

Fortismere Attendance and Punctuality policy

This policy is for Year 7 to Year 11

1. Introduction

Fortismere promotes good school attendance and punctuality for every student and is committed to working with students, families, the local authority and external agencies in order to achieve this. There is a strong link between regular school attendance and positive educational outcomes.

The School has high expectations in relation to students' attendance and punctuality and in order to benefit fully from their education students must attend school regularly and on time. Missing out on lessons leaves students vulnerable to falling behind and less likely to achieve their full potential.

Courts have defined regular attendance as *attendance in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school*. The rules prescribed by Fortismere are that **all students should attend school every day that the school is open to them throughout the academic year**.

The Department for Education (DfE) expects schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance.
- Reduce absence including persistent absence.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Ensure every student has access to full-time education.

Fortismere School will:

- Encourage all students to see regular attendance and punctuality as a priority and to recognise their importance to future economic well-being.
- Provide a stimulating educational experience to encourage attendance.
- Comply with legal requirements for recording and reporting attendance.
- Track and monitor individual student attendance to identify patterns early.
- Work with parents/carers, the local authority and external agencies to support students who are absent to improve their attendance at school.
- Communicate with parents/carers and make referrals to the local authority and external agencies where attendance is a concern.
- Agree attendance targets with the governing body and work with the whole school community to achieve these.

Students are expected to:

- Attend school regularly and on time every day that the school is open.
- Engage with support provided to help improve their attendance or punctuality.

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure their children attend school every day and on time.
- Notify the school and give reasons for any absence each day of absence.
- Provide evidence when requested in relation to any absence.
- Work with the school, local authority and external agencies to improve attendance and punctuality where there are concerns.

2. Legal background

Parents/carers of children of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive full-time education and where registered at a school, that they attend school regularly. Where parents fail to meet this duty, the school will work

with the local authority to consider the use of legal sanctions for non-attendance such as Penalty Notices, Parenting Contracts or prosecution. Further details on legal sanctions can be found on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk)

This policy has been written in accordance with the requirements of the Department for Education's [School Attendance Guidance](#) and the [School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures: Statutory Guidance](#). These documents are drawn from the legislation that governs school attendance.

3. Attendance Register

All schools must keep an attendance register and at the start of the morning session, and once during the afternoon session mark whether every student is present or absent. The register is marked using DfE Attendance and Absence Codes (See Appendix 1 DfE Codes)

4. Punctuality and Lateness

Students must arrive in school by 8.35am on each school day unless directed otherwise. The morning register is taken at 8.35am and remains open until 9.00am. The afternoon register is taken at the start of Period 4 and remains open for 25 minutes.

Students who arrive after 8.35am but before the register closes at 9.00am will be marked as a *Late arrival (L code)*.

Students arriving at school after the register has closed at 9.00am will be marked as *Late after the register (U code)* and this will count as an unauthorised absence for the whole session. The same procedure will apply to afternoon registration and any late arrival. This is in accordance with the DfE School Attendance Guidance.

Students who are late will be given a sanction. Students who are frequently late will be monitored by senior staff and parents will be contacted. Repeated lateness could result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

5. Absence from school

Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of any unplanned absence and give reasons for the absence. This should be done before 9.00am by telephone on 020 8365 4429 or by email attendance@fortismere.org.uk and followed up with a letter to the Form Tutor when the child returns to school.

The school will follow up any unexplained absences to establish the reason, ensure safeguarding action is taken if necessary, identify whether the absence is authorised or not and mark the correct code in the register. While an unexplained absence is followed-up it will be marked as unauthorised.

Parents will be informed in writing if their child is absent for unauthorised reasons, and where concerns continue, the matter will be escalated for further action. (See section 7. Monitoring Attendance)

5.1 Authorising absence

Any absence from school will be marked as either *authorised* or *unauthorised*. The school will decide if an explanation for an absence or lateness is justified and whether to authorise the absence. Only the Co-headteachers can authorise an absence from school. Parents/carers will be expected to provide a reason for absence, but they cannot authorise an absence.

Authorised absence means that the Co-headteachers have either given approval in advance for a student to be absent or have accepted an explanation given afterwards for the period of absence.

Unauthorised absence means that the Co-headteachers have not given approval for the absence or are not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

5.2 Absence due to illness

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a concern about the authenticity of the illness. Medical evidence may be requested if:

- the absence is more than three days;
- the authenticity of an illness is in doubt;
- there are concerns about repeated absences due to illness.

The school will decide whether to authorise the absence for illness or not.

Medical evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card, prescription, a packet of prescribed medication with a label, a doctor's letter or another appropriate form of evidence. Evidence provided must be recent and relate to the period of absence.

Where a pattern of medical absences begins to develop the school will involve external agencies for further information and support, for example the School Nursing Service. The school will support students with on-going medical conditions to continue to attend school regularly and to manage their conditions through individual Healthcare Plans drawn up with the school.

5.3 Medical or Dental Appointments

Appointments should be made for outside of school hours where possible and for the shortest time necessary so that learning is not interrupted.

Parents/carers must notify the school in advance of appointments (with evidence if required) in order for the absence to be marked as authorised.

If a student needs to leave school during the school day to attend an appointment, parents must inform the school in advance. No student will be allowed to leave the school site without advance written confirmation from a parent/carer.

5.4 Religious observance

The school will authorise absence when it is due to *religious observance*. The day must be a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/carers belong. The school may ask for evidence of this.

Not all religious festivals or events will be set aside for *religious observance* and if a day is not categorised as such, the absence will not be authorised and parents/carers will have to apply for leave of absence under exceptional circumstances instead. (See Section 6. Leave of Absence)

5.5 Traveller children

The aim for the attendance of Traveller students, as with all other students, is to attend school regularly and on time. However, provisions in law allow for non-attendance to be considered differently if the traveller family are of no fixed abode. It does not relieve parents of their duty to ensure that their children receive suitable education when not at school. The school will work with the local authority and external agencies to support the needs of any traveller children on roll. If a child of

traveller heritage is absent due to the nature of their parent's work, evidence of this will be requested, and if not provided, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

5.6 Study leave

Study leave may be granted to students in Year 11 approaching their summer GCSE exams. The Co-headteachers will decide what arrangements will be made for study leave on an annual basis and will communicate this to students and parent/carers.

6. Leave of absence during term-time

Regulations only allow Headteachers to authorise a leave of absence during term-time if they consider there to be *exceptional circumstances*.

The Co-headteachers will consider each request for a leave of absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context of the request. The Co-headteachers will decide whether to authorise the leave of absence or not.

Parent/carers must complete a Leave of absence request in advance and outline the exceptional circumstances leading to the request. The school may ask for evidence to support the request.

Holidays or family trips during term-time will not be authorised by the Co-headteachers unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If a leave of absence is not approved and parent/carers decide to continue with the absence anyway, it will be marked as an unauthorised absence and may be referred to the local authority. The local authority could issue a penalty notice to each parent/carer of each child registered at the school.

7. Monitoring attendance

Student attendance data will be monitored and shared with the local authority and the Department for Education where there is a statutory requirement to do so. The school will also share attendance data with the local authority or other agencies where there is a cause for concern regarding attendance or punctuality.

The Home School Liaison Officer:

- Monitors attendance and punctuality data at a school and individual student level to identify trends and students requiring support.
- Reports concerns about attendance to senior staff.
- Communicates with parents/carers to discuss concerns about attendance and lateness.
- Works with students and parent/carers to plan interventions and arrange support designed to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Works with external agencies to tackle non-attendance.
- Makes referrals to the local authority Education Welfare Service where there is persistent absence or ongoing cause for concern.
- Provides legal documentation and appears in court in cases where legal action has been undertaken against the parents of students with irregular attendance.

The following attendance levels will be used to identify students requiring support and interventions to improve their attendance:

- **96-91% attendance** – the school will work with students and parents/carers to discuss and implement strategies for improving attendance. If attendance does

not improve the case will be referred to the Home-School Liaison Officer or the local authority for further action.

- **90% or lower** – where attendance falls below 90% this will be classed as *persistent absence* and the case will be referred to the Home School Liaison Officer for further action (See section 7.1).

Where attendance has deteriorated rapidly, where there are concerning patterns of absence, a number of unauthorised absences, or parents/carers have not engaged or responded to school interventions, a referral may be made straight to the local authority Education Welfare Service.

7.1 Persistent absence (PA)

The Department for Education has defined attendance at less than 90% as persistent absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to a student's educational prospects. The Home School Liaison Officer will identify students who are PA, or on track to becoming PA and put in place appropriate interventions. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support. If parents/carers fail to engage with support and attendance does not improve a referral will be made to the local authority Education Welfare Service which could result in legal proceedings through a penalty notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court. Parents found guilty could receive a criminal record and a fine or up to a 3 month prison sentence.

8. Support to improve attendance

Fortismere recognises that non-attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a student's life related to problems at home or at school. Parents/carers should make the school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that might affect their child's attendance or behaviour.

Fortismere also recognises that some students are more vulnerable to non-attendance or more likely to need extra support to achieve regular attendance for example students with special educational needs, mental health needs and looked after children.

Fortismere will put in place a range of strategies to support improved attendance and punctuality including:

- Meetings with students/parents
- Attendance panels
- Report cards
- Mentors/counsellors
- Referrals to external agencies/multi-agency meetings
- Reward systems

Where parents/carers fail or refuse to engage with support and further absence occurs, Fortismere will refer the case to the local authority to consider the use of legal interventions.

9. Local Authority Legal Interventions

In cases where irregular attendance is a serious concern or not improving, the school will consult with the local authority Education Welfare Service with a view to commencing legal proceedings against parents. Further information can be found on the [Haringey Council website](#)

Fixed Penalty Notices

A Fixed Penalty Notice issued by Haringey Council is a penalty of £120 (reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days), payable by each parent, for each child that has been absent from school for unauthorised reasons. There is no appeal against the issue of a penalty notice.

Prosecutions

It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their children receive a full time education. This is set out in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 a parent is guilty of an offence if:

(1) If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, their parent is guilty of an offence.

(1A) If in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (1) the parent knows that their child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails without reasonable justification to cause him to do so, they are guilty of an offence.

10. Strategies for promoting attendance and punctuality

The school will use a range of strategies to promote attendance and punctuality to all students and their parents/carers including:

Assemblies and tutor group time and rewards and Parent/carer events such as Welcome meetings and the Parent Forum.

10. Attendance and Safeguarding concerns

Fortismere has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all its students and those who do not attend school regularly may be at risk of harm. Where there are safeguarding concerns regarding attendance the school will follow procedures set out in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

11. Monitoring and review of the policy

The Co-headteachers will review the working of the policy with senior leadership team staff and make an annual report to the governing body.

Policy date: September 2019

Agreed by governing body: 17 June 2019

Review cycle: Every 2 years

Appendix 1

Department for Education codes for recording absence and attendance

More detail can be found in the Department for Education's [guidance on school attendance](#).

ATTENDANCE CODES

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

ABSENCE CODES

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their GCSEs
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when reason emerges)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

ADMINISTRATIVE CODES

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day