



FARNBOROUGH HILL
WHOLEHEARTEDLY

ATTENDANCE POLICY INCLUDING CHILDREN MISSING AND ABSENT FROM EDUCATION POLICY

This policy has been written with the advice contained in the DfE's 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' guidance (September 2022) in mind.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Access Arrangements during External and School Examinations/Assessments and during the School Day
- Admissions Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Learning Support Policy
- Mental Health Policy
- Pandemic Policy
- Pupil Unaccounted for During the School Day Policy
- Rest Break/Rest Breaks During External and School Examinations/ Assessments and During the School Day
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy

Key Facts:

- Regular attendance is vitally important for successful academic achievement and well-being. Government research shows that pupils with the highest attainment at the end of
- High attendance is a central part of the School's vision, values, ethos and day to day life.
- The School will promote high attendance for all, in close liaison with parents and pupils.
- Parents have a duty to ensure regular and punctual school attendance.
- The School will communicate attendance rates to parents.
- The School will work proactively with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance, both in-school and external, by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place in order to improve attendance. Effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with the School's efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources.
- The School will maintain separate attendance and admission registers in keeping with regulations, using DfE national codes and certain additional school codes.
- The School will refer persistent absentees to the local authority for support, such as the Early Help Hub.
- Long-term absence may lead to the School recommending referring to the pupil's LEA Inclusion Services for assistance with access to education.
- During a pandemic, the School follows its *Pandemic Policy* on attendance and Annex I of that policy.

Introduction

It is important that staff, parents and pupils are familiar with the *Attendance Policy* to ensure all children achieve their potential. Good school attendance is a learned behaviour. Regular school attendance creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Missing learning time leaves

children vulnerable to falling behind and it is well-known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement. Children going missing or regularly absent from school is also a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the School, parents and the child.

The legal framework

The Education Act 1996 (updated in September 2016) specifies the legal responsibility of parents of statutory school age children to ensure they attend school. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by regular school attendance or education otherwise such as home education.

The same law requires the School to have an admissions register and an attendance register, and to place all children on both registers. Failure to do so is an offence. Specific details are contained within the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006(c) and referred to as such within the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (England) 2014 (Part 3 s15).

Children missing education who are of compulsory school age are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) later in life. Pupils at risk of harm or neglect may miss education as a result. The School must take action under the School's safeguarding duties under section 157 of the Education Act 2002 and Part 3 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (England) 2014 and Children Missing Education Policy drawn from DfE Guidance 2016, in respect of all pupils. As such, the School must investigate any unexplained absences and follow the local authority children's social care referral procedures accordingly.

Whilst the School believes that every pupil has a right to a full-time education and therefore has high attendance expectations for all pupils, it also acknowledges and accounts for the specific needs of certain pupils and pupil cohorts. This policy will be applied fairly and consistently but in doing so the School will always consider its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It will therefore consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance.

Parental responsibilities

- ensure regular and punctual attendance (attendance is compulsory from 8.45 am – 4.00 pm although the School is open from 7.30 am – 6.00 pm), being fully aware of their legal responsibilities, including ensuring there are no regular patterns of absence eg frequent Monday morning absences.
- ensure that their daughter in their care arrives punctually, prepared for learning
- contact the School every day of their daughter's absence as early as possible and preferably before the start of the School day
- provide clear written reasons for any absence which ensures the School can code the absence properly and accurately and provide medical evidence for reason of absence if this is requested
- avoid making arrangements to remove their daughter from school during term time
- respond helpfully and positively to any enquiry made by the School to ascertain the reason for any absence, including any safeguarding matter
- request authorisation from the Head if any absence is to occur during term time unavoidably, such as to attend a funeral
- return their daughter to school on an agreed date after absence
- ensure that no absence is unauthorised by the School, recognising that deliberate non-attendance for 20 days, that is unauthorised by the School, will be reported to the local authority's department for Children Missing from Education
- recognise that if a pupil is enrolled at school, parents need to let the School know where the pupil is each day and for their whereabouts to be authorised
- pay for any charges that may be incurred if the School makes a referral to the LEA's Education Welfare Office to assist with attendance, and/or to pay for any charges incurred if the School employs any LEA agency to assist with education other than at school, such as Inclusion or Access to Education

- give a term's notice when their daughter will be removed from the School roll, in accordance with the Acceptance Terms and Conditions, and to inform the School about the new school their daughter will be attending, including the start date

School Responsibilities

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence (attendance below 90%)
- ensure every pupil has high levels of attendance so they can access the education they are entitled to
- act early to address patterns of absence
- encourage parents to ensure their daughter attends all learning opportunities regularly and punctually
- keep accurate and efficient records of attendance and registration at school including attendance at all after school and before school activities
- to alert Head of Year and School Office if discrepancies in attendance occur from that registered
- the School Office monitors attendance which is analysed termly by the SLT with the School Counsellor, School Nurses and Head of Learning Support

We achieve this in the following ways:

- mark all pupils not present by the designated time, taking account of absence notes
- follow up absence with a telephone call to the parent if a reason has not been provided
- monitor attendance and lateness and take appropriate action
- specifically monitor any persistent absence (individual attendance below 90%)
- use the DfE national and other school-based codes to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations, including preservation of the entries on both the admission and attendance register for a period of three years after it was made
- only the Head or a member of staff acting on her behalf can authorise absence, other than short-term absence eg medical appointments
- discuss with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Head of Learning Support as appropriate to identify girls causing concern, including engaging children and parents regarding any unsatisfactory attendance
- In communicating with parents about unsatisfactory attendance, the School will discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing; it will also challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like
- implement any agreed improvement strategies such as referral to the Local Authority attendance services and/or children's social care in accordance with the *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* and procedures
- provide parents with the timings of the School day and the calendar via the School website and any other usual method such as the School newsletter – Weekly F'Hill, in advance.
- implement an Attendance Lead (Administrators working in the School Office) to ensure that there is a clear pathway during five weeks of non-attendance occurring, to establish the cause, monitor reintegration and to have a stepped approach with involvement of relevant personnel involved in assisting a return to school.
- the Deputy Head – Pastoral, who is the School's designated senior leader with overall responsibility for attendance, monitors and evaluates attendance expectations and processes, has oversight of data analysis and is responsible for communicating clear messages to pupils and parents about the importance of high attendance
- no pupil may abstain from registration if on the School premises. If an alternative arrangement is made, this must be agreed with the Head of Year and SLT

Significant Levels of Absence

If a pupil has a significant level of absence (see the 'Maintaining records and reporting to the authorities' section below), then the School has a clear system in place to monitor and work to achieve a full return to school through a planned reintegration programme.

However, if for any reason the agreed plan has not been able to be followed, or if the matter is complex, then the School escalates this matter to the Head of Learning Support and the Head. Actions that may be taken include:

- The Head reserves the right to determine if, in the pupil's best interest, transfer to the next academic year is not suitable. This will depend on the number of absences that may have occurred during an academic school year. Where the percentage of absence is very high, this may lead to a repeating of a school year being recommended.
- The Head reserves the right to determine, if absences from school are high so that objectives of GCSE or A level curriculum specifications have not been covered to meet the JCQ regulations, that a pupil is not entered for that qualification. There may also be a recommendation, in the pupil's best interest, to take fewer qualifications in a particular academic year.
- Where a reduced timetable may be agreed, this is for a finite period leading to reintegration and must be agreed by the Head that it is in the best interest of the pupil. Evidence must be provided by a specialist in either health or psychiatry that a reduced curriculum or timetable is recommended, and for how long this should be. It is the case that all pupils are expected to receive full time education up until the end of the Upper Sixth. Any reduction of attendance is very rare and with a substantial medical or psychiatric recommendation. A diagnosis of a special educational need is not grounds for a reduction in attendance at school nor exemption from registration. Schools adjust their teaching to accommodate SEN diagnoses.
- If, following an agreed reintegration timetable, a pupil still does not attend school, the school will apply to the LEA for assistance in inclusion education, and may also refer the case to local agencies to seek help locally for the family, such as MASH.
- In exceptional circumstances where support is not successful, not engaged with or in some cases, not appropriate, legal advice may be sought by the School.
- It is important that the School continues to have sight of a child on its educational roll. If absence has been for more than fifteen continuous days, then a home visit will be requested to see parents and the pupil both together and also separately.
- If there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance) support will be intensified through statutory children's social care involvement.
- Where a parent has expressed their intention to remove a child from the School with a view to educating at home, the School will work with the Local Authority and other key professionals to co-ordinate a meeting the parent(s) where possible. Ideally, this will take place before a final decision has been made, to ensure the parent(s) has considered what is in the best interests of the child. This is particularly important where a child has special educational needs or a disability, and/or has a social worker, and/or is otherwise vulnerable. Where a child has an Education, Health and Care plan the School will check that the Local Authority reviews the plan, working closely with parents and carers.

Farnborough Hill's Attendance Registration Systems

Pupils are officially registered twice a day by their Form Tutor at 8.45 am and their class teacher at 2.05 pm. An electronic system is employed (iSAMS).

Pupils are also registered electronically on iSAMS by class teachers at the beginning of each lesson.

When pupils are not in school and the School has not been informed by electronic absence forms, letter, email or telephone call by 9.15 am the Absences will contact parents by telephone between 9.15 am and 9.45 am. Where reasonably possible, the School holds at least two emergency contact numbers for each pupil. This gives the School additional options to make contact with a responsible adult if a pupil is absent without the School being made aware.

- Pupils arriving late to school should report to the School Office to be registered.
- The School Office will use the information to produce a School Register. This will record those that were absent and also those pupils that were present using the categories below.
- A copy of the list of absentees is kept in the School Office.
- Letters/emails informing the School of expected future absences should be kept on file by the School Office for at least one school year.
- If pupils are present during registration, but are going out of school any time afterwards, they are still marked as present. Lists of pupils on trips and sporting fixtures are always kept in the School Office.
- Teaching staff should register pupils electronically in lessons. If an unauthorised absence is suspected the School Office should be alerted (see *Pupil Unaccounted for During the School Day Policy*).

- Any electronic absence forms, letters and emails explaining pupils' absences after the event should be sent to the School Office. The School Office will amend the register and keep correspondence on file for at least one school year.

Registration categories

Register Mark	Description
/	Present – am
\	Present – pm
#	School Closed to Pupils
A	Appointment (eg doctors/dentists)
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (eg School Nurse has sent pupil home, she has official permission to leave or to be away for another reason, etc)
D	Dual Registered (at another educational establishment)
E	Excluded
G	Holiday not authorised or in excess of the period determined by the School
H	Family Holiday (Agreed)
I	Interview
L	Late with a good reason
N	Late with no good reason
M	Medical Treatment (eg in hospital stay NOT for dentist/doctor/orthodontist appointments)
O	Absent
R	Religious Observance
S	Study Leave (public examinations) or Study Period
U	Unauthorised Absence
V	Educational Visit, Trip or School Supervised Sporting Activity
W	Work Experience
Z	Attending approved activity in school

Additional information on absence

Sixth Form – when granted permission for agreed free periods of time in the School week, sixth formers may leave the School premises, signing out and back in at the School Office.

Authorised Absence – An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the School has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a pupil has been unwell and the parents complete an electronic absence form, telephone or write a note to the School to explain the absence. Only the School can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a pupil out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised Absence – An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without the permission of both the School and a parent.

Online Learning

In the event of a school buildings closure, learning will take place online using Microsoft Teams for communications and OneNote/Firefly as the primary means of sharing resources and work between pupils and staff.

Maintaining records and reporting to the authorities

If no reason for absence is first entered, this is later corrected (ideally within two weeks) to the appropriate symbol, (only in this case is overwriting allowable). It is the responsibility of the School Office to update the register.

The School's attendance register is backed up electronically on a daily basis. The register is retained for six years after the end of the School year.

Farnborough Hill as an independent school is not normally required to return absence data to the DfE. However, Farnborough Hill, as part of its membership of ISC, takes part in its organisation's annual census.

Local authorities have a legal responsibility to identify children of compulsory school age who are not in education. Schools must notify their local authority when they remove or add a pupil's name to the Admissions Register at non-standard transitions. Farnborough Hill will inform Hampshire County Council of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the Admissions Register where the following apply:

- The new school is named on a School Attendance Order OR a School Attendance Order has been revoked OR suitable arrangements have been made for education other than at school.
- A child will be registered at another school (and will not be dual registered at this school).
- A child is not attending and another school agrees that she should be removed from this school's register. (Child has not died or been Permanently Excluded.)
- A parent has written to confirm education otherwise than in school (there is no School Attendance Order).
- A child is not attending and no longer residing within a reasonable distance from the School that would allow for daily attendance.
- A child has not returned in ten school days after leave of absence was allowed PROVIDED the School does not have reasonable grounds to believe the child is prevented from attending (illness or other reasonable cause) AND the School and the LA have failed to identify where the child is after making reasonable enquiries.
- After an unauthorised absence for 20 continuous school days PROVIDED the School does not have reasonable grounds to believe the child is prevented from attending (illness or other reasonable cause) AND the School and the LA have failed to identify where the child is after making reasonable enquiries.

- A child is detained (by a court or order of recall by a court or the Secretary of State) for not less than four months, PROVIDED the School does not have reasonable grounds to believe the child will return to the School at the end of the detention.
- A child has died.
- A child will no longer be of statutory school age before school meets again AND EITHER child or parent has indicated the child will no longer attend the School OR the child has not met academic entry requirements for the School's Sixth Form.
- A child has ceased to be a pupil of the School.
- A child has been permanently excluded from the School.

The School will therefore inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the School's permission for a continuous period of 20 school days or more.

Staff who have concerns about a pupil regularly missing school and who may be aware of individual triggers such as travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage must inform the DSL immediately. If a teacher believes that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out, the teacher is required to report this to the police in line with their mandatory reporting requirements.

School registers are checked regularly by the Deputy Head - Pastoral for any concerns or patterns of non-attendance. Any falsification as to an absence of a pupil will be reported to the authorities by the School.

The Deputy Head - Pastoral in conjunction with the Head of Learning Support and Head of Year will investigate any concerns.

The School may refer persistent absenteeism to the local authority for support and may also inform the appropriate LEA, if a child needs to be registered as a Child Missing Education and/or the Educational Welfare Officer needs to be informed.

The School operates a stepped approach of liaising with parents when attendance is low. A letter asking for more details may suffice when a return to school date is agreed, and more involvement with the pastoral team or SLT, together with the Head of Learning Support and/or the School Nurses may be implemented. The goal always is to aim for full attendance at school.

When a pupil is absent because of medical (physical or psychological) reasons, there may be a consultant's diagnosis to verify this, preferably also with recommendations for the School about the amount of attendance possible, or not, and whether work should or should not be undertaken. It is not sufficient to give such reasons of possible absence as, for example, 'anxiety', 'depression' or 'eating disorder', without a diagnosis. The School may ask for the LEA Inclusion Services to be engaged if there is to be a long absence. There may be a fee for this additional service if the pupil remains on roll.

The School asks for liaison with external therapists and consultants – whether those arranged via the NHS or who have been privately engaged by parents.

It is the School's intent that when there is extended absence, to "have had sight of the child", unless their whereabouts are verified by another agency, such as hospital personnel. If "sight of the child" is required, this may be arranged with a visit by pastoral staff to the pupil's home for a welfare check. The School insists that during a welfare check, the child is seen privately by the pastoral staff from the School visiting the home.

No pupil enrolled at the School, may also be enrolled at another school without the knowledge and agreement of Farnborough Hill. In such a case, as when a pupil may be in hospital for a residential clinic to assist them, there would be an agreement with the other school and an agreed dual attendance would be maintained by both schools. Enrolling a pupil at Farnborough Hill and not informing another school where a child may have attended is strictly forbidden. At all times, the registration must reflect the school at which a child has enrolled and is officially attending. The School reserves the right to contact the Head of another school if it is found that two registrations have taken place, and to pursue the matter legally if necessary.

The School aims to reintegrate pupils who have had extended absence, and any phased return is to be arranged with the Heads of Pastoral, Academic and Learning Support in conjunction with the School Nurses'

team. Reasonable adjustments and individual healthcare plans will be put in place where appropriate. A phased return to school is not expected to be over more than a week, unless a consultant recommends a longer strategy. If, following a phased return, a pupil is unable to return to school, then consideration must be made about involvement with Inclusion Services at the LEA if they are not already engaged. This may incur a fee if a pupil remains on roll.

Any plans for a phased return must be validated, as a recommendation, in writing at consultant-level, as a recommendation, before the School will confirm the date of the phased return, to ensure the pupil is fit and well to do so. The School Nurses, or Deputy Head – Pastoral, may ask for updates on a pupil's medical or psychological condition on return to school.

Long-term absences may be recommended for referral to the LEA Inclusion Services and/or the Early Help Hub.

When a pupil is ill and absent, it is expected that school work will not be provided. In some cases, such as with anorexia nervosa, it can be detrimental to the pupil, to engage in school work since their focus needs to be on eating and getting well and school work is a distraction. The School Inclusion Services would advise as to the work that can be carried out. The School will work with the Inclusion Services if a pupil remains on roll, even though unable to attend school. This would mean that a pupil is dual registered.

Dual registration also occurs if a pupil is registered at Farnborough Hill but is being educated at hospital or a specialist clinic with an educational team attached.

On return to school, following absence, the Deputy Head – Academic, together with the Head of Learning support and the Head of Year, as well as School Nurses, will plan with parents the programme that can be followed and managed by the pupil, depending on the work that has been missed. The Head may also be involved in this decision-making if the programme of study needs to be more radical than reducing the number of subjects to be taken in school examinations, such as re-sitting an academic year if one has been largely missed.

If a pupil is de-registered but parents still require the services of the Inclusion Team at their LEA, they would need to take advice about options available from their LEA with regard to ensuring their daughter is registered with the authority.

This policy is reviewed and updated annually by the Head, Deputy Head - Pastoral and Head of Learning Support.

The next review is due in September 2024.

Annex I: Attendance matters during a pandemic

Attendance Expectations

During any pandemic, the School will follow government guidance related to attendance, including all updates as they are published. It will be the parents' responsibility to ensure that their child attends regularly (this applies to both physical attendance and also online attendance, as directed and advised by government guidance). The School will record this attendance, and follow up any absence, according to its procedures. The School will also complete an online daily or weekly educational setting status return when required by the DfE.

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

In some cases, the School may be advised by the government to close its buildings and move to online teaching, with pupils learning from home. When this guidance is relaxed or ceases altogether, the School will again follow government guidance on the return of pupils to school. A very small number of pupils may still be unable to attend face-to-face school in line with public health advice for a number of reasons, such as being advised to shield or because they have contracted the pandemic illness and are required to stay at home and avoid contact with others (self-isolate). The School will follow government guidance and on self-isolation. If a pupil is advised to shield by a consultant or clinician and not return to school after online teaching then the School will ask for written confirmation of this to be provided.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, the School will offer them access to online education and will monitor their engagement with this activity.

Pupils and families who are anxious about a return to school

All other pupils must attend school. The School will bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may have been reluctant or anxious about returning and continuing to attend. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically extremely vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from the pandemic illness. If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, the School will discuss these and provide reassurance of the measures they have in place to reduce the risk in school. Once back at school, the Head of Year and Tutors will provide support for the pupil as appropriate.

NB: If pupils choose to absent themselves from school (or their parents keep them at home) for a pandemic-related reason that is not specifically stated in the government guidance as being allowed, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

All other pupils will be expected to attend school as usual. The Attendance Policy will be followed in the case of pupils being absent from school without good reason.

Registration categories during a pandemic

As detailed in the table on Pages 4 and 5, the School uses a range of registration codes to provide information about absence. However, in order to effectively respond to any government request for additional information during a pandemic, an additional set of codes may also be used, as appropriate.