

Ferring CE Primary School		
Policy:	ATTENDANCE POLICY	
Policy date:	Autumn 2026	
Review date:	Autumn 2027	
Person responsible	Headteacher	

1. Policy statement

Ferring CE Primary School is committed to providing a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment in which every pupil can attend regularly, arrive on time and benefit fully from education. We recognise that attendance is fundamental to pupils' achievement, personal development, wellbeing, safeguarding and wider life chances.

We expect pupils to attend school regularly and punctually. We will work positively and respectfully with pupils, parents and carers to understand and remove barriers to attendance. Where support does not secure improvement, or where absence is unauthorised and legal intervention is appropriate, the school will work with West Sussex County Council in accordance with statutory guidance.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy has been updated for September 2026 and should be read alongside the most current versions of:

- Department for Education (DfE), Working together to improve school attendance – statutory guidance, updated 9 July 2026.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Education Act 1996, including sections 444 and 576.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Children Missing Education – statutory guidance, updated September 2025.
- DfE guidance on communicating with parents about school attendance, updated 19 August 2026.
- DfE guidance on providing remote education.
- Keeping children safe in education 2026, in force from 1 September 2026.
- West Sussex County Council attendance guidance and Fixed Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.
- Ofsted State-funded school inspection toolkit, for inspections from 7 September 2026.

The policy will be reviewed when statutory guidance or local authority arrangements change, rather than relying solely on the annual review date.

3. Our attendance principles

- Every minute in school matters and every pupil should attend regularly and punctually.
- Attendance is everyone's responsibility: pupils, parents/carers, school staff, governors and relevant external partners.
- Attendance difficulties are approached through a support-first ethos. Absence is often a symptom of wider needs or barriers.
- The school will maintain high expectations while making reasonable adjustments and providing appropriate support for pupils who face additional barriers, including pupils

with SEND, long-term physical or mental health needs, children known to social care and young carers.

- Attendance will be promoted positively and consistently across the school, not treated solely as an administrative or enforcement issue.
- Attendance data will be used intelligently to identify patterns, groups and individual pupils requiring support and to evaluate whether interventions are working.
- Safeguarding remains central: unexplained, repeated or concerning absence may indicate that a child is at risk of harm and will be considered through safeguarding procedures.
- The school will work with West Sussex County Council and other agencies where additional or specialist support is required.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Governing Body	Provide strategic oversight and challenge; recognise attendance as a priority; review attendance information and trends; ensure leaders meet statutory duties; and ensure staff receive appropriate training.
Headteacher / Inclusion Lead	Lead the school's attendance strategy; ensure the policy is implemented consistently; oversee attendance analysis and intervention; work with families and external agencies; authorise absence where permitted by law; and ensure appropriate referrals to the Local Authority.
Attendance administration / office team	Maintain accurate electronic registers; follow up unexplained absence promptly; record reasons and attendance codes accurately; maintain communication with families; and provide timely information for monitoring and statutory returns.
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Consider safeguarding implications of absence, particularly unexplained or repeated absence; ensure appropriate referrals and information sharing; and work with the attendance team where absence may indicate neglect, abuse, exploitation or other risk.
SENCO / Inclusion Lead	Work with families and staff to identify and reduce attendance barriers for pupils with SEND or additional needs, including reasonable adjustments and coordinated support.
All staff	Promote good attendance, model punctuality, record registers accurately, notice patterns or changes in attendance and pass concerns promptly to the appropriate leader.
Pupils	Attend regularly, arrive on time, engage positively in school and speak to a trusted

	adult if something is making attendance difficult.
Parents/carers	Ensure their child attends regularly and punctually, notify the school promptly of absence and provide an honest explanation, work with the school to address barriers, and request leave of absence in advance where appropriate.

5. Attendance expectations

Ferring CE Primary School expects pupils to attend every day that the school is open, unless absence is permitted by law or authorised by the school. The school does not set an arbitrary attendance entitlement or treat 90% as an acceptable target. Persistent absence is a national definition used to identify pupils requiring additional support. As a school, we aim for attendance to be at least in line with national averages and to demonstrate an improving trend where it is not. We will not stop striving for improvement simply because attendance reaches the national average.

6. School day, registration and punctuality

- The school day begins at 8:40am. Pupils may enter through the school's soft-start arrangements from 8:25am.
- The morning attendance register is taken at the start of the morning session. For operational purposes, the register opens at 8:40am and closes at 8:50am.
- A pupil arriving after the register opens but before it closes is recorded using code L (late before the register is closed), with the time of arrival recorded.
- A pupil arriving after the register has closed is recorded using code U (arrived in school after registration closed), unless another appropriate code applies.
- The afternoon register is taken once during the afternoon session in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Persistent lateness is treated seriously because it reduces learning time and can be an early indicator of wider attendance difficulties.
- Where lateness becomes a pattern, the school will work with the family to understand the cause, provide support where appropriate and take further action if improvement is not secured.

7. Reporting absence

Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of absence, as early as possible and no later than 9:15am, giving the reason for the absence. Parents may use the school's usual reporting arrangements, including telephone, email or Weduc. The school may request further information where necessary.

- If a child is absent and no reason has been received, the school will make contact with the first named contact as soon as practicable and follow its safeguarding procedures where the child's whereabouts or welfare cannot be established.
- If the first contact cannot be reached, other emergency contacts will be attempted as appropriate.
- The school may request additional information or medical evidence where absence is frequent, prolonged or the reason for absence is unclear. Medical evidence will not be demanded routinely where it is not necessary.

- Where a reason remains unconfirmed, the school will use the appropriate N code initially and ensure that unexplained absence is followed up and resolved promptly in accordance with statutory requirements.

8. Authorising absence

It is the school, not the parent/carers, that determines whether an absence is authorised. The school will only authorise absence where it is permitted by law and the circumstances justify it.

Examples of circumstances that may be authorised include:

- Illness, including physical or mental health-related illness.
- Medical or dental appointments where absence during school time is unavoidable.
- Religious observance, in accordance with statutory guidance.
- Exceptional circumstances agreed by the Headteacher.
- Approved educational activities and school-organised visits.
- Other circumstances for which a specific statutory attendance code applies.

Routine medical and dental appointments should, wherever reasonably possible, be arranged outside school hours. The school will take a proportionate approach where appointments during school time are unavoidable.

9. Leave of absence and term-time holidays

Parents/carers do not have an entitlement to take children out of school during term time for holidays. Leave of absence may only be granted where the circumstances meet the statutory requirements and, for a maintained school, the Headteacher considers that the circumstances are exceptional.

- Requests should be made in advance using the school's leave of absence request process.
- Each request will be considered individually on its circumstances and the information available at the time.
- The child's previous attendance may be relevant to the school's decision, but the school will not apply a blanket rule that automatically prevents leave for a pupil below a particular attendance percentage.
- A request made after the absence has taken place does not have to be considered or authorised.
- Family holidays, birthdays, shopping trips, leisure activities and convenience are not exceptional circumstances.
- Where leave is taken without authorisation, the absence will normally be recorded using the appropriate unauthorised absence code and may be referred to West Sussex County Council for consideration of enforcement.

10. Persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence (PA) is defined nationally as absence of 10% or more of possible sessions. Severe absence (SA) is absence of 50% or more of possible sessions. These definitions are used to identify pupils requiring enhanced attention and support; they are not targets for families.

- The school monitors all pupils who are approaching or meeting the PA threshold and considers the individual circumstances behind the attendance pattern.
- Where appropriate, the school will meet with parents/carers and the pupil to understand barriers and agree an attendance support plan.
- Support may include adjustments in school, pastoral support, SEND support, attendance mentoring, Early Help, health services or other relevant agencies.
- For pupils who are severely absent, the school will work with West Sussex County Council and relevant partners to develop a coordinated plan.
- Where support is not effective, is not engaged with, or is not appropriate, the school may consider formal attendance contracts and/or legal intervention in partnership with the Local Authority.

11. Understanding and removing barriers to attendance

The school will seek to understand the reasons behind absence rather than relying solely on attendance percentages. Attendance is considered alongside safeguarding, SEND, wellbeing, behaviour, family circumstances and educational progress.

- Pupils with SEND may require reasonable adjustments, adaptations or additional support to enable regular attendance.
- Pupils with long-term physical or mental health needs will be supported through appropriate plans and liaison with relevant professionals. The school may seek medical information where necessary to understand need and plan provision, but will not use medical evidence as a barrier to support.
- Young carers will be identified and their attendance monitored alongside their wider needs.
- Children who are known to or previously known to social care will receive close attention to attendance and unexplained absence, with information shared with the social worker where appropriate.
- Where anxiety, relationships, bullying, unmet SEND needs, family circumstances, transport, housing, poverty or other barriers affect attendance, the school will consider what it can change or provide before escalating enforcement.
- The school will use attendance data to identify cohorts and groups whose attendance is lower than their peers and to target improvement activity.

12. Part-time and reduced timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. A temporary part-time timetable will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances and where it is in the pupil's best interests.

- It must not be used as a behaviour management measure or sanction.
- It must be agreed by the school and the parent with whom the pupil normally lives.
- It must have a clear purpose and form part of a wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- It must include regular review dates involving the pupil and parents/carers.
- It must have a proposed end date and be in place for the shortest time necessary.
- Where a pupil has a social worker, the school will keep them informed and involved.
- Where a pupil has an EHCP plan, the school will discuss the arrangement with the Local Authority so that any support package can be reviewed.

- Absence arising from an agreed part-time timetable will be recorded using the appropriate statutory code, normally C2.

13. Remote education

Remote education is not an alternative attendance option for pupils who are able to attend school. Where a pupil is absent from school, the pupil remains absent in the attendance register even if the school provides remote learning.

In limited circumstances, remote education may be provided to support continuity of learning for a pupil who is well enough to learn but temporarily unable to attend the school site, including as part of a planned reintegration arrangement. Any such provision will be proportionate, reviewed regularly and designed to support a return to appropriate in-person education wherever possible.

14. Safeguarding and children absent from education

Absence can be a safeguarding indicator. The school will maintain effective first-day response arrangements and will escalate concerns where the child's whereabouts, welfare or circumstances are unclear or concerning.

- Unexplained absence will be followed up promptly.
- Repeated unexplained absence, sudden changes in attendance, or patterns suggesting a pupil may be at risk will be discussed with the DSL.
- Where appropriate, the school may contact other schools where siblings are believed to attend, undertake or request a home visit, seek advice from West Sussex County Council, or make a safeguarding referral.
- For pupils with a social worker, unexplained absence will be communicated to the social worker in accordance with statutory expectations.
- Where a pupil leaves the school and their destination cannot be established, the school will follow Children Missing Education procedures and liaise with West Sussex County Council.
- Where a pupil is removed from the admission register, the school will follow the statutory grounds and notification requirements.

15. Attendance support and intervention pathway

1. Universal promotion – clear expectations, positive relationships, punctuality routines, regular communication and celebration of good attendance.
2. Early identification – daily monitoring and regular analysis identify pupils whose attendance is declining or whose patterns indicate emerging barriers.
3. Support conversation – the school contacts the family to understand the reasons for absence and agrees proportionate actions.
4. Targeted support – an attendance support plan, pastoral intervention, SEND adjustments or referral to relevant services may be introduced.
5. Formal support – where appropriate, an attendance contract or coordinated plan with the Local Authority and other agencies may be used.
6. Enforcement – where voluntary support is unsuccessful, not engaged with or not appropriate, the school may request Local Authority legal intervention, including consideration of a Penalty Notice or prosecution.

16. Fixed Penalty Notices and legal intervention

West Sussex County Council is responsible for issuing Penalty Notices under the national framework and its published local Code of Conduct. The school does not issue the Penalty Notice itself.

- Schools must consider a referral for a Penalty Notice when a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised sessions within a rolling 10-school-week period, subject to the national and local framework.
- The Local Authority may also consider action below the threshold where there is evidence that a parent is deliberately avoiding the threshold or where other circumstances in the national framework apply.
- For a first Penalty Notice in a rolling three-year period, West Sussex currently applies a fine of £160 per parent per child, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second Penalty Notice for the same parent and child within a rolling three-year period is £160, with no reduced-rate payment period.
- A maximum of two Penalty Notices may be issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period. Further cases may be considered for prosecution or other legal intervention.
- Where a term-time holiday absence is 15 school days or more, the Local Authority may consider prosecution rather than a Penalty Notice.
- All enforcement decisions are made by West Sussex County Council in accordance with its current Code of Conduct and the national framework.

17. Attendance data, monitoring and evaluation

The school will use attendance data as part of normal school improvement activity. Analysis will be sufficiently detailed to identify individual pupils, groups, trends, patterns and possible causes of absence.

- Daily attendance and absence patterns will be monitored.
- The school will analyse attendance by year group and relevant pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, children known to social care and young carers.
- The school will monitor persistent and severe absence and pupils at risk of becoming PA or SA.
- Patterns such as particular days, sessions, classes, times of year or recurring reasons will be considered where they help identify barriers.
- Attendance information will be reviewed by school leaders and reported to governors at an appropriate frequency.
- The impact of attendance interventions will be reviewed so that ineffective approaches are changed.
- The school will compare attendance with national information and use local authority intelligence where appropriate, while avoiding simplistic target-setting that obscures individual circumstances.
- Attendance data will be shared with the DfE and Local Authority through statutory systems and returns.

18. Registers, coding and record keeping

The school maintains electronic attendance and admission registers using its management information system. Registers are legal records. Every entry in the attendance or admission register will be preserved for six years from the date the data was entered.

Where a register entry is amended, the original entry, amended entry, reason for amendment, date of amendment and name of the person making the amendment will be retained in accordance with statutory requirements.

Staff responsible for registration will receive appropriate guidance so that national attendance codes are applied accurately and consistently. The full statutory code set will be used; key codes are summarised in Appendix 1.

19. Publication, communication and review

- This policy will be published on the school website and made readily accessible to pupils, parents/carers and staff.
- Parents/carers will be reminded of the school's attendance expectations at the beginning of each academic year and when significant changes are made.
- The school will communicate attendance expectations clearly, positively and consistently.
- The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where DfE, Ofsted or West Sussex County Council requirements change.
- The governing body will receive appropriate information to provide oversight and challenge.

Appendix 1 – Attendance and absence codes

Code	Meaning	Status
/	Present in school – morning session	Present
\	Present in school – afternoon session	Present
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Present
C	Leave of absence agreed by the school due to exceptional circumstances	Authorised absence
C1	Absent for a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad	Authorised absence
C2	Absent due to an agreed temporary part-time timetable	Authorised absence
D	Dual registered at another school	Not counted as possible attendance at this school
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Authorised absence

G	Holiday not granted by the school / holiday in excess of an agreed leave	Unauthorised absence
I	Illness, including physical or mental health-related illness	Authorised absence
J1	Interview for employment or admission to another educational institution	Authorised absence
K	Educational provision arranged by the Local Authority	Present
L	Arrived late before the register closed	Present
M	Medical or dental appointment	Authorised absence
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Unauthorised until resolved
O	Absent without authorisation	Unauthorised absence
P	Participating in an approved sporting activity	Present
Q	Unable to attend because of lack of access arrangements	Unauthorised absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave for public examinations	Authorised absence
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Authorised absence
U	Arrived after registration closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Present
W	Work experience	Present
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend	Not counted as possible attendance
Y1	Transport normally provided is unavailable	Not counted as possible attendance
Y2	Widespread travel disruption	Not counted as possible attendance
Y3	Part of the school premises is closed	Not counted as possible attendance
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Not counted as possible attendance
Y5	Pupil is in criminal justice detention	Not counted as possible attendance
Y6	Unable to attend because of public health guidance or law	Not counted as possible attendance
Y7	Other unavoidable cause affecting the pupil	Not counted as possible attendance
Z	Prospective pupil not yet on the admission register	Not counted as possible attendance

#	Planned whole-school closure	Not counted as possible attendance
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Note: This summary is provided for operational use. Staff must use the current DfE statutory guidance and the school's management information system guidance when deciding the correct code for an individual session.

Appendix 2 – Key attendance thresholds and actions

Indicator	Meaning	School response
Attendance below 90%	Commonly referred to as persistent absence territory when the pupil has missed 10% or more of possible sessions.	Investigate causes, engage family, provide support and monitor closely.
Persistent absence (PA)	10% or more absence across possible sessions.	Targeted support and close monitoring; formal action where appropriate.
Severe absence (SA)	50% or more absence across possible sessions.	Intensive, coordinated support with the Local Authority and relevant agencies.
10 unauthorised sessions in a rolling 10-school-week period	National threshold at which schools must consider referral for a Penalty Notice, subject to the national/local framework.	Consider referral to West Sussex County Council; individual circumstances and the Code of Conduct apply.
Persistent lateness	Repeated late arrival or patterns of lateness that reduce learning time.	Discuss barriers, provide support, monitor and escalate where appropriate.

Appendix 3 – Key documents and links

- **DfE – Working together to improve school attendance:**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>
- **DfE – Communicating with parents about school attendance:**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/communicating-with-parents-about-school-attendance>
- **DfE – Children missing education:**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>
- **DfE – Keeping children safe in education 2026:**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
- **West Sussex County Council – School absences and Fixed Penalty Notices:**
<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/schools-and-colleges/school-attendance-and-behaviour/school-absences/>