

Freemantles School

Attendance Policy

Governors' Committee: SEN

Reviewed and readopted: September 2009

Next Review: September 2010

1. Introduction

- Regular school attendance is essential if pupils are to achieve their full potential.
- The Governors and staff of Freemantles believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling pupils to maximise the educational opportunities available to them in order to fulfil the potential of each individual.
- Freemantles values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.
- This policy takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

2. Legal Framework

- Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents/carers must ensure that pupils of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A pupil is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A pupil ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.
- Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents/carers secure education for pupils of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. Categorising absence

- Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

- Parents/carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note in the home/school contact book, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.
- Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent/carer informing the school that their pupil is ill will be acceptable. Parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments Parents/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day.

Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent/carer in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

Family Holidays and Extended Leave Parents/carers are strongly advised to avoid taking their pupils on holiday during term time. Parents/carers do not have an automatic right to remove their pupil from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and should be made aware that if their pupil is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

At Freemantles we acknowledge that it is sometimes difficult for families to take young people with Autistic Spectrum Condition to crowded places where others are having holidays and consent for a short holiday at a quieter time may be granted by the Headteacher on receiving details of the family's request.

Parents/carers wishing to take their pupil on holiday during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before holiday arrangements are made. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Pupil's educational and social needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Previous term time holidays taken

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing. Where a request has been granted the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents/carers must contact school should any delays occur

- That the pupil's place may be withdrawn if the family do not return as expected

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents/carers has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that the pupil will lose their school place.

Only in **exceptional circumstances** will absence of more than 10 school days be agreed. In such cases, consideration will also be given to cultural needs and family circumstances, such as minority ethnic pupils returning to their country of origin. In these cases granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parents/carers will be required to justify why the holiday needs to be taken during term time.

Religious Observance Freemantles acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent/carer to allow their pupils not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their pupil to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Traveller Absence The aim for the attendance of Traveller pupils, in common with all other pupils, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents/carers from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent/carer is safe from prosecution if their pupil accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the pupil is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller pupils is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties to ensure that their pupils are receiving suitable education when not at school.

3.13 Late Arrival Registration begins at 9.15 am Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late unless there has been a problem with transport of which the school has been notified. The register will close at 9.45 am pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late.

4. Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

5. Roles and Responsibilities

We believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents/carers, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents/carers
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department of Pupils, Schools and Families as required and on time

- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Pupils, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Department Managers will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions

- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Request that Parents/carers will:

- Take a positive interest in their pupil's work and educational progress
- Contact the school if their pupil is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their pupil is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their pupil's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their pupil's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of pupils receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home
- Avoid taking their pupil on holiday during term-time, where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of booking the holiday

6. Using Attendance Data

Pupils' attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

6.2 Every half term the Front Office staff will provide the SMT with attendance data for the previous half term. The list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attenders at the top; every pupil will be colour coded as indicated below:

GREEN	pupils with attendance between 100% and 96%
AMBER - GREEN	pupils with attendance between 95% and 88%
RED - AMBER	pupils with attendance between 87% and 80%
RED	pupils with attendance below 80%

This pupil level data will be used support school action. Action will normally be taken as a result of daily scrutiny rather than half termly reporting.

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Freemantles will share attendance data with the Department for Pupils, Schools and Families and the local authority as required.

All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

7. Support Systems

Freemantles School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties associated with Autistic Spectrum Condition. Once aware, school staff will provide support, initially through a home visit and suggested behaviour strategies and, if necessary, following up by engaging other relevant professionals. Parents/carers should make school aware of any further circumstances which may impact the pupil or young person eg. bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

8. Legal Sanctions

In the unlikely event that a parent/carer continues to allow a pupil or young person to be withdrawn from school, prosecution may be the eventual outcome.

Prosecution Where a comprehensive package of support fails to bring about an improvement in attendance and only if parents/carers and carers are not taking steps themselves to try and secure attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents/carers realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning pupils to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent/carer fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their pupil if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

September 2009

To be reviewed: September 2010