



Lower Farm Academy

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Audience:	Parents/Carers Academy staff and volunteers Local Governing Bodies Trustees
Approved:	
Other related policies:	Safeguarding and Child protection, Home Visits, Health and Safety, Admissions.
Policy owner:	Lower Farm Academy
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At REAch2, our actions and our intentions as school leaders are guided by our Touchstones:

Integrity	We recognise that we lead by example and if we want children to grow up to behave appropriately and with integrity then we must model this behaviour
Responsibility	We act judiciously with sensitivity and care. We don't make excuses, but mindfully answer for actions and continually seek to make improvements
Inclusion	We acknowledge and celebrate that all people are different and can play a role in the REAch2 family whatever their background or learning style
Enjoyment	Providing learning that is relevant, motivating and engaging releases a child's curiosity and fun, so that a task can be tackled and their goals achieved
Inspiration	Inspiration breathes life into our schools. Introducing children to influential experiences of people and place, motivates them to live their lives to the full
Learning	Children and adults will flourish in their learning and through learning discover a future that is worth pursuing
Leadership	REAch2 aspires for high quality leadership by seeking out talent, developing potential and spotting the possible in people as well as the actual

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1. Mission statement

Lower Farm Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils. A key element is a child's attendance at school; only by attending school regularly (96% or more of the time) and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Regular school attendance is a major factor in ensuring that children are safe, achieve well and develop socially, emotionally and behaviourally. Good school attendance prepares children well for their future, preparing them for high school, further education, employment and training, and plays a crucial role in enabling them to become happy, healthy and successful adults. High achievement depends on good attendance. Children who miss out on lessons are vulnerable to falling behind and statistics show that children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

Attendance	Description	Approx. days lost per year	Approx. weeks lost per year
99-100%	Excellent	0-4	Less than 1
96-98%	Good	5-9	1-2
95-96%	Satisfactory	10-13	2-3
90-94%	Unsatisfactory	14-18	3-4
Below 90%	Persistent Absence	More than 19	More than 4

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and all members of the Governing body – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this. The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community know of the policy and have access to it.

2. Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

- The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable
 - a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
 - b) to any special educational needs, they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A person begins to be of compulsory school age
 - a) when they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
 - b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.
- A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year.
 - a) if they attain the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,

- b) if they attain that age on that day, or
- c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following their attaining that age.

Lower Farm Academy is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance and punctuality policy accordingly.

3. Roles and responsibilities

School responsibilities

All staff at Lower Farm Academy have a key role to play in the safeguarding of children and in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance. All staff will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will be delegated to take the school's strategic lead on attendance and will be responsible for overseeing, directing and coordinating the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance. They will ensure that the school's Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school and will be responsible for analysing attendance data. They will also be responsible for reporting on attendance to the Senior Leadership Team and governing body.

The Family Liaison Support Worker will be responsible for attendance on a day-to-day basis and will provide support to any pupils whose attendance drops below 96%. They will be responsible for liaising with the Class Teacher and will contact the parents/carers to discuss the child's attendance and offer support when needed. They will collate attendance data and provides this along with information on the impacts of the school's actions to improve attendance to the Attendance Strategic Lead on a regular basis.

A dedicated member of the admin team is responsible for maintaining the electronic registers, signs children in who arrive late, carries out first day calling and, produce and send letter to parents and carers, as directed by Family Liaison Support Worker.

Governors' responsibilities

The Governing Body will make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the practices of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

Parents'/carers' responsibilities

Parents/carers are required by law to ensure that their children receive an appropriate and fulltime education.

Lower Farm Academy expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly (96% or more) and on time
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school
- parents will also be expected to:

- notify school on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence, unless medical evidence is provided which defines the necessary length of absence.
- provide specific medical evidence for absences when attendance falls below 96%

Pupils' responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality and ensure they attend the school regularly (96% or more) and on time. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly or are causing them to arrive at school late, they should speak to their class teacher, a member of the pastoral team or the attendance lead.

4. Registration

Class Registers

Class registers are recorded using the Management Information System (MIS). The system ensures that no children are missed and that pupil information can be shared quickly and securely. Registers are the only way of recording pupil attendance and must be completed accurately. This is the responsibility of whichever member of staff has been directed to take the register for that session.

Morning registration

In the morning the registers will be taken at **9:00am** children who arrive after this time will need to report to reception and sign in as late (L). The registers will close at 9:30am across the school, anyone who arrives after this time will be marked as unauthorised (U) unless a reason is provided that the school deems to be acceptable.

Afternoon registration

Registers must be submitted straight after lunch at 13:00 before afternoon lessons commence.

5. Categorising absence

Any child who is not present during registration will be marked as absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher or other designated staff. Parents/carers cannot authorise absences and should be aware that while calling the school or providing a note for an absence complies with safeguarding procedures, it does not automatically mean an absence will be authorised.

Lower Farm Academy recognises the clear links between attendance and achievement, and attendance and the safeguarding of children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence. If absence is frequent or continuous we will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their children's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 1 week, the absence will remain unauthorised.

Authorised Absence

Absences may be authorised by the Headteacher or other designated staff in the following circumstances:

- Leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example:
 - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority
 - a pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion – in authorising such an absence, the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered
 - An application must be made in writing on the prescribed form (Appendix 1), with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended circumstance wherever possible. Amendments have been made to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. From 1st September 2013 Term-time absence will NOT be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- The pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should endeavour to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand)
- There is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's / student's parent belongs
- The pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the pupil / student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months
- In other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a close family bereavement) and for a very limited period
- The school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend.

Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

Religious observance

Lower Farm Academy recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends and will allow authorised absence for these times. Parent/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

Unauthorised absence

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation
- the pupil is staying at home to mind the house

- Staying at home to care for a sick or disabled parent / carer / family member.
- the pupil is shopping during school hours
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday
- the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday
- the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence
- the parent / carer has medical appointment

Persistent absence

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

Term-time absence

The Headteacher will consider each application individually. An application must be made in writing on the prescribed form (Appendix 1), with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended circumstance wherever possible. Lower Farm Academy will only consider authorising leave of absence for the following:

- death of parent/carers or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- parent/carers recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)

Early Years Expectations

As attendance for children under 5 years of age is not statutory, there is not the same recourse to legal sanctions. However, the early years are a critical time to establish the good habits and routines needed throughout life and to get the key messages about the importance of attendance and punctuality at nursery and school across to parents and carers.

Regular attendance has a positive impact on all aspects of a young child's learning and development. A regular routine supports the young child to feel settled and secure. Unsettled children have higher stress levels which, in turn, prevent them from being able to benefit fully from the learning opportunities available.

Families should know that good attendance and being punctual are expected when their child takes up a place. As attendance is an issue that affects all age groups, there needs to be as much consistency as possible between early years and school settings. This includes expectations around holidays, which for school-aged children are not permissible in term time.

6. Collection and analysis of data

The school uses the MIS to keep an electronic record of attendance.

The Attendance Strategic Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team on a weekly basis, and to parents and the Governing body as appropriate. The report should include commentary on the progress towards achieving the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored by individual children, year group, tutor group and by reasons of absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance. This data is used to identify where intervention and support is required to improve attendance (See appendix 2 & 3).

Accurate attendance returns are made to the Department of Education (DfE) within the stipulated time frame.

7. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance / punctuality

First-day calling

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carer, a first day absence call will be made. The admin staff use the following system:

- Phone parents' contact number(s).
- Repeat this during the first morning of absence if no response.
- Phone emergency contact number(s) to get an up-to-date contact number for the parent/carer and update the school system accordingly.
- SLT to speak to the parents at home time if they are at school to pick up other children.
- Speak to the parents face-to-face or by phone the next day and establish reasons for absence and update contact numbers.
- The parent/carer is asked to provide a reason as to why the child is not in school. The absence reason is recorded next to the child's name on Integris
- When no contact has been established the school will consider conducting a home visit or request a safe and well check from the police, if the absence is unusual or school has concerns regarding the child's welfare. This may also result in a referral to Essex Children Services.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will routinely share a list of vulnerable children with the office, the admin team will notify the DSL immediately if a child on that list is not in school, on the first day of absence, and each subsequent day.

Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 09:00 every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked as absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building.

Pupils arriving late should report to the School Office on arrival with their parent/carer who must sign

them in and provide an explanation for the late arrival. It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure. For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment) or returning to school later in the day sign out and provide a reason for leaving early. On his/her subsequent return to school, they must sign in again to say that they have returned.

Breakfast Club

Daily Breakfast Club is available to all children. This supports parents by allowing them to drop their children off from 08.00 ensuring they are on time for school. Places need to be booked in advance via the school office. The club is supervised by members of school staff.

Profile and Rewards

Attendance has a high profile Lower Farm Academy and is regularly discussed during assemblies and in classes. Parents are regularly reminded about the importance of good attendance and its links to achievement. A trophy is awarded each week to the class which has the best attendance for the week. Pupils who have 100% attendance over a term are rewarded and parents/carers are notified of their achievement. There will also be an organised celebration for pupils with 100% attendance at the end of the academic year.

Staff training

The School Business Manager will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

8. School Strategies to Tackle Absence

The Attendance Leader is responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that Lower Farm Academy intervene in non-attendance at an early stage. The Attendance Leader meets with the Head Teacher on a weekly basis to review any pupils where attendance concerns exist and to monitor the impacts of any actions taken. Our policy states that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, or designated member of staff (see authorised absence), irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed form provided by the school. Where a parent removes a child when the application for term time leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by the school.

Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's absence or if staff are particularly concerned, the school will contact the parents to discuss reasons for the absences with them. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them. If the pattern persists a Penalty Notice referral may be issued where there is no improvement seen.

Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders them vulnerable to harm. Lower Farm Academy takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without

authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately; failing this the police will be contacted and informed. Any child who leaves the school without authorisation will be dealt with according to the school's behaviour policy.

Referral to the Child Missing Education (CME) Service

Where a pupil is failing to attend school for 5 consecutive days and contact cannot be made with the parents, a child missing in education form will be completed and sent to the Child Missing in Education officer (Attendance Compliance Service).

Threshold	Intervention	By whom
97-100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily and weekly monitoring takes place (first day calling and weekly attendance figures). Assembly is used to share and celebrate attendance figures with pupils. Letter 1 sent out to any parents who cannot be contacted re: pupil's first day absence from school. Consider home visit if welfare/safeguarding concerns are present. Annual awards for pupils that meet and exceed the school's attendance target of 96%. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class teacher encourages/monitors attendance Admin Team Family Support Worker SLT
Below 96% (Preventative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If attendance dips below 96% and is either unauthorised or the reasons provided are questionable, a letter (letter 2) informing parents of this is sent out, requesting an initial meeting with the Class teacher/ Family Support Worker. Three-week period of monitoring takes place where an insufficient reason for absence is provided (unauthorised). Follow up with the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class teacher Admin Team Family Support Worker SLT
90-95%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If attendance continues to drop, a letter informing parents of this is sent out, requesting a meeting with the Family Support Worker/SLT. Four-week period of monitoring takes place. Other interventions to be considered here as appropriate. Follow up with the family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class teacher (to be kept informed) Admin Team Family Support Worker SLT
90% and below	<p>PA threshold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with the Headteacher to discuss and agree on a plan of action. Four-week period of monitoring takes place. Follow up with the family. Where there is no improvement, then a referral to the Local Authority for statutory action should be considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class teacher (to be kept informed) Admin Team Family Support Worker SLT Headteacher

Flow Chart for Attendance Letters/Interventions

