

Attendance Policy

What is the Frome Learning Partnership?

The Frome Learning Partnership (FLP) consists of all the schools in Frome and outlying villages. We work together to develop and maintain strong relationships within our school communities in order to maximise our children's enjoyment, learning and progress.

Research suggests that missing school through absence or lateness impacts significantly on a child's social, emotional and academic progress. Across the FLP, we will adopt a common and consistent approach to ensure our children are able to maintain the highest possible levels of school attendance.

Expected		Requiring Improvement	Cause for Concern
100%	96%	90-95%	89% or less
190 days of education	182 days of education	180-171 days of education	169 days of education
0 days missed	8 days missed	10-18 days missed	21 days missed
Hours of learning missed	40 Hours of learning missed	50-90 Hours of learning missed	105 Hours of learning missed

This attendance policy is designed to inform parents, schools and other members of the school community of our shared aims, expectations and responsibilities regarding school attendance.

As a partnership, we aim to:

- Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 96 per cent
- Maintain awareness of the importance attending school regularly and on time
- Develop and use consistent strategies in order to identify and address any attendance concerns
- Deliver support to any pupils experiencing difficulty in attending school regularly
- Make use of appropriate support services to support and challenge poor attendance, where necessary

What are the FLP's expectations?

Low levels of attendance at school are usually a sign that something is not right for the child and that work needs to be done to support them to access school as fully as possible.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school relies upon our schools, parents and pupils working together effectively.

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure your child attends school regularly and on time (Section 441, Education Act 1996)
- Provide school with all up-to-date contact and emergency details
- Contact the school as early as possible on every day of any absence
- Arrange any non-school appointments outside of school time, wherever possible
- Be proactive in working with the school regarding any long-term or ongoing issues or concerns that might impact on attendance levels
- Respond to any queries regarding attendance in a timely manner

Schools are expected to:

- Provide full-time education provision that is appropriate to the needs of each child that is of statutory school age (Section 7, Education Act 1996)
- Use reasonable judgement when deciding whether absences should be either authorised or unauthorised (this responsibility lies with the head teacher)
- Promote, actively encourage and reward excellent and/or improved attendance
- Keep and maintain accurate attendance registers on all enrolled pupils twice a day
- Keep registers open for up to 30 minutes from the beginning of each school day
- Make every effort to contact parents as quickly as possible in the event of any unexplained absence (first day call)
- Regularly monitor individual and whole-school attendance in order to identify any patterns or concerns relating to absences
- Identify and act upon any attendance concerns as appropriate
- Put into place any appropriate support packages for pupils, where attendance is a concern
- Refer any serious concerns regarding attendance to the appropriate agencies for advice, support or legal action (in line with Section 441 of the Education Act 1996), where necessary
- Ensure all parents are aware of and understand their legal obligations regarding regular school attendance

The Local Authority (Somerset County Council) must:

- Promote good attendance and support or challenge, where necessary, to reduce absence, including persistent absence¹
- Advise, support and challenge schools regarding attendance issues and concerns
- Use its statutory powers to ensure regular school attendance through appropriate legal action

What does 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' absence mean?

By law, the head teacher of a school must decide whether each absence should be authorised or unauthorised. There is guidance detailing when a head teacher can authorise absence and when they cannot.

Below are some examples of when absences may be authorised and unauthorised. These are for guidance and are not complete lists of all reasons upon which a head teacher might make their decision.

Absences may be authorised if:

- a child is too ill to attend school
- religious or cultural observances (these might include, but are not limited to: Sukkot on the Jewish calendar or Traveller status)

Absences may be unauthorised if:

- no reason is given for the absence
- a pupil arrives late, after the school's register closes²

- a pupil is tired
- it is a pupil's or family member's birthday
- a family holiday is arranged during term-time, other than in exceptional circumstances³
- the head teacher believes the reason given for absence is not acceptable

Unauthorised absences may lead to a referral to the Education Welfare Service if they are a concern.

Unauthorised absences can lead to the Local Authority pursuing legal action against the parent.

Is it possible to request term-time leave from school?

While term-time leave can be authorised in exceptional circumstances, having time off school is not an entitlement and should not be seen as such.

Parents may request term-time leave for their children, which may be authorised by the school's head teacher in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances may include (but are not limited to):

- Parental leave from active military service
- Terminal parental illness
- Parental wedding

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the head teacher, the absence will be unauthorised and legal action may be taken by the Local Authority.

School Action: Monitoring Attendance and Following up Absence

All schools must monitor the attendance of their pupils on a regular basis. This enables them to identify patterns or levels of absence that might become a need for support or a cause for concern.

There are also safeguarding implications around regular absence that schools must consider and take action, where necessary.

The Government's persistent absence threshold is 90 per cent. Any child whose attendance is below this level falls into this category whether absences are authorised or unauthorised. Schools are expected to act quickly in these cases to intervene and improve attendance.

The Frome Learning Partnership expects high levels of attendance from all of its pupils:

There are many stages involved when attendance falls below the expected level. The action taken will always depend on the level of absence and the circumstances surrounding it. Throughout all of these stages, the school will remain in regular contact with parents to inform them of their actions.

Some children might have a known and diagnosed medical condition that prevents them from attending school regularly. Parents are expected to inform schools of any health requirements their child has, so that schools and other services can support them as necessary.

The following support and intervention stages may be put into place when a child's attendance becomes a cause for concern and reason for absence is not clear:

Stage 1

If the school identifies a child's attendance as requiring improvement, they will make contact with the parent to discuss the reasons for their absences and any possible support necessary to improve attendance.

Stage 2

Following initial contact, should concerns continue or increase and attendance becomes a cause for concern, the school will request an Attendance Review Meeting with parents to further discuss the reasons for absence and put a support plan into place. At this point, the school may also invite parents to provide medical evidence (see Appendix A) or documentation from another professional or support service. At this stage, the school might also seek advice from the Education Welfare Service.

Attendance support plans might include, but are not limited to:

- Permission from parents to share information with other support and healthcare services
- Agreed personalised timetable
- Regular meetings to review attendance progress and any support needs
- Enhanced home/school contact arrangements
- Medical, learning or social/emotional action plans
- Referral to Child and Family Support Team (PFSA's, Family Support Practitioners)

Stage 3

Despite the interventions at stages 1 and 2, if attendance continues to worsen or shows little sign of improvement the school will request that parents provide further evidence in order to authorise absences. Without sufficient evidence being provided, absences will be marked as unauthorised. The school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Service and may also ask to make a referral to other support services, such as the Child and Family Support Team.

Referral to the Education Welfare Service may result in legal action being taken against the parents under Section 441 of the Education Act 1996, which might include:

- Continued work with support services and Education Welfare Service
- Fixed Penalty Notices (£120 per child per parent)
- Interview under caution

Prosecution at Magistrate's Court, which may result in a criminal record, fines of up to £2,500 and up to three months' imprisonment

Moving School, Home Educating and Children Missing Education

If a child is due to leave a school (for example, because of a house move), parents are asked to provide information in writing detailing where they will be educated once they have left and their new address details.

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from the school system in order to educate them at home. This is known as Elective Home Education. Parents wishing to home educate must inform the school in writing of their decision. At this point, the school must remove the child from their roll and inform the Local Authority, who keep a register of all home educated children in the county. Parents who home educate take on the legal responsibility of ensuring their child receives an adequate level of education and will be asked to evidence the work that is being done.

Under no circumstances should schools seek to persuade or coerce parents to home educate their children.

When a child leaves, or appears to have left, school without this information being provided, they will be considered to be a child missing from education. At this point, the school must refer the child to the Local Authority, which has a legal responsibility to investigate the whereabouts of the child with support from social care services, health services and the police.

¹ The Government sets a national target for school attendance. If a child's attendance falls below 90 per cent, they fall into the category of 'persistent absence', whether those absences are authorised or not.

² Schools are expected to open their registers at the beginning of the school day and keep them open for a maximum of 30 minutes. If a child arrives after this time without a valid reason, this will be unauthorised.

³ In terms of term-time leave, schools may only authorise absence if it is unavoidable, rare, significant and short. It is the head's decision

Certification of Consent to disclose medical details regarding

.....

to the attendance officer at {School Name}, {School Address}

I _____ (___ / ___ / ___)

of: _____

_____ do, as the legal guardian of the

above-named child, hereby give my permission to:

Dr _____ or an appropriately designated colleague

at: _____, which is the registered medical

practice for my child: _____ (___ / ___ / ___) to share

information with _____ or an appropriately designated colleague at

{School Name} relating to the impact that any medical conditions or health needs his/her ability might have

on {his/her} ability to attend school on a regular basis.

This consent relates to the period starting on: _____.

By giving consent, I understand that:

- I am giving permission for the above-named school to contact my child's medical practice and school to share information relating to any ill health and the impact it might have on school attendance.
- The attendance level of my child has become a cause for concern
- The school might not authorise any further absences without the support and advice of the named health practitioners
- This information sharing process is being put into place to better support my child and work towards their improved health and subsequent attendance at school

Signed _____
(parent/carer)

Date _____

Signed _____
(on behalf of the above-named school)

Date _____

Dear {GP name}

School attendance concerns relating to medical needs

Child's Name (DOB), Child's address

Please find enclosed a signed consent form giving permission for information regarding {Child's} health needs and the impact they might be having on their ability to attend school on a regular basis.

This consent has been requested due to on-going concerns about the number of absences {Child} is accruing as a result of ill health, reported by their parent/carer. Their attendance is current {XX.X}% and the school has instigated Stage 2 of its attendance protocol. This means that in-school support has been put into place, but it has not impacted on or improved attendance levels.

In order for us to ensure best safeguarding practice and also maximise {Child's} chances of accessing their education as fully as possible, it is essential that we work together in sharing relevant information so that the right levels of support can be put into place.

Medical information sharing consent is only requested when:

- a child's attendance levels are impacting significantly on their progress at school
- absences are being attributed to ill health and/or medical needs and appointments
- the school is not aware of any pre-existing or diagnosed medical condition that might impact attendance

When given, medical consent enables the sharing of the following information between the stated school and medical practice:

- whether a child has been offered and/or attended appointments at the practice
- whether there are any medical issues that might
- whether there is any further support that might be helpful to ensure good attendance

Medical consent does not entitle the school to have access to {Child's} medical records or personal data.

Schools are obliged to monitor attendance closely and put into place appropriate support and challenge when attendance levels become a concern. The Head Teacher must decide whether absences should be authorised or unauthorised based on the information and evidence available. Ongoing absences without clear medical support can lead to absences being unauthorised, which may lead to legal action being taken against the parent.

This is something we are keen to avoid and hope that this consent, together with the sharing of relevant information, can prevent this course of action and ensure {Child} receives the support they need through both of our services.

The designated school staff may contact your surgery requesting information regarding appointments and/or whether {Child's} health ought to be impacting on their ability to attend school. We also invite you to make contact with us, should you have any queries or concerns.

Yours faithfully

Named staff member

School name