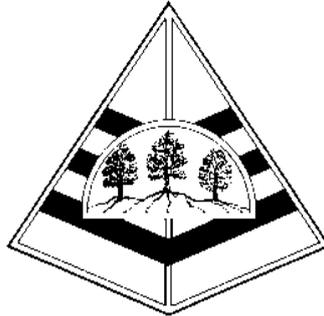


Ferndown Middle School

Attendance Policy



| Policy to be reviewed by Governor Committee | Curriculum & Community Committee |
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| Frequency | Annually |
| Reviewed: | 06/01/16 |
| Reviewed: | 07/03/17 |
| Reviewed: | 18/10/17 |
| Reviewed: | 9/10/19 |
| Reviewed: | 13/10/20 |
| Reviewed: | |
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Article 28: You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can' UNCEF

This Policy document has been written to reflect current practices in place at Ferndown Middle School, it is implemented and endorsed as expected good practice by the Leadership Team and the staff.

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Ferndown Middle School Aims

- To provide an exciting, challenging and motivating learning environment for all pupils and teachers that shows respect for the diversity of people's backgrounds.
- To set high standards of attainment and achievement for all pupils, ensuring that similar life opportunities are available to all pupils.

An exciting learning and motivating environment for all pupils

- An exciting learning and motivating environment.
- To foster the joy of learning.
- To provide a variety of techniques and strategies for teaching and learning.
- To provide resources within the classrooms to aid learning.
- To ensure that all pupils feel safe within the learning environment.
- To at all times be aware of the responsibility of teachers to promote self-esteem.
- For staff to have high expectations of all pupils.
- Pupils' and adult's behaviour is thoughtful and creates a positive learning ethos in all lessons.
- For staff to develop and foster the skills and attributes of a good learner to include; resilience, resourcefulness and motivation for learning.

Philosophy

Ferndown Middle School is committed to maximising attendance for all pupils to enable them to benefit fully from their education. We believe that regular attendance is vital for effective learning.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise the importance of establishing strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is a concern about attendance.

We will identify and address, as quickly as possible, any problems affecting attendance and adopt, at times, a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance.

Principles

The school will work to ensure that all pupils feel supported and valued. It will promote positive staff attitudes to those pupils returning from absences.

Staff will be made aware of the registration process and receive in service training on registration regulations and education law. Registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

Parents will be encouraged to contact the school on the first day of the child's absence.

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Attendance procedures will be regularly evaluated by the leadership team and the governors.

Procedures will allow returned absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of other pupils in the class (if appropriate).

Consultation will take place with staff and the relevant outside agencies to develop and maintain the school attendance policy.

Rights and responsibilities

Improving the attendance at Ferndown Middle School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community: pupils, parents and school staff.

Pupils are expected to attend school and lessons regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience difficulties attending school will be offered support.

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn.

“Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. This can be by regular attendance at school, at alternative provision, or otherwise (e.g. the parent can choose to educate their child at home).” DfE 2015

Covid 19

Since schools were informed to close due to Covid 19 in March 2020, we have been following the government guidance carefully to ensure the safety of our children and staff when we were able to re-open. Due to some restrictions in place, this had an impact on the way our school usually runs. Please note when reading this policy, temporary changes have been made to registration times, what is now deemed as being ‘late’ and some procedures.

Procedure

If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are required to notify the school of a reason, preferably on the first day of absence. Any parent, whose first language is not English or has literacy problems, will be offered support in matters of communication. When a child is not at school it is considered a safeguarding matter and this is why it is vital we receive an explanation of absence.

If a child does not arrive at school and we have no explanation, the receptionist or Pastoral Officer will contact a parent.

A pupil’s absence from school will remain unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is given by a parent. If a child’s attendance falls below 90%, the school may require proof of absence, for example, a letter from a hospital confirming that the child is to attend a medical appointment.

Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns regarding their child’s attendance.

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First letter – letter of concern about lateness or attendance .

Second letter – a request to attend a meeting with the Pastoral Officer, the Attendance Support Officer from Dorset Council, may attend this meeting.

Third letter- a request for a meeting with the East Education & Early Help Inclusion Team. The outcome from this meeting may be a penalty notice.

Attendance meetings will take place, even in the absence of the invited parent. A referral will be made to East Education & Early Help Inclusion Team when a meeting is unattended and no contact is made.

Inclusion panels are held termly. We work within our pyramid of schools to support the improvement of good attendance. Parent may be asked to attend an inclusion panel if attendance is not improving even after support has been given or if your child is 'Persistently absent'. School-age pupils are persistent absentees if they miss 10% of session or more.

If a child is absent from school and the school deems that the absence is a cause for concern, two members of staff will conduct a home visit.

“All schools must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school’s permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority” DfE 2015

There are two types of absence:

Authorised and Unauthorised

We will not authorise:

- Persistent lateness (after 9.10am) or truancy.
- Caring for brothers and sisters or appointments for other members of the family.
- Going shopping.
- Transport difficulties.
- Long weekends or holidays.
- Any absence which the school has not been informed about.
- Any absence which the Headteacher does not deem to be for a genuine reason.

The Headteacher has the discretion to authorise:

- Absence because of illness.
- Absence due to self-isolating due to Covid 19.
- Absence because of receiving treatment (may require medical evidence).
- Absence for educational purposes.

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- Absence for other specific circumstance (e.g. family bereavement, approved public performance).
- Absence for days of religious observance. Absence for annual family holiday, up to 10 days, if there are exceptional circumstances. (Defining exceptional circumstance: The absence is rare and unavoidable; the event could not be reasonably scheduled for another time).

School staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Staff should convey high expectations to pupils regarding attendance and punctuality. Staff will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

Registration

Registers will be called promptly at 8.45am and 1.20pm.

Registers will officially close at 9.10am. (i.e. at the beginning of the first lesson of the morning) and 1.30pm. (i.e. at the beginning of the first lesson in the afternoon). Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded 'U' unless the child has attended a medical appointment, this will be coded as 'M'.

Where pupils arrive late and the register is still open, they will be marked late but counted as present for the session. Where pupils miss registration and do not provide an adequate explanation, they will be marked as late but counted as unauthorised absent. Where pupils miss registration but provide an acceptable explanation - e.g. medical/dental appointments - they will be marked as absent but as authorised absent for that session.

Lateness

Lateness is actively discouraged and challenged immediately when it arises. If a child is arriving after 9.10am, they will receive a 'U' mark in the register and that child will be deemed as late.

Pupils are expected to be in the classrooms at 8.45am when the register is called. If the child arrives after 8.45am and the teacher has closed the register, for example, because of assembly, the child must go to the front office and sign in. If a parent is arriving with a child after 8.45am, children must enter through the school office and sign in.

The school will outline an alternative plan in exceptional cases.

If a child is persistently late, the Pastoral Officer will contact their parents to offer support. Dorset Council are made aware of any child who is persistently late for school. A letter will be sent if deemed necessary.

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Recording Absence

All staff must record absences, either as authorised or unauthorised, using the agreed symbols.

Absences will be totalled by the Pastoral Officer monthly and then forwarded to the Teaching and Learning Managers.

Monthly print outs for Teaching and Learning Managers (TLM) for their year group will be provided. The Teaching and Learning Managers will discuss the absences with the form tutor and Pastoral Officer.

Consistent criteria should be applied to decision making. If the Headteacher have reasons to doubt the explanation offered about whether a particular absence is genuine, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised. The school will not authorise absences when a child has attendance that is below 90% without medical proof. Parents/ carers will be notified by letter or phone call when this proof is required. If in doubt the Head teacher will seek advice from the Local Authority.

Annual Holidays Taken During Term Time

Under the guidance from the DfE the school will not grant family holiday during school term time. The school can grant time off during term time for exceptional circumstances. These circumstances include a close family wedding, bereavement, serious illness in the immediate family. The list is not exhaustive and the Headteacher makes the final decision. Parents have to write to the Headteacher to request time off during term time.

Penalty notices for holidays during term time

Holidays during term time will not be authorised by the school. If your child is removed from school for the purpose of a holiday, a penalty notice will be considered.

“The authorised person may issue a Penalty Notice without first issuing a formal warning to the parent as would otherwise be required. However s/he should still be satisfied that the parent was informed beforehand that, in some circumstances e.g. term time holiday, unauthorised absence could lead to a Penalty Notice being issued without further warning.”

The Headteacher will consider each request individually.

Unauthorised Absence

Penalty notices can also be issued when a child’s attendance is of a concern. If your child has 10 sessions (5 days) or more of unauthorised absences within a 12 week period, the Local Authority can issue a penalty notice.

Action of irregular attendance will initially involve the Pastoral Officer, the pupil’s head of year and the school receptionist. Parents of all pupils whose attendance falls below 90% (which is unauthorised) may be asked to attend a meeting with the Pastoral Officer. The aim

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of this meeting will be to identify and resolve any difficulties preventing the pupil from attending school. Here the parents will be made aware of the legal requirements for their children to attend school.

“If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.” DfE 2015

If the pupil’s difficulties are not resolved and the attendance doesn’t improve, a formal conversation will be held with the Attendance Support Officer who works for Dorset Council where the next course of action will be discussed.

If your child is absent from school and this is a cause of concern, two members of staff may conduct a home visit to establish the reason why your child is absent.

Reviews and Strategies

Part of the evaluation process will be to consider what interventions, as listed below, have been successful.

- The school receptionist telephoning parents on the first day of absence;
- Careful monitoring by the Pastoral Officer, the TLM and the Headteacher
- Statistics produced from SIMS Attendance software each month.
- Inter-agency referrals to the East Education & Early Help Inclusion Team if attendance is below 90%.
- Attendance discussed as an agenda item at least once every half term at the TLM meeting.
- TLMs inform their Year team of individual pupil concerns.
- The Headteacher and the Pastoral Officer will monitor attendance half termly and identify by year group pupils with attendance below 90%. Letters will be sent home in the first instance, followed up by a meeting if no improvement.
- Targets are set annually with the Local Authority via the SEP programme.

It is our duty to let the local authority know of any children who is not attending school on a full time basis.

If your child is absent from school and this is a cause of concern, two members of staff may conduct a home visit to establish the reason why your child is absent.

Children Missing in Education

If a child is believed to be missing in education then a completed form will be sent to Children’s Services. The reasons why we may use this referral system are:

- The parent has informed the school that the child is leaving and the new intake school has not requested the files.

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- The child has not attended the school for 2 weeks and there has not been any contact from the parent/guardian.

Ferndown Middle School has a programme of Safeguarding training that includes whole staff workshops on subjects that could affect a child's attendance, including radicalisation and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

We also have a statutory duty to let the local authority when a child on our school roll is missing out on education. This includes:

- Reduced time tables
- Fixed term exclusions
- Permanent exclusions
- Children withdrawn for elective home education
- Managed moves
- Any child take on or off role outside normal transition points
- Children missing in education.

“All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area.” DfE 2015

Glossary

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| TLM | Teacher and Learning Manager |
| DFE | Department for Education |
| FGM | Female Genitalia Mutilation |
| LA | Local Authority |
| SEP | School Evaluation Partner |
| MASH | Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub |