



# 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 Head of Key Stage 3 and Head of Key Stage 4

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## Principles/Aims

The Fernwood School is committed to maximising the best pastoral and academic development and progress for each and every student in its charge, in line with our mission statement “High Achievement with Care and Discipline for All”. In order to do this, good/excellent attendance and punctuality are vital. There is a direct correlation between good attendance and positive attitudes towards behaviour and willingness to learn. The school is committed to working with all students, parents, and other relevant bodies to ensure that all students attend school regularly to maximise their successes and support continued whole school improvement.

All schools and parents have statutory duties with respect to attendance. A targeted approach needs to be balanced with ensuring that these duties are carried out effectively with respect to all students of compulsory school age. At The Fernwood School, we deliver effective systems of attendance management by working in partnership with students, parents, and other relevant bodies to maintain excellent overall attendance and reduce persistent absence. Promoting excellent attendance and behaviour is the responsibility of the whole Fernwood School community.

**The Fernwood School will** promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials, and by continually striving to promote stimulating and challenging teaching and learning. Excellent and good attendance and behaviour by students will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at The Fernwood School, on time, every day The Fernwood School is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any problems or issues that arise with attendance are most effectively resolved between The Fernwood School, parents/carers and the student. Where a student is reluctant to attend, it is not a solution either to support absences or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from The Fernwood School without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carer.

The attendance policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of students. We have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more, where The Fernwood School is unable to make contact with the parent/carer/child, or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

## Taking the Register

The Fernwood School is required to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether the student is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site or absent. If a student of compulsory school age is absent; every half-day absence from The Fernwood School has to be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. Only The Fernwood School can authorise absences, not parents/carers. Therefore, the information about the cause of each absence is always required preferably in writing. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from The Fernwood School for a good reason 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 include:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during The Fernwood School day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at The Fernwood School too late to get a mark
- holidays taken without prior agreement from The Head Teacher

## Lateness:

Students 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 student who arrives after 8.30am is late. The school operates a late gate, and students who arrive late will receive a detention. If a student is late to a lesson they will receive C1/15 minute detention with the class teacher. If a student is late to Tutor time they will receive a C1/15



minute detention with their Tutor. If they are late 3 times in a week they will serve a C2/ 1 hour detention with their Head of Year/PTL (If the detention is after school, a Late Detention text will be sent to parents). Pastoral Leaders and Assistant Pastoral Leaders will contact parents/carers of any student who is persistently late in order to work collaboratively to resolve the issue/problem.

## Penalty Notices

Reducing absence and improving punctuality enhances students' pastoral development, attainment and progress, and protects students vulnerable to anti-social behaviour. An additional strategy to be used as a sanction when parents/carers do not fulfil their responsibility to ensure their children attend The Fernwood School regularly, is the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

The Local Authority holds statutory powers under the Education Act 1996 to ensure children attend school. If they cannot successfully engage with the family to achieve this they may use the many statutory powers to enforce the parents'/carers' responsibility regarding their child's school attendance.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, amended Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, allows parents to be issued with a penalty where they failed to ensure their child of compulsory school age (5-16).

A penalty notice is initially for £60. If this £60 is not paid within 21 days from the date of issue it rises to £120. If after 28 days of the date of issue the £120 is not paid the Local Authority will prosecute the parents under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. This will lead to a hearing in the Magistrates' Court and may result in a fine of up to £1,000 per parent.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact The Fernwood School at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving any problems/barriers. This is almost always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, The Fernwood School or the parent/carer may refer the child to the Education Welfare Services (EWS). He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed. The officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents/carers or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the EWS themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of The Fernwood School and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from The Fernwood School reception or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

## Procedures

The Fernwood School applies the following procedures in dealing with individual absences:

- Parents/carers are advised that students are expected to be in The Fernwood School every day. The importance of excellent attendance is stressed through written and oral communications with students and parents
- Reminder letters may be sent out to parents/carers where their child is under 95% (see Fernwood Attendance Intervention flow chart) and reward letters are sent for improvements. Certificates and badges are also issued for 100% attendance
- The Fernwood School operates a PAR (pupil at risk) list for attendance which is reviewed and updated with actions/interventions every half term (and after PTLs/Heads of School meetings with the Attendance Officer)
- Students who arrive late are expected to sign in at The Fernwood School reception giving reasons for their lateness.
- If students have any periods of frequent lateness where there are no extenuating circumstances, a late letter will be sent to parents/carers, and this will be discussed with the student, Form Tutor, PTL and parent/carer to resolve the situation
- Students who are regularly late receive consequences through The Fernwood School Behaviour for Learning system



- Parents/carers are discouraged from making non urgent medical and dental appointments during The Fernwood School day.
- Students who need to leave The Fernwood School during the day must have a note explaining the reasons for this. Form Tutors and Pastoral Team Leaders/ Heads of School should also be made aware of the reason for absence.
- All requests for known absences from The Fernwood School must be made in writing.
- Holidays/leave of absence during term time will not be granted and may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Head Teacher.
- All absences through illness must be backed up by a note explaining the nature of the illness and/or a telephone call to the Attendance Officer.
- Attendance is regularly monitored by the Attendance Officer, Heads of School, Pastoral Team Leaders and Form Tutors, and class teachers. (see Fernwood Attendance Intervention flowchart)
- For any unexplained absences a text message may be sent on the first day of absence asking parents/carers to explain the reasons for their child's absence. If there is no response from parents/carers, a further text message will be sent asking for clarification from the parent/carer. If there is still no response the absence is recorded as unauthorised.
- Where concerns about individual students occur, these are addressed with parents/carers through the Form Tutor and Pastoral Team Leader and/or the Head of School, in the first instance. If concerns about attendance persist then The Fernwood School will involve other relevant bodies and the Education Welfare Service. Throughout this process, staff will be looking to identify and address reasons for attendance issues so that the student can return to The Fernwood School (with support if necessary) as quickly as possible.
- When an individual student's attendance level falls below 85% in any term without good reason, a referral to the EWS may be made by The Fernwood School. Following investigation, any unresolved issues could result in the parent/carer receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s444.

## Persistent Absence (PA)

The Fernwood School is committed to reducing persistent absence (less than 85% attendance) and has specific procedures for dealing with this.

1. PA data is monitored daily and weekly to track and review attendance of PA students so that concerns can be addressed.
2. The Attendance Officer contacts parents/carers of PA students as soon as they are absent.
3. Regular meetings are held with the Attendance Officer, PTLs/HOS to discuss existing cases and any new concerns.
4. Parents/carers, the child, the Form Tutor, class teachers, Pastoral Team Leaders and Heads of School and EWS are all spoken to about concerns relating to PA.
5. Actions/interventions are taken by The Fernwood School staff and the EWS in line with The Fernwood School/ LA policy.

## Rules for holiday leave

On 1st September 2013, a significant alteration in the law came into effect which changed the grounds on which a Head Teacher could allow a student to go on holiday during term time. Prior to the change the law stated that 'a student may be granted leave of absence from the school to go away on holiday' where the Head Teacher considered that there were 'special circumstances relating to that application'. This section has been deleted and **there is now no rule which allows for authorisation to be given specifically for holidays**. The replacement section states that 'leave of absence shall not be granted' unless the Head Teacher considers that there are '**exceptional circumstances** relating to that application'. It is important that all parents support the school Holiday Policy and are aware that where children have unauthorised absences it may lead to a penalty notice or in extreme circumstances, court action. (A recent prosecution in the Crown Court relating to unauthorised holidays at The Fernwood School, resulted in fines of £735.)

Leave of absence due to urgent and unavoidable circumstances (such as a family bereavement) would clearly be considered exceptional. Other than this, however, it will be appropriate for Head Teacher to deal with applications on a case-by-case basis.



## Attendance Rewards

Rewards and sanctions will be used productively to encourage excellent attendance and punctuality. Excellent, good, and improving attendance will be celebrated in the termly and End of Year celebration assemblies. Examples of rewards for attendance are the following:

- Certificates and badges for 100% attendance and punctuality on a termly/end of year basis
- Positive Fernwood Award Points for weekly excellent attendance (Perfect Week)
- Fernwood Award Points for improved attendance/punctuality following on from Form Tutor/PTL/HOS report card for attendance/punctuality
- Recognition at future Fernwood Award presentation/celebration evenings/events

## 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, targeted support, Educational Psychologists, School Health, Social Care, Youth Offending Team, police, and CAMHS.

The Head Teacher is responsible for the operational management of the attendance policy and can delegate to members of the Senior Leadership Team. Form Tutors/Pastoral Team Leaders and Heads of School should follow up individual students and analyse attendance data to identify trends for individual students, classes, and year groups enabling The Fernwood School to target efforts and interventions to have maximum impact. Wherever possible, action should be taken by The Fernwood School to improve a student's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to the EWS/Local Authority.

Attendance is monitored within The Fernwood School by:

Head of Lower School/KS3 and Head of Upper School/KS4 who lead the Pastoral Team (Years 7 to 11) and have strategic responsibility for monitoring and improving The Fernwood School attendance together with the Attendance Officer (provides administrative support for attendance, first day contact and communications/queries regarding attendance from parents).

The Fernwood School has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. The Fernwood School staff are committed to working with all students and parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible, to support and secure the best pastoral and academic development and progress of each and every child at The Fernwood School.