



FIRST BASE ATTENDANCE POLICY

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 First Base is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and Management Committee – 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.
- 1.3 The policy has been drawn up after consultation with the whole community and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. First Base will ensure that all members of the committee know of the policy and have access to it.

2. School's roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at First Base have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and 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.
- 2.2 Attendance Leader
The Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the Management Committee termly. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.
- 2.3 Registration
 - i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown overleaf).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

- ii) The register will be called promptly at **9.30 am** and **1.15 pm** by each teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.
- iii) The registers will close at **9.45 am** and **1.30 pm**. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive before the register closes ie between 9.30 and 9.45 am and 1.15 and 1.30 pm will be counted as **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para 4.5 on page 7).

2.4 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised 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 final decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher.
- ii) First Base recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at First Base will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child'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**.
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised;
- iv) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:
 - (a) where 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 / student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - in **exceptional** circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance. (See the school's policy on term-time holidays at paragraph 5).
 - (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend (School may request medical documentation when a child is frequently absent due to illness).
 - (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged 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;

- (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, eg extreme weather conditions;
 - (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
 - (f) the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
 - (g) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, have reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
 - (h) in other **exceptional circumstances** (eg a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.
- v) 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;
 - the pupil is shopping during school hours;
 - the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, eg a birthday;
 - the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
 - 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.

2.5 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.

2.6 Staff Support

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

3. **Collection and analysis of data**

3.1 The Headteacher will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the Management Committee. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

3.2 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

3.3 Data regarding attendance percentages is produced upon request for Education Welfare Officers when they undertake register checks. Pupils with an attendance rate below 85% over a four week period whose absence is mainly unauthorised will be highlighted in the data provided.

4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at First Base and is regularly discussed. Parents are regularly reminded.

4.2 First-day calling

First Base has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. The mainstream school is notified. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will send a letter to them by first class post or if First Base staff are concerned about the child's non-attendance a home visit will be made.

4.3 Meetings with parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence over a 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

4.4 Referral to the Education Attendance Service

If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

4.5 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time 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 (see para. 2.3 (iii) on page 5) will be marked 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. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

4.6 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the office and they will amend the register. **It is important that all pupils arriving late following this procedure.**

4.7 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day report to the office.

5. Term-time Holidays

- 5.1 Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are unable to take holiday at any other time.
- 5.2 First Base will consider every application individually. Its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most **exceptional** circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **four weeks in advance** of the intended holiday,
- 5.3 First Base will consider authorising holidays for:
- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during school holidays;
 - when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
 - parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.
- 5.4 Requests for holidays for the following reason will not be authorised:
- cheaper cost of holiday;
 - availability of the desired accommodation;
 - poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
 - Overlap with beginning or end of term.
- 5.5 First Base will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.
- 5.6 The school applies the penalty notice protocol where a pupil has taken holiday during term time and the absence is not authorised by school.

6. Extended leave of absence

- 6.1 In considering absence for extended trips overseas First Base will take account of the following:
- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
 - such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
 - parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
 - the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved;
 - where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

7. Parents' / carers' responsibilities

7.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by First Base.

7.2 First Base expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- 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.

7.3 Parents will also be expected to:

- notify First Base on the first day of absence;
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. First Base will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

8. Pupils' responsibilities

8.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.

8.2 Pupils have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

9. Governors' responsibilities

Section 175 (2)

9.1 The Management Committee of First Base shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

10. Conclusion

10.1 Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring the outcomes of *Every Child Matters*:

Be healthy –

- attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy

Stay safe –

- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly

Enjoy and achieve –

- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings

Make a positive contribution –

- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others

Achieve economic well-being –

- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at **9.30 am** and the afternoon register at **1.15 pm**.

2. What happens if my child is late?

Registration finishes at **9.45 am** in the morning and **1.15 pm** in the afternoon.

If your child arrives after **9.45 am** he/she will be marked **absent**.

If your child arrives after **1.15 pm** he/she will be marked **absent**.

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

(We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence. If you do not phone us, we will phone you. However, we need a written explanation on your child's return to school. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence.)

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental / medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

5. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays or looking after brothers or sisters, etc.

6. Will the School contact me if my child is absent?

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

7. What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. Your child will bring home a home/school First Base book each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and comment in it ready for the next day.

8. My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer. The school may also refer you to an Education Welfare Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise. The Education Attendance Service is based at:

Children and Young People's Services
Adrian House
Alexandra Road
Lowestoft NR32 1PL

Tel. No. 01502 405229