



The Fernwood School

High Achievement with Care & Discipline for All"

Attendance Policy

This policy will be monitored regularly and evaluated so that it remains responsive to current issues. This will be co-ordinated by the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral).

Approved: March 2026
Next review: March 2027
Status: Statutory



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Statement of Intent..... | 3 |
| Legal Framework..... | 3 |
| The Law relating to attendance and safeguarding..... | 3 |
| Taking the Register..... | 4 |
| Outside Agency Support..... | 5 |
| Education Welfare Service (EWS)..... | 5 |
| Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH) | 5 |
| Persistent and Severely Absent students (PA and SA)..... | 5 |
| Requests for exceptional leave in term time..... | 6 |
| Attendance Rewards..... | 7 |
| Punctuality..... | 7 |
| Children Missing from Education (DFE 2024) | 7 |
| Looked After Children | 7 |
| Roles & Responsibilities..... | 8 |
| Teachers and Tutors..... | 8 |
| Heads of year / Assistant Heads of Year/Assistant Headteachers with responsibility for KS3 and KS4 | 8 |
| The Attendance Lead..... | 8 |
| The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)..... | 9 |
| The Headteacher..... | 10 |
| The Trustees..... | 10 |
| Working with other agencies | 10 |



Statement of Intent

The Fernwood School is committed to providing the best pastoral care and support for every student. We recognise that there is a direct correlation between high attendance and positive engagement across *all aspects of school life*. The school is committed to working with **all** students, parents, and external agencies to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly to maximise their successes and support continued whole school improvement.

The Fernwood School intends to maintain its high levels of attendance each year. Our current target for 2025-2026 is 94.5%.

All schools and parents have statutory duties with respect to attendance. At The Fernwood School, we have established effective systems to monitor attendance by working in collaboration with all stakeholders to maintain excellent attendance and reduce persistent and severe absence. Promoting excellent attendance and behaviour is the responsibility of the whole Fernwood School community. We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

At The Fernwood School, The Assistant Headteachers who line manage the Pastoral Team Leaders (PTLs) have strategic responsibility for monitoring attendance together with the Attendance Lead (who provides administrative support for attendance, first day contact and communications/queries regarding attendance from parents). The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) has oversight of all year groups and works closely with these colleagues on a week-to-week basis, ensuring that attendance and punctuality issues are on the agenda at relevant meetings (namely KS3/4 PTL meetings where cases are discussed twice each half term); strategies and interventions are discussed to ensure uniformity of approach and consistent follow up.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- 📖 Education Act 1996
- 📖 Equality Act 2010
- 📖 The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- 📖 The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- 📖 Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- 📖 DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- 📖 DfE 'Keeping children safe in education (updated annually)
- 📖 DfE (2024) 'Children missing education'

The Law relating to attendance and safeguarding

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:



the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- (a) to age, ability, and aptitude and
 - (b) to any special educational needs, he/ she may have
- either at school or otherwise

Compulsory School Age: A child is compulsory school age from the beginning of the next term after their 5th birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16th birthday.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

The issue of a penalty notice under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act may be considered in cases where a student is absent from the academy and the absence is unauthorised.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- ✿ The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- ✿ A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- ✿ A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Taking the Register

The Fernwood School is required to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site or absent. If a pupil is absent, it is classified as either *authorised* or *unauthorised* and recorded as either a morning or an afternoon session. **The school authorises absences, not the parents.** Therefore, the information about the cause of each absence is always required either in writing, message on the absence line or a text sent from the parents' mobile phone. Absences would be authorised for reasons such as illness or other unavoidable causes. Unauthorised absences are those which The Fernwood School does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given.



These may include but not limited to:

- ☛ Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- ☛ Truancy
- ☛ Absences with no adequate explanation
- ☛ Caring for other members of the family
- ☛ Arriving to school too late to get a mark for the morning session
- ☛ Any holidays or day trips taken in term time
- ☛ Any other leave of absence taken without prior agreement from the Headteacher that may not be considered under exceptional circumstances

Outside Agency Support

Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The school works closely with the EWS to promote the importance of regular attendance and work with families to remove the barriers they are facing.

Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH)

Support can be sought if:

- ☛ An Attendance Plan has been implemented and has not prompted an improvement in attendance
- ☛ Poor overall attendance (e.g., below 90%) and no mitigating circumstances or acceptable reasons for absence provided to school
- ☛ If attendance continues to give cause for concern strategies will be considered and steps taken in an attempt to improve attendance and punctuality. This will include letters, home visits from school staff, meetings in school with key staff or other professionals if deemed appropriate

When a student has not attended for 10 school days the school has a statutory responsibility to inform the Local Authority.

Persistent and Severely Absent students (PA and SA)

- ☛ A pupil is a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year *for whatever reason. **This equates to 19 days absence or more in one school year***
- ☛ A pupil is a "severe absentee" if attendance is less than 50% across the school year for whatever reason. ***This equates to 80 days absence or more in one school year***

Absence at both these levels causes considerable damage to any child's educational prospects. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA or SA thresholds or is at risk of moving towards that level, is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.



If a child has or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence or Severely Absent the parent will be asked to provide evidence for any future absence. This may be medical evidence for illness which can be in the form of prescription, appointment cards, medicine packaging, hospital letter or a screen-print from the My GP app. Where we have concerns about a child's health, we may ask a parent to talk to the school nurse or seek permission to contact their GP or other medical professionals for advice.

We use our attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance at both individual and for different groups within the school population. Once concerns have been identified we will work together with pupils, parents, and other services where appropriate to resolve the issue, understand and remove any barriers to attendance and work to resolve them before they become a more serious issue.

Requests for exceptional leave in term time

Working Together to Improve School Attendance states "the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance."

Parents must, therefore, plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leave of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable. There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time.

All applications for a leave of absence must be made in advance to the Headteacher via email to attendance@fernwood.school and will only be considered if the circumstances are deemed to be *exceptional* and *out of the parents' control*. The school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. The Headteacher will be the final arbiter as to the authorisation of any leave although he has also delegated this responsibility to the Deputy Headteacher.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Previous good attendance or your child's education ability are not considered when the school make the decision. If leave has been granted and a child returns late outside of the agreed dates either before or after, the school will reserve the right to unauthorise the entire period of leave taken.

If an unauthorised holiday is taken, consideration could be given to issuing a Penalty Notice. At the Headteacher's request, the Local Authority will issue the Penalty Notice and inform the school of the outcome.



Attendance Rewards

Rewards and sanctions will be used productively to encourage excellent attendance and punctuality.

We run an 'Attendance Raffle' each half term; this is the most high-profile recognition of high or improved attendance as it is regularly promoted through assemblies. The names of those to be entered (pupils with 95% or above, those who have shown an improvement from one ½ term to the next or those who receive a special commendation) are displayed on a central notice board. Names are then entered in a draw and the winners announced in assembly. The Attendance Prefects are involved in the promotion of this award and the winners choose a prize from an array of options.

Punctuality

Pupils attending The Fernwood School are expected to arrive on time, as it provides a good start to the day and is an essential skill for the world of work and further study. **Any pupil who arrives after 8.30am is late and will receive a detention.**

- ✿ If a pupil is late to a lesson 3 times in one week, they will receive a C2/1 hour after school detention on a Monday night.
- ✿ If a pupil is late to Tutor time (8.30am) they will receive a C1/15-minute detention at break time on the same day, with the Deputy Headteacher and a member of the pastoral team. If a pupil does not attend this breaktime detention, they will be issued with a detention at the end of the day (3.00pm or 3.10pm depending on key stage) for 30 minutes – a text will be sent in advance to parents.

PTLs will contact parents/carers of any pupil who is persistently late in order to work collaboratively to resolve the issue/problem. Further sanctions may be implemented.

Children Missing from Education (DFE 2024)

If a family moves from the area and their whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove a pupil from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. A child may be at risk of losing their school place if their whereabouts are not known.

Looked After Children

Matt Hughes, Assistant Headteacher, is the Designated Teacher for Looked after Children and liaises with the Local Authority's Children Looked After team. Attendance of CLA pupils is rigorously monitored and issues swiftly acted upon, involving outside agencies as necessary.



Roles & Responsibilities

Teachers and Tutors

- All teachers and tutors have a responsibility to complete an accurate attendance register; this is a legal requirement. The attendance register must be marked at the beginning of the Tutor Session beginning at 8.30am at the start of every lesson
- Where it is not possible to access the attendance management system, the teacher must alert the Attendance Lead that a manual register is required
- Tutors monitor the register daily and are encouraged to highlight any emerging patterns of absence and lateness or any alarming changes in this area. They can alert the Attendance Lead directly, copying in the relevant pastoral leaders
- All staff have been trained on the use of CPOMS, and if they have a safeguarding concern, they should log it on the system so that it will be dealt with by the DSL or a DDSL
- Teachers and tutors play a crucial role in recording lateness to morning registration to lessons so that sanctions can be applied as per the policy. This ensures consistency and fairness
- Tutors must ensure that information about absences is passed on to the appropriate person. Welcome back pupils after an absence using positive, encouraging and non-judgmental language

Heads of year / Assistant Heads of Year/Assistant Headteachers with responsibility for KS3 and KS4

- To keep the conversations about pupil attendance on the agenda regularly, ensuring that all are aware and involved in the decision-making decisions about steps taken for each individual
- To stay aware, using data available to the pastoral team, of those pupils the school is most concerned about for example looked after children, children subject to safeguarding procedures, children with EHCPs or other vulnerable children
- To follow up non-school attendance issues in line with attendance policy, including conducting home visits as required
- To promote the importance of regular attendance and excellent punctuality through assemblies
- To monitor a specific cohort across the year, as part of their appraisal process

The Attendance Lead

A full overview of the Attendance Lead's responsibilities is set out in the job description

Duties include:

- Ensuring that all registers are taken promptly and act if there are any issues, liaising with the Deputy Headteacher to resolve them
- Overseeing the first day calling procedures to ascertain reasons for absence for every child, every day. This task is supported by the Assistant Heads of Year; the Attendance Lead directs their work in this area



- Ensuring that attendance data is accurate and up to date
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Deputy Headteacher responsible for attendance
- Collaborating with school staff e.g., pastoral leaders and SENDCo to tackle persistent and severe absence and to follow up absences
- Working alongside the Deputy Headteacher to issue fixed penalty notices as per the policy
- Remaining vigilant with regards to those pupils the school is most concerned about for example looked after children, children subject to safeguarding procedures, children with EHCPs or other vulnerable children
- Producing an 'watch list' for all pastoral leaders so that information about the most vulnerable pupils is shared daily. They will also inform pastoral leaders when a home visit is required, due to prolonged absence without contact from parents or a safeguarding issue
- Contributing to the meetings in which pastoral leaders analyse data and plan actions
- Setting up and leading attendance meetings with pupils and their Parent/Carer, alongside the Deputy Headteacher, monitoring the resulting plans
- Maintaining running logs or using CPOMS to track the actions taken with the most vulnerable cases
- Directing the work of the Attendance Administrators

The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)

Duties include:

- Devising and reviewing an attendance policy, reviewed at regular intervals, and ratified by the Trustees
- Monitoring attendance patterns and trends and identifying whole school strategies and support for children who are absent from school
- Evaluating effectiveness of interventions and their impact on attendance levels
- Being aware of those pupils the school is most concerned about for example looked after children, children subject to safeguarding procedures, children with EHCPs or other vulnerable children
- Working closely with the Attendance Lead and the Data Manager to analyse trends and benchmark the school's attendance against national data in order to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Attending meetings with parents or directing other relevant pastoral staff to attend
- Where there is a lack of engagement, holding more formal conversations with parents and raising the issue of the potential need for legal intervention
- Overseeing back to school arrangements for those pupils who are or have been unable to access a full curriculum
- Ensuring that CPOMS is used as a recording tool where there are safeguarding concerns relating to absence
- Providing updates and training to the wider staff and the Trustees as appropriate



The Headteacher

The Headteacher will consider every request for leave on its individual merits. The Headteacher will be the final arbiter of the authorisation of any leave.

The Headteacher oversees the collection and reporting of attendance data and the publication of statistics and reports on attendance to parents, pupils, trustees and to Nottingham City Council. Data used to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohort who need it most. Data will also inform the annual review of school's attendance policy and practice.

The Trustees

There are two Trustees who are responsible for school attendance policies and issues. At Fernwood School these are Mrs Hudlin and Dr Ahmad. It is their role to be aware of general attendance issues and along with the other Trustees inform and oversee school attendance performance initiatives.

Reports and statistics and initiatives to improve school attendance will be shared and consulted on with the Trustees and documented in meeting minutes and the Trustees Annual Report.

The named Trustees must:

- ☛ Recognise the importance of school attendance and ensure that it is promoted across the school's ethos and policies
- ☛ Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- ☛ Regularly review attendance data with the Deputy Headteacher and Attendance Lead, discussing emerging and challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- ☛ Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance
- ☛ Hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Working with other agencies

Research has shown that schools in partnership with the full range of support services have a greater impact on school attendance than when they act alone or when the support services are uncoordinated. The Fernwood School aims to work with the many support services to improve the outcomes for our students, including improving attendance. These services may include a school counsellor, support from Educational Psychologists, School Health, Social Care, Youth Justice Team, Police, CAMHS or BEMHS.

The school adheres to a variety of additional guidance, namely the ones listed below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

<https://www.nottinghamschools.org.uk/media/cwrbp1kx/section-19-policy-2025.pdf>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657995f0254aaa000d050bff/Arranging_education_for_children_who_cannot_attend_school_because_of_health_needs.pdf

