has been suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision has been made.
I	Illness	The school has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
J1	Leave of absence	The student has an interview with a prospective employer/ admission to another educational institution.
M	Medical/dental appointment	The student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Parents travelling for occupational purposes.	The student is a mobile child due to the parent travelling from place to place for business/trade.
Q	Unable to attend due to lack of access arrangements	The student is unable to attend due to a lack of access arrangements made by the local authority

Y1	Unable to attend due to lack of transport	Where the school or local authority normally provides transport which is not available; and the school is beyond reasonable walking distance.
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	The student is unable to attend school because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school being unexpectedly closed	Where the whole school was planned to be open but remained closed unexpectedly
Y5	Unable to attend as student is in criminal justice detention	If the student is in police detention or on remand to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Student travel to or attendance at the school would be contrary to restrictions set by the secretary of state for health
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the student, not the parent
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	The student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	The school is not satisfied with the reason for the student's absence

U	Arrival after registration	The student arrived late and after 30 minutes from the start of the session
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Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day