

The Friary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Introduction

Our school's commitment to maintaining high levels of attendance for all students upholds the expectations set out by the Department for Education in their ['Overview - School Attendance & Absence'](#).

Good school attendance provides students with an opportunity to participate fully in the whole school curriculum, enhancing student development, achievement and satisfaction. Regular attendance is an important aspect of achievement. We will always address the issue of absenteeism and lateness, being sensitive to the individual circumstances relating to poor attenders, with the possibility of such students receiving appropriate support.

We see good attendance - which we would define as at least 95% - which equates to ½ day absence per fortnight - as an integral part of the school ethos, and will reward students for regular and improved attendance and good punctuality. We provide exciting incentives for students to attend well and there are regular celebrations of good attendance across all year groups. Good attendance is best achieved through the forging of meaningful relationships between school and home and by offering a curriculum that stimulates every student.

Indeed, all evidence indicates that poor attendance has a serious and detrimental impact on student exam outcomes which in turn reduced post-16 opportunities and access; for example in Summer 2023 Year 11 students final exam results contrasted sharply relating to their level of attendance; ie - 96%+ attendance saw an average extra 1½ grades in each subject; 90-95.9% attendance saw an average extra ¾ grades in each subject; whilst below 90% attendance saw an average of 0 extra grades in each subject. Amongst our poorest attenders in this cohort, only one made good progress based on their Key Stage 2 outcomes.

Our Attendance Officer is Ria Champion, our Attendance Lead is Richard Barnett-Richards (Assistant Headteacher) and our Designated Safeguarding Lead is Stacey Walsh (Assistant Headteacher).

Throughout this policy the term 'parent' refers to all adults or carers with either parental responsibility, or are responsible for the day-to-day care of the student.

Underpinning Values

The Friary School will promote good attendance through its use of curriculum and teaching and learning. This is reinforced in the Behaviour Policy. Good attendance will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent permits absence from school without a good reason it may be an offence.

Under the Education Act (Student Registration) Regulations 1996 schools have a duty to refer to the Local Authority any child of compulsory school age who is continuously absent from school without explanation or whose attendance is irregular or whose punctuality is an issue.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day. This shows whether the student is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a child of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either authorised or unauthorised. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always needed. The reasons we may designate absence as unauthorised include, but are not limited to, parents keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy and absences without explanation.

We have a safeguarding duty and will always investigate unexplained absences. We will share relevant data with Local Authority Officers and other relevant professionals as appropriate.

Partnership Working

Parents have the central responsibility of ensuring that their child attends school. Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work proactively with the school in resolving any problems. Wherever possible the school will take action to improve a student's attendance and address any underlying causes of problems before requesting support.

Following the COVID pandemic there is clear evidence of school attendance deteriorating significantly. Our school views this decline as a serious matter and is very proactive at supporting children into school with the intention that all students meet our minimum 95% attendance threshold benchmark.

Elsewhere, our school is not in a position to approve any term-time holidays as to do so would undermine our underpinning values laid out in this policy. Nonetheless, we expect all families to notify us of such an absence as we can review this matter with them and find a way forward. This process is outlined in the 'Leave of Absence' section below and paperwork can be obtained via our Attendance Officer.

Even so, the Local Authority is entitled to fine parents who take such holidays and our school is beholden to flag up concerns as part of our statutory responsibilities.

Leave of Absence

All leave of absence requests should be made using a standard form available from the school office; completed forms can be returned to either the school office or the Attendance Officer. Leave of absence will only be granted under exceptional circumstances and parents will be notified of the school's decision after consideration of the request. If leave of absence is not granted and the child does not attend school on the dates requested a penalty notice request may be submitted.

First Day of Absence

In the event that we are not notified of the reason for absence on the first day we will attempt to establish the reason as soon as is practically possible. This may involve contacting parents using all the available contact details we have been provided with. We may also contact parents on subsequent days of absence to determine how soon a student can return to school. We have a duty to encourage good attendance so that students can make good progress and a duty to safeguard all students; this is entirely consistent with that duty.

Absence Thresholds

Each term we will notify parents when their child has been absent for a set number of sessions. This contact will be via a letter and in some circumstances we will speak to parents directly about absence. The letter and/or phone call may request a meeting or possibly that medical evidence be provided for future absences. The details regarding thresholds are available on request although, for example, in the first term we will begin to consider a student's attendance in detail if they miss 8 sessions (half days) of school.

We may write to parents at other times too if we feel it might be helpful for ensuring good attendance. If a child's attendance falls consistently below 90% then they can be classed as 'persistently absent' and a penalty notice request may be submitted.

At times, we receive parental concern relating to formal letters. At these times we explain that there are statutory responsibilities for all schools to monitor school absence and these checking processes are part of safeguarding measures and the school / Local Authority's responsibility to ensure that students receive a good education to set them up for later life.

Reviewed By	Full Governors	Implementation Date	Sept 2023	Review Date	Nov 2025
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