

Attendance at Finchampstead Primary School

Autumn 2024



Why is school attendance important?

Pupils with good attendance are more likely to do well at school. When pupils miss school, even if the time period is very short, it can lead to gaps in their learning which might make future lessons more difficult for them.

Regular attendance helps pupils to feel part of our school community and enables them to develop good relationships with their peers and other members of the school community. This can have a positive impact on their wellbeing and help them to feel more settled in school.

When a pupil attends school every day, it helps to establish good routines and habits for their later life.

What does the law say?

It is a legal requirement for schools to keep a record of attendance and the reasons for any absences. There are clear guidelines set out by the government about how schools should manage attendance and schools are expected to follow these.

Only the headteacher can officially authorise an absence. Parents and carers should provide reasons for absences to enable the school to decide whether or not to authorise the absence based on government guidelines.

Parents and carers must ensure that their child attends school regularly. Failure to do so, without good reason, is an offence. Parents and carers of children with unauthorised absences may be subject to a fixed penalty notice/legal action.

What are the different types of absence?

There are two broad categories of absence:

Authorised absence: This is an absence that has been authorised by the school for a legitimate medical, emergency or unavoidable situation.

Typical examples of authorised absence include:

- illness that means a child is too unwell to come to school;
- following NHS advice regarding remaining off school following a period of illness (in the case of certain infectious illnesses);
- an emergency medical or dental appointment;
- the recent death of a close family member;
- religious observance, as long as certain conditions are met.

Unauthorised absence: This is where a pupil's absence is for a reason deemed to be unacceptable by the school or where the reason for a pupil's absence has not been provided, proven (if appropriate) and/or cannot be established.

Why is it important that my child is on time each day?

When children are late to school, they may initially feel unsettled and they might miss important information and activities. Schools are required to record late arrivals. If pupils arrive after the start of the school day but when the register is still open (before 9.20), it will be recorded as a late mark. If pupils arrive after the register closes (which government guidelines state must be within 30 minutes of the register opening), then their morning mark will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, unless evidence can be provided that there are exceptional circumstances that led to the late arrival.

What about medical appointments?

We understand that pupils need to attend medical and dental appointments and that it is not always possible to arrange this outside of school time. However, we would request that any non-emergency appointments are made for outside of the school day as this keeps the disruption to a minimum and ensures that they do not miss important lessons.

How does occasional absence affect my child?

Missing occasional days from school may seem unimportant at the time; however, this can have a significant impact on your child in the long term:

| % of attendance in a school year | Number of days absent | Weeks missed |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 98% | 4 | Less than 1 week |
| 95% | 9.5 | Nearly 2 weeks |
| 90% | 19 | Nearly 4 weeks |
| 85% | 28.5 | Nearly 6 weeks |

A pupil with 85% attendance is missing nearly half a term of learning time each school year.

Regular absences can result in poorer outcomes over time. Research shows that pupils with attendance of 80%-90% (which is between half and one day of absence per week on average) stand only a 35% chance of achieving five or more good GCSEs, compared to 73% with attendance of above 95%.

Late arrivals also add up over time – being 10 minutes late each day adds up to two weeks of lost learning time over the whole school year.

Why won't the school usually authorise absence for a family holiday?

We recognise that family vacations during the school holidays can be expensive and that booking a cheaper term-time holiday might be tempting. However, headteachers can only authorise leave during term time if there are exceptional circumstances, even if your child has an excellent attendance record or if you believe that the reason for the absence is justified.

Parents and carers should plan their holidays around school holidays and avoid asking for permission to take their children out of school.

If there are exceptional circumstances, then a request can be made to the school using our absence request form which can be found in the lobby.

Requests for term-time absences should be made as soon as possible and at least 10 days before the absence is due to take place. However, we recognise that in some rare instances, this will not always be possible.

Requests for term-time absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking the facts, circumstances and any supporting evidence into consideration. Leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances is at the discretion of the headteacher. This includes the length of time that the leave will be granted for.

How do I report an unplanned absence to the school?

Unexpected absences should be reported to school by:

Please report any absences by 9am or as soon as you become aware that your child will be absent. You can call the office but we also ask for an email to be sent to attendance@finchampstead.wokingham.sch.uk

In the case of illness, the absence will usually be authorised unless there are grounds for concern that the illness is significantly impacting learning or it may not be genuine or that it might not be sufficient to require time off school. In these cases, the school may ask for additional evidence, such as a doctor's note, appointment card, hospital letter or medical report. The school will not ask for this additional evidence unnecessarily.

If you do not provide a reason for your child's absence, we will make contact with you to find out why they are not in school. Unexplained absences will be recorded as unauthorised and will be a safeguarding concern.

Who should I contact if I have any questions or concerns about my child's attendance?

We are keen to work closely together to support strong attendance. Mrs Lawrence and Mrs Vanstone can be contacted to seek advice or support.