

Attendance Policy

Farringdon Community Academy believe that missing school is missing out. Without excellent levels of attendance students will be prevented from reaching their personal and academic potential. FCA expects 100% attendance from all students.

FCA employs resources including time, key staff, support services and attendance data to encourage maximum attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns.

Roles, routines and responsibilities are clearly identified and consistently applied.

Regular school attendance is extremely important, without it, the efforts of teachers and school will come to nothing. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

What to do if your child has to be away?

If a child is unfit for school, the parent or carer is required to contact the school on the first day of absence in person or by telephone. It is expected that parents or carers contact the school on each subsequent day of absence unless we are informed on the initial phone call that the absence will be of a specific length. This is our only way of knowing that a child has not gone missing since leaving home. If a parent fails to contact school by 10a.m. they should expect a text message from the school office admin support staff during the morning of the first absence and each subsequent day unless a specific timescale has been given. This decision has been made to ensure the safety of the children.

Absence for reasons other than illness must be discussed with the school each time. Leave of absence may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments that are unavoidable in school time, providing a written explanation is received.

If a child does not want to attend a school for any reason, it is important that parents and carers do not collude with the child by stating sickness as a reason of absence. Parents and carers must discuss the problem with the school at the first opportunity. The school will assess the situation and if necessary seek the support of appropriate agencies to resolve any difficulties.

What constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences?

Authorised absences are those which the school agree are unavoidable, e.g. illness, family bereavement, visits or interviews, dates of religious observance etc and absence for which leave has been given, e.g. agreed holidays in exceptional circumstances, medical appointments etc.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school considers unreasonable, e.g. holidays taken in term time where there are no exceptional circumstances, truancy, excessive lateness, shopping, theatre visits, staying at home because brother/sister is ill etc. An absence is unauthorised until an acceptable written or verbal explanation is received. If no acceptable explanation is received in writing within one week of the absence, this absence will remain unauthorised.

It is for the school, not the parent or carer to decide whether the absence should be recorded as authorised or unauthorised on receipt of note. The submission of a note does not automatically register the absence as authorised. Where FCA has concerns over the amount of illness absence a child has,

the parent or carer may be asked to provide medical evidence in order for FCA to authorise the absence. If this is the case, the parent or carer will be informed of this decision in writing.

Appointments

Appointments – GP, dentist etc. that have to be made during school time should be notified to the school in writing, in advance. Where possible appointment cards should be brought into school and handed to Year Manager. Whenever possible, appointments should be made outside of school hours. It is expected that wherever possible, the child attends school either side of the appointment time.

Special occasions/holidays

In line with Government guidelines, students are not granted leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any such absences are at the discretion of the Head Teacher. If parents wish for their child to have a leave of absence, they must complete a form giving details of the reason for the leave of absence and the length of time they will be absent for. This meeting must be arranged with the Year Manager in advance of the required date.

Elective Home Education

Where a parent or carer elects for the child/children in their care to be home schooled, FCA. will follow the procedures set out by the Local Authority. School will follow the EST checklist for parents considering to home educate and then make a referral to the LA within 10 days. If the child is subject to a Care or Protection Plan Children's Services Social Care Team will be informed.

Off Site Students

A number of students are educated at other provisions during the school day. Arrangements are made with the provider to ensure that attendance is notified to our school office as early as possible within the session. If a student is transported to a provision from school, the school registers their presence and it is confirmed to FCA upon arrival at the provision. Students who have temporary or permanent placements within Behaviour Units are registered daily at the unit and confirmation of their attendance is faxed or emailed to the Attendance Officer at the end of the week. The units are asked to immediately contact parents and carers or use their attendance officers to chase up any absence from the first day. e.g. Pitstop, PRU. If a student is absent from a work placement, organised by the school, the employer is asked to notify the school office as soon as the absence is known. If the absence is known to the school, parents are contacted immediately via text message.

Children Missing from Education

Should a child leave a Sunderland school without the school being advised (by the parent/carer) as to which new school the child is transferring to, the school will immediately notify the Attendance Team using the CME referral form. The Principal Inclusion Officer (Behaviour) co-ordinates, the identification, referral, tracking and engagement of children missing from education, through multi-agency working.

If a staff member is concerned that a child is missing from education, they must approach a Year Manager, Attendance Officer or Assistant Headteacher who will complete the Children Missing from Education referral form and send it to cme@sunderland.gov.uk

The Law

The law states that it is the responsibility of the parent or carer to ensure that a child attends school regularly and on time. FCA work closely with the Local Authority and utilises all its sanctions to address unacceptable levels of attendance.

Attendance Officer

From September 2012 FCA have employed their own Attendance Officer who is employed directly by the school. The Attendance Officer is based at Farrington Community Academy and works with the feeder primary schools. The Attendance Officer is identifiable by name badge and is contactable through the direct line. Parents are to expect home visits, phone calls and letters in relation to attendance concerns.

Referral to the Attendance Team

Where attendance remains unsatisfactory, at 90% or below with at least 10 unauthorised sessions in the last 6 weeks a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team for consideration for prosecution.

Fixed Penalty Notices

FCA will utilise Fixed Penalty Notices where a student has unauthorised absences and/or where unauthorised holidays have been taken in term time (i.e. more than 10 consecutive days in an academic year). A Fixed Penalty Notice currently requires payment of £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days, and will result in prosecution in a Magistrates Court if unpaid.

This policy will be reviewed in September 2018