



# Fleet Primary School

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## Attendance Policy – September 2020

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We aim for an environment, which enables and encourages all members of the school community to strive for excellence and enjoyment in education. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually.

At Fleet Primary School our objectives are to develop an ethos, which demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for effective learning and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

### Why Regular Attendance is important:

#### 1. Learning

We know from experience and from studies, that regular absence and poor punctuality can have a detrimental effect on a child's learning. When a pupil is absent or arrives late it disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning not only of that pupil but also that of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a penalty notice or prosecution.

#### 2. Safeguarding

At Fleet Primary School, we believe every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places your child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses:

Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, FGM and CSE.

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

In order to allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

It is also important for parents to let school know of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances. If you are uncertain about what would be considered a vulnerability please speak with the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

#### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Provide parents / carers with details on attendance in the school Newsletter;
- Report to parents and governors at least half-termly on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events;
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

### **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 after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

### **Authorised Absence**

An authorised absence is where the school has either given permission in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered is accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical appointments (appointments should be made outside school times where possible)
- Unavoidable cause (which is expected to be an emergency and unavoidable)
- Days of religious observance
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment

### **Unauthorised Absences**

An unauthorised absence is where either no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school.

This includes:

- Parents / Carers keeping children off school to assist with translation
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a late mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

If an absence is recorded as unauthorised the school may refer this to the Local Authority's Education Service. The Local Authority can use various sanctions to promote regular attendance such as issuing a Penalty Notice Fine or initiate court proceedings.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes it can be that they are reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

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

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that level is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the LA.

If your child has or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence, you 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, medicine packaging or hospital letter. Where we have concerns about your child's health, we may ask for your permission to contact your GP.

### **Absence Procedures**

#### **If your child is absent, you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and give an expected return date. You need to call at least every 2<sup>nd</sup> day thereafter to advise school of your child's progress.
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Alternatively, you can call into school and report to reception, who may arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

#### **If your child is absent, we will:**

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Class Teacher/ Head Teacher if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Pupil Attendance Service (PAS) for legal proceedings if attendance moves below 95% and at least 10% of absences are unauthorised.

### **6. Family Contact Details**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have current telephone number / email contact – if we do not then something important may be missed. This is especially important for your child's health and safety. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year. You are also asked to provide two other contacts in case of emergency where we are unable to contact you. Please ensure you have downloaded the 'Parent Hub' App to your phone. All letters and messages will be sent home using this. You need to ensure that notifications are set to on for this App so you will be alerted when new messages are sent. Ask in the office if you need support with this.

#### **The School Attendance Officer (SAO)**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems affecting or likely to affect attendance together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may refer the child to the PAS. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. They may also apply for an Education Supervision Order through the Family Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or from Camden Council PAS.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact PAS themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or via 0207 974 1653.

## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information / instructions and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and it can be embarrassing for the child. This can encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness**

*(Please see Covid-19 Addendum for adjustments during the Covid-19 Pandemic)*

The school day starts at **9am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. We operate a soft start meaning they can be in the playground from **8.30am**. The classroom will open at **8.45am** and children and adults can then go up to see the class teacher from that time. **ALL** children need to be in class and ready to start the day by **9am**.

Registers are marked by **9.05am** and your child will receive a 'late' mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.15am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time, they will receive an unauthorised absence mark that shows them to be on site but **not** counted as a present for statistical / legal purposes. This means that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Exceptional Leave in Term Time**

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time.

Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any monetary savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. Previous good attendance or your child's education ability are not considered when the school make the decision. If you have siblings at other schools you must seek permission from all the schools and it is possible that one school may grant it and another may not.

All applications for a leave of absence must be made in advance to the Head Teacher and will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances. In making a decision, the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. If exceptional leave is agreed you will receive a letter from the school. If you do not get a letter **DO NOT** assume that permission has been granted. Only the Head Teacher can decide if they will grant exceptional leave – no one else in school has permission to do so and leaving an application form is not permission to take leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Your child's school place may also be at risk.

### **School Targets and Initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school on the Attendance board and you should take time to study them.

We have set a whole school attendance target of **96%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the country.

Throughout the school year, we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Newsletter and we ask for your full support.

### **People responsible for attendance matters at Fleet Primary School**

Head teacher and Attendance Lead: Don M<sup>c</sup>Gibbon

Governor: Oonagh Pierce

School Attendance Admin Officer: Lisa Tan

### **Summary**

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

**Head Teacher: Don M<sup>c</sup>Gibbon**

**Chair of Governors Signature: Kim Issroff**

**Issue Date: September 2020**

**Review: September 2022**



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## Attendance Policy: Covid-19 Addendum – September 2020

### Impact of Covid 19 on our attendance policy.

Government advice on attendance during the pandemic is subject to change at short notice. Any changes that impact on our policy and or Local authority legal responsibilities will be shown on our website and via school newsletters.

Our current changes as of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 are:

### Staggered Start and Finish Times

We are operating staggered start and finish times to ensure different classes can be kept separate as well as reducing congestion and the number of adults on site at any one time. We are also using different entrances and exits to the school site depending on the class a child is in.

The table below shows the entrances, as well as start and finish time for each class. The start time shown in when the child is expected to be at the school ready to go straight upto class (during the Covid-19 pandemic we are not operating a soft start). The register will be taken 5 minutes after that time and the register will close 15 minutes after it. As in usual circumstances if your child arrives after that time, they will receive an unauthorised absence mark that shows them to be on site but **not** counted as a present for statistical / legal purposes. This means that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Class	Start Time	Finish Time	Entrance to use
Year 6	8.45am	3.15pm	Car Park – Junior Playground
Year 5	9.15am	3.45pm	Car Park – Junior Playground
Year 4	9am	3.30pm	Car Park – Junior Playground
Year 3	9.15am	3.45pm	Main Gate
Year 2	9am	3.30pm	Car Park - Nursery Gate
Year 1	8.45am	3.15pm	Main Gate
Reception	9am	3.30pm	Main Gate
Nursery	9.15am	3.20pm	Car Park - Nursery Gate

### Absence for Illness During Covid-19 Pandemic

In this time of Covid-19 it is important that everyone knows what to do should your child, or anyone in your house become ill.

The indicator symptoms of Covid-19 are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back. A temperature above 38C is normally considered to be high.
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

### **What to do if my child or someone in my house is ill?**

In the case of a cold, sniffle, sore tummy etc. or other symptom that is **NOT** one of the 3 symptoms associated with Covid-19 children would only need to stay off school for the period their illness means they are too unwell to be in school. Any siblings, if not ill, are able to come to school as normal.

If your child, or any member of the household exhibits **ANY** of those 3 symptoms then you must go online and arrange a test for them. That child or person should self isolate for 10 days and their siblings and other members of the household for 14 days, until there is **EITHER**:

A negative test result

**OR**

A doctor's note explaining that the symptom is not COVID-19 (e.g. the cough is not a "new" cough – i.e. is typical of a individual's pre-existing health condition)

If you have only been told by 111 that they do not need to get tested but the individual with symptoms had one of the three COVID symptoms, then we will request a GP note to confirm this information before we will consider the child or any siblings returning. This is in line with the advice we have received from the local authority.

**It is really important that anyone with symptoms is tested within 5 days.** If the person is not tested within 5 days of symptoms first exhibiting then the whole household is required to self-isolate for 14 days. That is a lot of school for the children to miss and having a test can really minimise that.

If a negative test comes back children will be able to return to school and not have to miss 2 weeks of school.

In the case of a positive test in your household all children in the family home—whether they have symptoms or not would stay off school. If the test is positive you must let us know straight away so we can discuss with public health and determine if we need to isolate the class the child is in and move to online learning for 14 days.

In the case of children having to self-isolate and stay off school we will provide work for them to do at home. There is an expectation that, if they are well enough, this work will be completed and sent in to school (either when they return or via email).

If you are unsure you can phone the office for advice or call 111. To arrange a Covid-19 test go to: [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test)

We will work closely with the Pupil Attendance Service (PAS) and other Camden and health support agencies to ensure that children are able to access education.

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school and the impact of Covid 19 please speak to the school office who will consult with the Head Teacher so we can look at what additional measures or support can be put in place.