



# FOREST SCHOOL

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy Senior School

V1.2

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This policy should be read in conjunction with the.

Missing Child Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Supervision Policy

Behaviour Policy

School Rules

Educational Visits Policy

## 1 Introduction and Aims

“Improving attendance is everyone’s business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.” (DFE Working together to Improve School Attendance August 2024). Improving school attendance must be a focus of the wider school culture.

The information noted in this policy takes into the consideration best practice and guidance highlighted in Working together to improve school attendance guidance (August 2024) including the Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (August 2024). Furthermore, taking into consideration the guidance from School attendance parental responsibility measures (December 2023).

Excellent attendance and punctuality are crucial to maximising the educational opportunities for pupils at Forest. In line, with the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, we have high expectations of our pupils at Forest. This includes not seeing attendance and punctuality as isolated areas and that these are required for pupils to thrive and learn successfully. Improving attendance and punctuality is everyone’s responsibility. It is not a discrete piece of work, but rather it is an integral part of the school’s ethos and culture. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all the Forest community. It is the responsibility of staff to ensure accurate registers are taken.

Our School Values of Growth, Wellbeing, Learning, Hard Work, Diversity, Responsibility and Community are reflected in this policy. We have a responsibility to promote a culture which promotes the importance of attendance and punctuality to support with the safeguarding of pupils, development of skills for life-long learning such as time management and organisation. This also includes ensuring we have robust daily processes to follow up absence and punctuality.

The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Some pupils may find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance and punctuality at Forest we work with pupils and parents/carers to support the pupil in working together to remove any barriers to attendance by building consistent and trusting relationships.

At Forest we recognise that attendance and punctuality is never ‘solved’ and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies. At Forest the attendance team consists of the Deputy Head Safeguarding, Deputy Head Pastoral, Senior School Office Manager, Heads of Section and the School’s Attendance Officer. The Attendance Team will meet regularly with a designated Governing Council Member who also promotes the importance of school attendance, reviews attendance data and ensures the leaders in the school are fulfilling the expectations as outlined in this policy. All staff take part in familiarisation sessions regarding

Attendance and Punctuality to ensure they understand their duty of care and legal responsibilities when completing registers.

## 2 Working Together to Improve Attendance

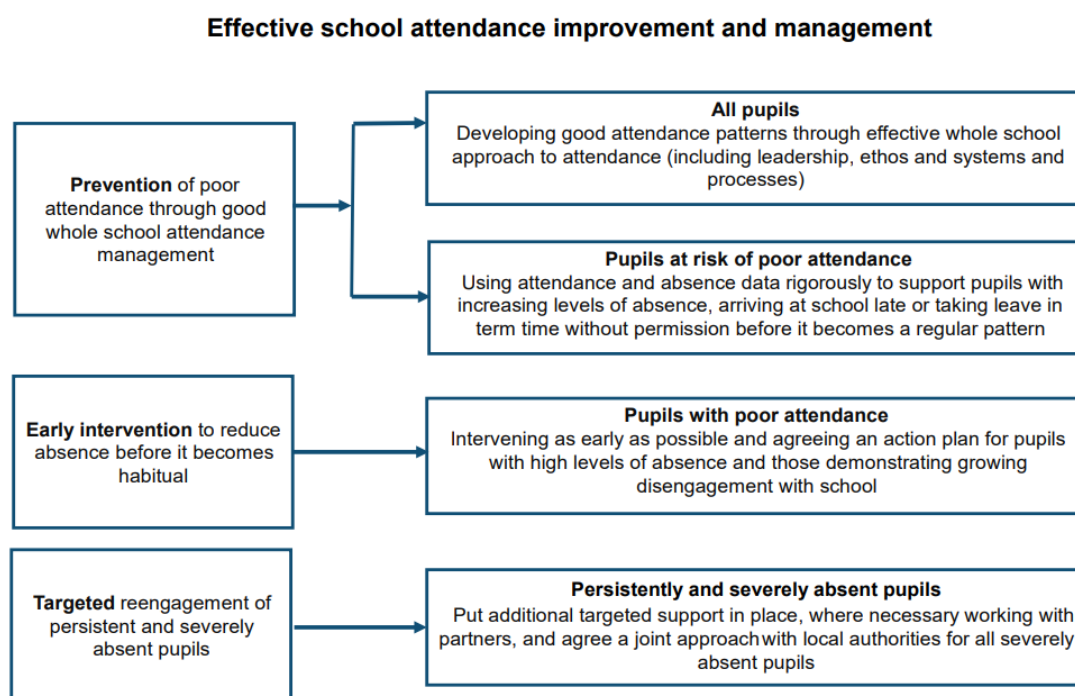
Excellent attendance and punctuality require schools, parents/carers, pupils and local partners (if applicable) to work collaboratively. Using the below framework as a guide to this collegiate approach: Expect- Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents/carers and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor- Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand- When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents/carers to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support- Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents/carers to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support- Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract.



### 3 Safeguarding and External Agencies

At Forest we recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. The Attendance Team meets with the Waltham Forest Attendance Team on a regularly basis to review our processes, policy and attendance cases.

For the most vulnerable pupils attending school is a protective factor.

In most cases, the school should monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents/carers and any other external agencies involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, all parties should work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

We ensure a collaborative culture when liaising with external agencies regarding attendance. External agencies have a proactive role to support schools with attendance.

The school has a statutory responsibility in line with [DFE guidance](#), paragraph 58 of the guidance to make a 'sickness return' to the Local Authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using code I (unable to attend because of sickness). This includes if there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days. This is to help the school and local authority to agree any provision needed to ensure continuity of education for pupils.

At Forest taking into consideration our academic year total number of school days this 'sickness return' would occur when a pupil in Forest falls below 91% attendance.

### 3.1 Emotionally School Based Avoidance

Paragraph 132 of the statutory guidance states that: Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.

## 4 Attendance Thresholds

\*Thresholds for Attendance will be monitored regularly but particularly towards the end of the Michaelmas. Thresholds for Attendance will be regularly monitored throughout the academic year, with particular emphasis from the second half of the Michaelmas Term once pupils have completed the first half term of the academic year. Monitoring of thresholds will take into account the previous twelve-month period.

**Threshold 1:** If attendance falls below 95% the Tutor will contact parents/carers as a check in and to ensure there is no additional information, we need to be made aware of regarding the absence.

In addition, on the third day of consecutive absence the School Office will alert the Tutor to contact home to check-in pastorally and see if there is anything additional, we can do to support.

After x3 days of absence and not receiving information regarding an authorised reason to be missing School, the Safeguarding Team who are members of the Attendance Team would seek advice from the Children Missing in Education Team. The Safeguarding Team recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect.

**Threshold 2:** If attendance falls below 90%- 85% the Tutor and Head of House will meet with parents/carers and pupil to dig deeper into the potential reasons for absence and to offer support if needed. Following this meeting a standardised letter is sent from the office for recording purposes.

*\*If a pupil reaches threshold which is below 85% but the parent/carer and pupil meeting with the Tutor and Head of House between 90-85% has not yet happened, then the Tutor and Head of House should still meet with the parents/carers and pupil in the first instance to investigate reasons for absence and offer support, unless directed otherwise by the Head of Section'.*

**Threshold 3:** If attendance falls below 80-85% the Head of Section will meet with parents/carers to discuss reasons for low attendance and offer support and discuss next steps. This is also added to our internal safeguarding database.

**Threshold 4:** If attendance falls below 80% the Head of Section and Deputy Head Pastoral decide what intervention, support or external guidance is needed dependent on pupil and context/ reason for absences. Working with each identified pupil and their parents/carers to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

## 5 Punctuality

AM Registration is taken by 8.30am by all Tutors. All pupils are expected to be in their tutor rooms by 8.30am.

-If a pupil is not in AM registration, the Tutor will mark N on the register.

-If they know the reason for pupil absence (i.e. Music, EPP etc.) the tutor must record a note in the register or contact the Senior School Office directly.

-Pupils that enter the White Gates between 8.30-8.35am **must** be marked late (including minutes) by the Tutor. From 8.35am the reception will then record pupils and update lateness on the register accordingly.

-Lates should not be given if the parent or carer has given a reasonable reason for absence and informed the tutor or alerted the Senior School Office.

-If there are adverse weather conditions or transport issues that are causing widespread delays members of the Attendance Team will advise tutors not to mark lateness for that particular morning.

The punctuality thresholds for **morning registration** are as follows: These will be cleared every term and reset for each pupil. The Data team will send automated emails and notifications when pupils meet thresholds.

1st - Professional Conversation (actioned by Tutor)

2nd- Parental/Carer email home (automated email sent by the Data Team)

3rd- Lunch time reflection

4th- Head of House Parental/Carer Communication

5th- Punctuality Awareness Session led by the Head of House

6th- School Detention

9<sup>th</sup>- Head of Section Parental/Carer communication

12<sup>th</sup>- Leadership Detention

If lateness persisted following the Leadership Detention the Head of Section and Deputy Head Pastoral would discuss next steps, this will be decided on a case-by-case-basis depending on the child and context of reason for lateness.

## 6 Lessons (including PM registration)

Lesson registers must be taken at the start of the lesson within the first 10 minutes. Subject teacher must mark the minutes late on the register where and when applicable if a pupil is late to their lesson.

If pupils are late to lessons in line with the Behaviour Policy, they will be issued with a professional conversation in the first instance and for repeated lateness they would receive a lunchtime reflection.

If repeated lateness occurred following this the subject teacher would work closely with the Head of Department and Head of House to discuss next steps this may involve escalated sanctions as well as further support for the pupil.

If pupils do not arrive to lessons or PM registration and the teacher is unaware of their whereabouts, they must contact the Senior School Office who will then following the processes outlined in the Missing Child Policy.



## 7 Parental and Carer Responsibility

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends School regularly (compulsory school age). This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Parents and carers must notify the Senior School Office ([office@forest.org.uk](mailto:office@forest.org.uk)) if a child is going to be late or not in School:

We ask parents/carers to:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies (this includes Open Day).
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.

All pupils are expected to be in School during Term time, and we would not expect to receive any requests for absence, in particular due to holiday. The school's position is that it is far from ideal for pupils to miss schooling at this crucial time in their education. Although pupils would endeavour to catch up on any work missed, this is of course no substitute for actually being taught in the classroom and absence can lead to pupils being disadvantaged and many hinder their performance in end of year and external examinations. A request for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances should be sent to the relevant Head of Section to be considered whether it is authorised or not. Granting leaves of absences only include attending an interview, study leave, PT timetable arrangements or exceptional circumstances (decided by the school).

If a pupil is at risk of becoming persistently absent or late to School parents/carers must work closely with the school and local authority (if applicable) to help them understand the barriers to attendance and/or punctuality. Parents/carers must proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.

In communicating with parents/carers, we will discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance and punctuality, it is important that a member of the pupil's core team works with and supports the family and wherever possible this staff member should be kept consistent. With regards to persistently absent pupils the parents/carers are expected to work with the school and external agencies to help them understand the barriers to attendance and or repeated lateness. Parents/carers are expected to proactively engage with the formal support offered, this may involve multi-agencies depending on the needs of the pupil and background of the case. This would referral to Early Help and/or MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) as part of our duty of care under the statutory Children Missing in Education.

All parents/carers must provide at least one emergency contact for their child/children.

## 8 Reports and Parental/Carer Portal

Attendance and punctuality data is noted on their child's report as well as on the parent/carers portal. If a parent/carers believes data is incorrect they should contact the School Office ([office@forest.org.uk](mailto:office@forest.org.uk)) copying in the Tutor.

## 9 Support for Neurodiverse and SEND pupils including those with medical conditions

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. As a School we will maintain the same ambition for attendance as well as punctuality and work with pupils and parents/carers to maximise attendance and punctuality where and when applicable. Regularly monitoring of data for such groups will be reviewed. That said, in working with their parents/carers to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

Triangular communication between the pastoral and learning support teams including parents/carers will be key to ensuring transparent and open dialogue. Additional support and adjustments will be considered, discussed and implemented. Additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals will be considered (where applicable).

This could include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- 1. • Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school such as an adapted curriculum and lunchtime/breaktime arrangements. Ensure that whilst we do not provide structured timetabled lessons and work for pupils who are struggling to attend school, as this may act as an enabler, the school will look at each child case by case and provide academic support where appropriate to help ease the transition back into lessons.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.

- Ensure data is regularly monitored for these groups at Pastoral and Safeguarding meetings.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education. In all cases, schools should be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents/carers, and they should talk to pupils and parents/carers and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

## 10 Monitoring and Analysis of Data

Poor attendance and/or punctuality could in some cases be habitual, prevention and early intervention is crucial. The key to this is regular data analysis to both identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them. The Attendance Team use the programme 'PowerBi' to track and monitor attendance and punctuality data. This enables the pastoral team to monitor individual pupils, cohorts and also the ability to analyse sectional data as well.

Effective and timely use and sharing of register data is critical to improve attendance and punctuality. The school's electronic management information system iSAMs is used to keep attendance and admission registers to improve accuracy, speed up the process of sharing and analysing information, and make returns to external agencies easier.

## 11 Admission and Attendance Register

All schools including independent schools are required by law to have an admission register. All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on the admission register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register. The Admission Register and Attendance Registers are recorded and backed up monthly, as required by legislation and these are held electronically. The Admission Register contains the specific details of every pupil in the school, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, date of birth, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended. The Attendance Register records registration at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. Lesson registers are also taken during the school day. The registers are annotated with present, attending an approved educational activity, reason for absence or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Registers are legal records, and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 3 years from the date of entry. As the attendance register is a record of the pupils present at the time it was taken, the register should only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken, and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are made, all schools must ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and

the name and title of the person who made the amendment. Attendance Registers and the Admissions Register are formally recorded every month and copies backed up monthly as required by legislation.