

Featherstone High School



Student Attendance and Absence Policy

Prepared by:

John Noel, Assistant Head, Access & Inclusion; April 2010

Ratified by Governors on:

11th May 2010

FHS Student Attendance and Absence

Introduction

Featherstone High is a successful school and every child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be on time. Attendance is one the main factors that will influence the success of students. Students at Featherstone High are expected to attend school at least 95% of the time. The evidence is clear, if students do not attend school on a regular basis they will underachieve.

The Law

Parents/guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends school on a regular basis. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Here the maximum fine is £1000 per parent per child. Other disposals may be in the form of conditional discharges or issuing of Parenting Orders. It is a strict liability offence. The proof required that the offence has been committed is the school attendance certificate that shows that the child has failed to attend regularly.

Since March 2001 there has been a further offence. This is called an aggravated offence. It is when a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend (Education Act 1996, section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000), i.e. the parent knew of their child's non-attendance and failed, in the absence of any good reason, to do anything about it. On conviction can lead to a custodial sentence, a community sentence, Parenting Order or a fine of up to £2500. Convictions incur a criminal record.

Local Education Authority Officers, Head Teachers and the Police have the power to issue penalty notices to parents of children who have irregular attendance and registered at Ealing Schools. The Council will issue such notices in cases of truancy, parentally condoned absence, unapproved holidays, irregular or low attendance where absences are unauthorised. Parents will initially receive a warning and offered a time period to improve attendance. However cases of persistent unauthorised absence may be fast tracked to court. Penalty notices are an alternative in the form of a fine, to prosecution. There are 2 levels of penalty notice- £100 to be paid within 42 days, reduced to £50 if paid within 28 days. There is no right of appeal against the penalty notice. If you believe it to have been wrongly issued to you, you should contact the Local Authority immediately as they may withdraw the penalty notice if it has not been issued in accordance with the local code, or has been issued to the wrong person. Featherstone High will support parents and students to improve their attendance;

however the school will follow these aspects of the law where appropriate by referring appropriate cases to the LA senior education welfare officer.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. The register is taken twice a day with students receive a mark in the morning (AM) and one in the afternoon (PM). Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility; parents, students and all members of school staff.

What Featherstone High School will do;

- Provide parents/guardians with access to their child's attendance profile via the SIMS Learning Gateway. Alternatively, parents will be provided with printed attendance profiles on request.
- Report to parents/guardians at least half-termly on attendance and punctuality rates and report how this relates to their academic progress.
- Implement parenting contracts to clarify what support will be put into place to support students and their families to improve their behaviour.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Run promotional events such as curriculum meetings when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Absence from School

Parents/guardians must inform the school on the first day of absence of why their son/daughter is not in school and when they are to due to return. Students should only be absent from school for illness or in the case of an emergency. All other absences are deemed to be unauthorised until an explanation is presented to the school. If a call is not received, parents/guardians will be contacted by the school on the first day of absence.

If there are patterns of absence, the schools attendance officer will contact parents and arrange to meet them to discuss the schools concerns and to work with the parent/guardians and student to improve their attendance to school. In more serious cases, the Assistant Head, Access & Inclusion will be involved as will Ealing's Senior Education Welfare officer.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 20% or more schooling at any point in the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents fullest

support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we will combine this with academic mentoring (in examination years) where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents may be subject to an Action Plan and or a parenting contract and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a mentor or a parent support advisor (and in some cases both). All PA cases are also automatically made known to the local authority Education Welfare Officer.

Punctuality

Lateness is not acceptable. Students are expected to arrive to school early in order for lessons to start on time. Students who are late to school will receive a 10 minute detention on the day. Students who are late more than once in a week they will receive a 30 minute detention on the Friday. The attendance officer will contact parents/guardians to discuss concerns regarding lateness to school. Students who are persistently late to school will be placed on dual registration. These students will need to register early over a period of time with the attendance officer before they attend morning registration or their first lesson.

Authorised School Absence including holiday requests during Term Time

The Head Teacher is the only person who has the authority to authorise school absences. This responsibility is delegated to specific members of staff. Parents wishing to take their child out of school for reasons such as weddings, holidays etc must make a written request to the head teacher giving at least two weeks notice. Requests for holidays will not be authorised, even if the student's attendance is over 95%. A maximum of 10 days will only be authorised if there is an emergency. If 10 days are granted and the student fails to return within expected deadlines the student may be removed from the school roll.

Removing a Student from the School Roll related to non attendance

A student may be removed from the school roll for the following reasons;

- If the student no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the Featherstone High School.
- If they are absent from school for 20 consecutive school days and are not able to attend school due to distance.
- If they are absent from school for 20 consecutive school days and the school is unaware of the child's and family's location after reasonable enquiry.
- If they have been taken on a holiday that has not been authorised by the Head teacher and has not returned within 10 days.
- If emergency leave has been authorised and the student does not return to school for 10 days after the agreed date of return and reasonable enquiry has been undertaken.

Evaluation

- Reviewed every two years by the Student Welfare Committee and the Governing Body, unless specific changes are required by legislation
- Regular audit of attendance and absence by the Student Welfare Committee with reports to the governing body at each meeting.

Other relevant policies and procedures

- Managing and Improving Behaviour (procedural document)
- Student Discipline and Behaviour Policy