

Attendance Policy

Written by	Rob Andrew, Headteacher
Adopted by governors	March 2026
Review date	September 2027
Applies to	All pupils at Feniscowles Primary School (Reception to Year 6)
Contact	School Office office@feniscowles.blackburn.sch.uk

This policy is published on the school website at www.feniscowlesprimary.com/policies in accordance with the School Information (England) Regulations 2008. A hard copy is available from the school office on request.

1. Aims

At Feniscowles Primary School, we believe that excellent attendance is one of the most powerful factors in a child's educational achievement and wellbeing. Every day in school matters. Research consistently shows that pupils who attend school regularly make greater academic progress, develop stronger social skills, and are better prepared for the next stage of their education.

We are committed to:

- Promoting a whole-school culture that values and celebrates good attendance
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to identify and address patterns of absence before they become entrenched
- Supporting families to overcome barriers to attendance, working with early help and wider services where needed
- Using attendance data proactively to monitor individual pupils and identify vulnerable groups

We also support parents to fulfil their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Why every day matters — across one school year:

Less than 5 days absent = 97% or above (Good attendance)

Around 10 days absent = Approximately 95%

Around 19 days absent = Below 90% — Persistent Absence (PA) threshold

Around 38 days absent = Below 80% — Severe Absence (SA)

A child with 80% attendance misses the equivalent of nearly one full day every single week.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the DfE statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024) and has been written in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. It should be read alongside:

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance – DfE, August 2024 (statutory from 19 August 2024)

- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education Act 1996, Part 6; Education Act 2002, Part 3; Education and Inspections Act 2006, Part 7
- Children Missing Education – DfE statutory guidance
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School – DfE statutory guidance
- Mental Health Issues Affecting a Pupil's School Attendance – DfE guidance, 2023
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – DfE statutory safeguarding guidance
- Attendance Interventions: Rapid Evidence Assessment – Education Endowment Foundation, 2022
- Is My Child Too Ill for School? – NHS guidance

This policy also refers to the DfE National Framework for Penalty Notices (in force from 19 August 2024) and the Local Authority Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for the Borough of Blackburn with Darwen.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Good attendance is everyone's responsibility. The DfE's 2024 statutory guidance is clear that a whole-school culture of high attendance must be led from board level and embedded across all staff, pupils and families.

3.1 The Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Taking an active role in attendance improvement and setting high expectations across the whole school community
- Monitoring attendance data and patterns at least termly, identifying common barriers
- Holding the headteacher to account for implementing this policy and for the school's attendance outcomes
- Ensuring this policy is reviewed and updated in line with DfE guidance

The Curriculum Committee receives termly attendance reports and provides scrutiny of the school's approach.

3.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy and leading a whole-school culture that prioritises attendance
- Monitoring school-level and individual pupil absence data and reporting to governors
- Supporting staff in monitoring attendance and taking early, proportionate action
- Ensuring the school meets near-live data sharing requirements under the 2024 regulations
- Issuing Notices to Improve and requesting penalty notices from the local authority where appropriate
- Ensuring attendance is central to safeguarding practice, including identifying children missing education (CME)

3.3 The Attendance Lead

The designated attendance lead is responsible for:

- Monitoring daily, weekly and termly attendance data at school and individual pupil level
- Reporting concerns to the headteacher and triggering escalation where needed
- Making first contact with families and arranging meetings and home visits where absence is a concern

- Working with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and other external agencies to address persistent absence
- Maintaining accurate and up-to-date records on Arbor

3.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Taking the attendance register accurately at the start of each session using the correct DfE codes
- Noting patterns or changes in a pupil's attendance or punctuality and raising these promptly
- Building positive, inclusive relationships that make school a welcoming and engaging place

3.5 School Office Staff

School office staff are responsible for:

- Receiving and recording calls and messages from parents/carers regarding absence
- Alerting the attendance lead to unexplained or concerning absences
- Maintaining accurate records on Arbor, including contact attempts

3.6 Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring their child attends school every day on time, unless there is a genuine reason for absence
- Contacting the school by telephone on 01254 201054 before 9:30am on the first and every subsequent day of absence
- Applying in advance for any planned absence using the school's Leave of Absence Request Form
- Working in partnership with the school and support services to address barriers to attendance

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 Attendance Register

In accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, Feniscowles Primary School maintains an electronic attendance register on Arbor for all pupils. The register is taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. Each entry records whether a pupil is present, attending an approved off-site activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50am. The morning register is taken at 8:50am and closes at 9:30am. The afternoon register is taken at 1:00pm and closes at 1:15pm.

Any amendment to the attendance register must record: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date; and the name and position of the person making the amendment. All entries are retained for a minimum of three years.

In line with the 2024 regulations, attendance data is shared daily with the DfE, Blackburn with Darwen local authority, and where applicable the academy trust. This near-live data sharing is a statutory requirement from 19 August 2024. See Appendix 1 for the full updated DfE attendance codes.

4.2 Unplanned (Same-Day) Absence

When a child is absent without prior notice, the parent/carer must contact the school by telephone on 01254 201054 before 9:30am on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence.

We will record absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Where doubt exists, the school may request medical evidence such as a doctor's note, prescription or appointment card. We will not request medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified.

4.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised absence provided the school is notified in advance. Where possible, parents/carers should provide a copy of the appointment card. We encourage families to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, pupils should be out of school for the minimum necessary time.

Requests for other types of term-time absence should be submitted as far in advance as possible using the school's Leave of Absence Request Form (available from the school office or website). See Section 5 for the school's approach to authorising term-time leave.

4.4 Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives after the register opens but before it closes will be marked as late (code L). A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent with an unauthorised code (U).

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Where a pupil is regularly late, the attendance lead will make contact with the family to understand the cause and agree a plan. Persistent lateness may result in a meeting with the headteacher. Please contact us as early as possible if you are experiencing difficulties getting your child to school on time.

4.5 Following Up Unexplained Absence

Where a child we expect to attend school does not arrive and no reason has been given, we will:

- Send a notification via the Arbor app or email if no contact has been received by 10:00am
- Attempt telephone contact with the parent/carer and all emergency contacts on record
- Carry out a welfare home visit where contact cannot be made, particularly where there are existing safeguarding concerns
- Refer to the local authority as a child missing in education (CME) if a pupil has been absent for 10 or more consecutive days and cannot be located

This daily follow-up process reflects the DfE's 2024 expectation that all schools have a clear, consistent process for identifying and acting on unexplained absence on the day it occurs.

4.6 Reporting to Parents

Attendance information is formally reported to parents/carers annually. Where there are concerns about a pupil's attendance, families will receive half-termly updates and a copy of their child's attendance record. Parents/carers may request to see their child's attendance data at any time by contacting the school office.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

5.1 Approval for Term-Time Leave

The headteacher may only grant leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances. Leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion and each case is considered individually on its own merits.

The DfE is explicit in its 2024 statutory guidance that 'a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance'. Holidays in term time will not be authorised.

The following types of absence may be authorised:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see Sections 4.2 and 4.3)
- Religious observance — where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes (Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen, Circus people, Bargees and New Travellers) — where agreed with the school
- Leave under code C1 (regulated performance or employment abroad) or C2 (agreed part-time timetable)

To request any planned term-time leave, parents/carers must complete the Leave of Absence Request Form at least four weeks before the planned absence. The school will notify families of its decision in writing.

5.2 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

The DfE defines the following national thresholds:

- Below 95%: Cause for monitoring — the school will contact the family and track attendance closely
- Below 90%: Persistent Absence (PA) — a formal support plan will be agreed with the family; the EWO may be involved
- Below 50%: Severe Absence (SA) — an intensive multi-agency response is required

The EEF's Rapid Evidence Assessment on attendance interventions (2022) identifies targeted parental engagement as a promising strategy — specifically, responsive approaches that seek to understand the individual causes of low attendance rather than applying a generic response. Our approach reflects this, prioritising early, supportive contact with families before any formal or legal action.

Our staged response is:

Stage 1 — Monitoring and First Contact (90–95%):

- The attendance lead contacts the family to discuss the situation and identify barriers
- A letter is sent along with a copy of the child's attendance record
- Attendance is monitored on a weekly basis

Stage 2 — Persistent Absence Support (below 90%):

- Meeting with the attendance lead and/or headteacher to agree a support plan
- Consideration of early help, EWO referral or other external agency involvement
- Specific targets agreed and reviewed regularly
- A Notice to Improve may be issued, setting out the support available and expected improvement

Stage 3 — Escalation:

- Where improvement is not achieved despite support, a penalty notice may be requested from the local authority
- Statutory agencies are involved as needed; in cases of severe absence, a multi-agency response is co-ordinated

Our Education Welfare Officer visits termly to review all pupils at or below 90% attendance. The school also uses personalised attendance letters that cite a pupil's individual data as an early, proportionate intervention — consistent with EEF recommendations.

5.3 Mental Health, SEND and Complex Barriers

The school recognises that some pupils face additional barriers to attendance related to mental health, SEND, long-term medical conditions or other complex circumstances. In line with DfE guidance (Mental Health Issues Affecting a Pupil's School Attendance, 2023), these pupils require a tailored, supportive approach rather than a primarily punitive one.

Where a pupil's non-attendance is believed to be linked to anxiety, mental health difficulties or other complex needs, the school will:

- Seek to understand the underlying cause through sensitive conversation with the pupil and family
- Involve the SENCo, pastoral staff and relevant external agencies (including CAMHS and Early Help)
- Consider an agreed part-time timetable (code C2) where clinically appropriate and properly authorised
- Give appropriate weight to medical evidence from healthcare professionals when determining whether absence should be authorised

The school will not apply formal sanctions to families where absence is clearly linked to a diagnosed medical or mental health condition that has been evidenced appropriately.

5.4 Legal Sanctions

The school and local authority have a range of legal powers available where persistent unauthorised absence continues despite the offer of support.

From 19 August 2024, the National Framework for Penalty Notices applies to all schools in England. The national threshold at which a penalty notice must be considered is 10 sessions (usually 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school-week period. These sessions do not need to be consecutive and can span different terms or school years.

Before a penalty notice is issued for unauthorised absence (other than unauthorised holiday), a Notice to Improve must first be sent to the parent/carer. No Notice to Improve is required before issuing a penalty notice for an unauthorised term-time holiday.

Penalty Notice Amounts (from 19 August 2024 – per parent, per child):

First penalty notice (within a rolling 3-year period):

- £80 if paid within 21 days
- £160 if paid within 28 days

Second penalty notice (same parent, same child, within 3 years):

- £160 (no discounted rate available)

A maximum of two penalty notices may be issued for the same parent and child in any 3-year rolling period. After that, the local authority must consider prosecution. Fines are issued per parent, per child — both parents may receive separate fines.

Non-payment within 28 days may result in prosecution. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2,500 per parent. Convictions may appear on future DBS checks.

6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The most powerful driver of good attendance is a school where every child feels safe, valued, known and included. All our attendance strategies are underpinned by this principle. Drawing on the EEF's evidence-informed themes for supporting attendance, our strategies include:

- Building a holistic understanding of pupils and families: our pastoral and attendance team proactively builds relationships with families, seeking to understand barriers before escalating
- Building a culture of community and belonging: our curriculum, enrichment activities and Feniscowles Way all aim to make school a place where every pupil has a positive identity and feels they belong
- Communicating effectively with families: we use Arbor app notifications, personalised attendance letters citing individual pupil data, text messages and telephone calls
- Improving universal provision: all staff are expected to create classrooms where pupils feel engaged and supported. The Feniscowles Way and our Teaching and Learning priorities directly support this
- Targeted interventions for individual pupils: where universal approaches are insufficient, we provide tailored support including mentoring, nurture-based provision and referrals to CAMHS, Early Help and the EWO
- Monitoring and evaluating impact: attendance data is reviewed weekly by the attendance lead, termly by the headteacher, and reported to governors each term

Individual pupils with high or improved attendance are celebrated through termly attendance awards and recognition at whole-school assemblies.

7. Attendance Monitoring and Data

Attendance data is managed through Arbor. All session-by-session attendance is recorded electronically and shared with the DfE and local authority in line with the 2024 near-live data sharing requirements.

The school uses attendance data to:

- Track attendance of individual pupils on a session-by-session and cumulative basis
- Identify whether particular groups — Pupil Premium, SEND, early help, specific year groups — have attendance patterns requiring intervention
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of support plans and interventions
- Inform headteacher reports to governors and school improvement planning

The attendance thresholds used for monitoring are:

- 97% or above: Good — no concern
- 95–97%: Approaching concern — noted and monitored
- 90–95%: Cause for concern — family contact made, attendance closely tracked
- Below 90%: Persistent Absence — formal support plan agreed, EWO may be involved
- Below 50%: Severe Absence — urgent multi-agency response required

Parents/carers are expected to telephone 01254 201054 before 9:30am on every day of unplanned absence. The school will make contact where no notification has been received by 10:00am.

8. Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed in line with any updated guidance from the DfE or local authority, and as a minimum annually by the headteacher and attendance lead. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board. The governing board monitors compliance and attendance outcomes through termly headteacher reports and the work of the Curriculum Committee.

9. Links with Other Policies

This policy links to:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Complaints Policy

Governing Body Sign-Off	
<p>Headteacher: Rob Andrew</p> <p>Signature: _____ </p>	<p>Chair of Governors:</p> <p>Signature: <i>C Woodhouse</i></p>
<p>Date adopted by governors: March 2026 Next review date: September 2027</p>	

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes (DfE 2024)

The following codes reflect the updated School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, in effect from 19 August 2024. Key changes from previous versions: Code H (authorised holiday) has been removed. New codes C1, C2, J1 and K have been introduced. Y codes have been expanded (Y1–Y7).

Code	Definition	Scenario
Present / Approved Off-Site Activity		
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late (before register closed)	Pupil arrives late but before the register has closed
B	Other approved educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
K	Alternative provision (LA arranged)	Pupil is attending alternative provision arranged by the local authority
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement (secondary only)
Authorised Absence		
C	Leave of absence - exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted leave due to exceptional circumstances
C1	Leave of absence - regulated performance/employment abroad	Pupil has been granted leave to participate in a regulated performance or undertake employment abroad
C2	Leave of absence - part-time timetable	Compulsory school age pupil subject to an agreed part-time timetable
E	Excluded (no alternative provision)	Pupil excluded but no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer or educational establishment
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling as agreed with the school
Unauthorised Absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday not approved by the school
N	Reason not yet provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason — should be changed to O if no reason provided after a reasonable time
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with the reason given for absence
U	Arrival after register closed	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
Administrative / Other Codes		
X	Not required to attend	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y1	Site closure	School site closed due to an unforeseen circumstance
Y2	Transport unavailable	School or LA transport is not available

Y3	Flexi-schooling (at home)	Pupil absent under an agreed flexi-schooling arrangement
Y4	Beyond pupil's control - other	Pupil unable to attend due to other unavoidable cause
Y5	Public health guidance or law	Pupil unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y6	Criminal justice system	Pupil is in custody
Y7	Other unavoidable cause	Any unavoidable cause not covered by other Y codes — nature must also be recorded
Z	Not yet on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure — half-term, bank holiday or INSET day