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ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance Policy

The Ferry Centre

Vision and Aims

The Ferry Centre is dedicated to providing a supportive, high-quality learning environment tailored to the needs of pupils with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. This policy reflects our commitment to:

- Encouraging staff, parents, and pupils to maximise the learning experience so all pupils reach their full potential.
- Providing clear, empathetic procedures for involving parents in school attendance.
- Recognising that for our pupils, attendance is often a baseline indicator of their emotional well-being.

Principles

We believe high attainment and future success depend on consistent attendance, allowing each pupil to access the full school offer. At The Ferry Centre:

- **Role Models:** All staff support and promote excellent attendance by acting as role models and creating a safe, valued, and eager learning environment.
- **Empathy & Support:** We understand that a pupil's absence or lateness may be linked to their SEMH needs. Our policy is to be supportive—not to make a child feel guilty or inadequate—while maintaining high expectations.
- **Parental Responsibility:** We remind parents that under the Education Act 1996, the prime responsibility is to ensure their children attend school regularly. We work as partners to overcome barriers to attendance.

Responsibility for the Policy and Procedure

Role of the Proprietor (Will Harvey)

The Proprietor will:

- Delegate powers to the Head of SEND and Head of Education to ensure policy compliance.
- Ensure the attendance policy is implemented effectively across the setting.
- Monitor termly progress and trends, specifically regarding persistent absence.
- Ensure the policy is maintained, updated, and accessible to all parents/carers.

Role of the Head of SEND (Julie Lawrence) & Head of Education (Jo Gardner)

As The Ferry Centre operates with a streamlined leadership team, Julie Lawrence and Jo Gardner share the responsibilities typically held by a Headteacher and School Office. They will:

- **Frontline Contact:** Act as the primary point of contact for daily attendance calls and 'First Day Response.'
- **Daily Monitoring:** Undertake daily monitoring via the registration system.
- **Pupil Concerns:** Maintain an up-to-date 'Pupil Concerns List' and share this with relevant key staff.
- **Analysis:** Monitor attendance trends according to gender, age, eligibility for Free School Meals, and specific SEMH profiles.
- **Intervention:** Target support for children highlighted as poor attenders.
- **Reporting:** Publicise good attendance in newsletters and report figures to the Proprietor.
- **Training:** Ensure all staff understand attendance codes and the distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Role of School Staff

All staff will:

- Set an example of punctuality and professional attendance.
- Ensure registers are taken accurately and at the appropriate times. The school will maintain admission and attendance registers in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and Working Together to Improve

School Attendance. Registers will be taken at the start of each morning and afternoon session using the correct attendance and absence codes. Registers will be checked daily by the Head of Education or Head of SEND.

- Inform Jo Gardner or Julie Lawrence immediately of any concerns regarding a pupil's patterns of absence.
- Discuss attendance positively during parent consultations.

Role of Parents/Carers

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring their children arrive at school on time.
- **Reporting Absence:** Contacting the school on the **first day of absence** by 9:30 a.m.
- Keeping contact details updated to ensure the school can reach them in an emergency.

Daily Attendance Procedures

First Day Contact

Because the Head of Education and Head of SEND manage frontline calls, the following procedure applies:

1. **By 9:30 a.m.:** If no notification of absence is received, the school will call the parent/carer.
2. **Concerns List:** If a child on the "Pupil Concerns List" is absent without notice, this is treated as a priority for immediate follow-up.
3. **No Contact:** If no phone contact is made, an email or text will be sent. We will continue to attempt contact throughout the day.
4. **Safeguarding:** If contact cannot be established for a vulnerable pupil, the Heads will determine if a home visit or a call to the Placing Local Authority/Social Worker is required.

Dealing with Trends

When a pattern of poor attendance emerges:

- Parents will be invited to an informal meeting with the Head of Education to discuss barriers.
- Support Plans: As an SEMH provision, we will offer bespoke support to address underlying emotional or environmental reasons for absence.
- If no improvement is seen, the school will liaise with the Placing Local Authority.

Absence Categories

Authorised vs. Unauthorised

The school (not the parent) decides how an absence is classified.

- **Authorised:** Genuine illness, medical appointments (where they cannot be scheduled outside school hours), or exceptional circumstances.
- **Unauthorised:** Truancy, shopping trips, birthdays, or absences where no explanation is provided.
- **Medical Appointments:** We encourage these to be made outside of school hours to minimise disruption to the therapeutic and educational offer.

Where a pupil is absent without explanation and parents/carers cannot be contacted, the school will consider the pupil's vulnerability, safeguarding history, transport arrangements and known risks. For pupils on the Pupil Concerns List, lack of contact will trigger same-day escalation to the DSL and may include contact with the placing local authority, social worker, police or a safe-and-well home visit.

Leave of Absence (Holidays)

In line with DfE regulations, Headteachers may not authorise any leave of absence unless circumstances are exceptional. Requests must be submitted in writing to the Head of Education in advance.

Religious Observance

A maximum of three days per academic year is allowed for recognised religious observance. Absence for religious observance may be authorised where the day is exclusively set apart for

religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/carer belongs. Requests will be considered individually and recorded using the appropriate attendance code.

Attendance Targets

The Ferry Centre has adopted the following attendance targets:

- **Initial Concern:** Any attendance falling below 95% will trigger an initial record of concern and internal monitoring.
- **Persistent Absence:** Persistent absence is attendance below 90%. Severe absence is attendance below 50%. Pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence will have an individual attendance support plan agreed with parents/carers, the placing local authority and relevant professionals.

May 2026

To be reviewed: May 2027