



FIRST BRIDGE SCHOOL

# Attendance policy

## Introduction

Absence from school affects pupils' therapeutic and educational progress; regular absence may seriously affect learning and wellbeing.

Ensuring a pupil's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law. Though attendance, like safeguarding, is everybody's responsibility, our attendance 'champion' is our headteacher.

We set clear targets for school attendance of 95% in order to ensure that our pupils come to school every day and make the best possible progress. We are mindful, however, that all of our pupils have complex SEND including EHC plans. Some therefore may face complex barriers to attendance, including in relation to mental health needs. Though the expectations of attendance for these pupils are the same, we recognise that they might require additional support.

This policy is closely linked to the school's safeguarding policy, behaviour policy and exclusion policy. It pays regard to the latest statutory guidance, including [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) and [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#). However, we are aware that chapter 3 does not apply to independent schools. First Bridge School may seek support from the school attendance support team in Hammersmith and Fulham, however we are aware that not all aspects of legal intervention are open to us – education supervision orders, prosecution and parenting orders may be used, while penalty notices and attendance contracts may not.

## The school day

The school day starts at 9:00am and finishes at 4:00pm. The school day is split into two 'sessions', a morning session, starting at 9:00am and finishing at 12:00pm, and an afternoon session, starting at 1:00pm and finishing at 4:00pm.

First Bridge School is open to pupils for up to 47 weeks per year.

## Requests for earlier finishes than the usual 4:00pm finish time

Parents may make a request in writing to the headteacher for an earlier finish than 4:00pm, under reasonable grounds. Such requests will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and take into consideration the pupil's attendance, educational needs, and will also consider our Clinical Team's

recommendations for hours of service per week. Where the Local Authority are responsible for the payment of the placement of a pupil, they will be notified of such requests when they are made, and liaison will take place to ensure that a decision is made, in collaboration with Local Authority, in the best interest of the child.

## **Procedures**

### **Registration**

Attendance registers are completed by the School Administrator, or a Clinical Supervisor in their absence, on FAMLY and HUBmis. The headteacher reviews the attendance registers weekly. The information logged on the FAMLY App is also shared with parents, so that parents of pupils who are transported to school via Local Authority transport services are aware when their child has arrived safely at school.

The register is open from 9:00am to 9:30am for the morning session (and 1:00pm to 1:30pm for the afternoon session).

We maintain attendance registers for 6 years.

### **Punctuality**

Pupils who arrive after the registers close should report to the main reception. Their name, classroom, arrival time and reason for lateness will be recorded on HUBmis by adding a comment to their attendance entry with the appropriate code to reflect the reason for absence.

It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that they proactively plan to allow ample time to arrive at school for 9:00am. This includes taking into consideration any 'usual' or 'unusual' traffic conditions (included planned road closures, train/bus strikes etc). Traffic is not an acceptable justification for repeated lateness to school.

Should there be extenuating circumstances as to why there may be a pattern of lateness (e.g., behavioural challenges with the pupil), it is the parents' responsibility to proactively seek advice, programming, and support, from the pupil's Clinical Supervisor.

Pupils will be marked as 'authorised late' (L Code) if they arrive at main reception between 9:05am and 9:30am or 'unauthorised late' (U Code) if they arrive at main reception after the registers have closed\*.

*\*There are occasions where this may be extended e.g., where school transport is delayed and is in no way a fault of the pupil/parent. This will be at the discretion of the headteacher.*

### Punctuality Support Plans (PSPs)

Parents will receive a first punctuality letter if a pupil is late on more than three occasions within one half term; this letter highlights the importance of the pupil's punctuality to school. Parents will receive a second punctuality letter if the pupil is late on three more occasions, totalling six late marks in one half term. This letter will invite the parents to a meeting to discuss strategies for improving the pupil's punctuality. During this meeting, a Punctuality Support Plan (PSP) will be put in place, with the aim of supporting the family and the pupil in arriving on time for school. PSPs will be reviewed with the parents, no later than every six weeks, and sooner if lateness continues to be a problem.

### Unplanned absences

An unplanned absence is an absence that occurs on any school day, that has not been pre-requested for by the parent.

A pupil will be deemed absent from school when they are not physically present on school premises. Only First Bridge School can authorise an absence if the headteacher is satisfied the reason is legitimate.

### Illness, medical and dental appointments

First Bridge School will need to be satisfied that the appointment taken during the school day is necessary and legitimate. First Bridge School will ask for evidence of appointments, including unplanned/unscheduled appointments (e.g., to the GP or A&E), that happen within the school day.

### Reporting an unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school for the reason of absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30am, by either calling the school on 020 3026 0095, or by messaging on the FAMLY App directly to the School. Please leave

a message stating the pupil's name, reason for absence and indication of the expected return date and time.

Absences due to illness will be marked as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence.

If the school is not satisfied by the authentication of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance of any change to the attendance register.

### Attendance Support Plans (ASPs)

Every half term, attendance will be reviewed by the headteacher and wider leadership team. Any pupils whose attendance falls below the 95% attendance expectation, will receive an attendance letter. If improvement is not forthcoming, a second letter will invite the parents to a meeting to discuss strategies for improving the pupil's attendance in the following half term. During this meeting, an Attendance Support Plan (ASP) will be put in place, with the aim of supporting the family and the pupil in improving their attendance at school. ASPs will be reviewed with the parents, no later than every six weeks, and sooner if attendance continues to be a problem.

## **Planned absences**

### Medical and dental appointments

Parents are encouraged to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

Where is this not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time possible.

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school of the appointment as far in advance as possible. Parents should request a leave of absence by emailing the headteacher.

Where pupils are diagnosed with long-term illnesses that require frequent medical appointments, exceptions will be made.

## Family bereavements

First Bridge School will always consider requests to attend funerals or to give pupils appropriate time to come to terms with such events. Where possible, for funerals whereby the date is known in advance, parents are requested to apply in writing to the headteacher.

## Requests for family holidays, extended trips overseas & early finishes

Requests for holidays, extended trips overseas, and/or early finishes to terms will not be authorised (the 'H' attendance code no longer exists). The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be **exceptional** circumstances. Any request should be made in writing to the headteacher, who may request additional supporting documentation or evidence to support their decision. The headteacher will provide a written response to the parent, within five working days of receipt of the request.

Absence without the headteacher's approval will always be recorded as unauthorised in the school register and the above reporting procedures for Unexplained Absences will be followed.

*First Bridge School recognises that we provide access to education in excess of the typical 39 weeks per year. First Bridge School provides access to education for its pupils for up to 47 weeks per year, as many of the pupils in our care require education delivered in addition to the standard school year, in order to meet their needs. If a pupil is supported by an EHCP plan that states educational provision is to be provided for more than 39 weeks per year, then First Bridge School will require attendance of those pupils as per the agreed and funded provision.*

*For pupils who are legally required to attend for 39 weeks per year, but whose parents choose to fund some additional weeks privately, we are legally obligated to record attendance for the standard academic year (but actually record all attendance).*

## Days of religious observance

Parents should seek permission from headteacher at least two weeks prior to the one-day event. The school should satisfy itself that the religious festival is related to the religion practiced by the family.

## Other exceptional circumstances

These will be looked at individually, bearing in mind the considerations laid out above.

## **Following up on an unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/s, or send a message on the FAMILY App, on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence, to ascertain the reason why their child is not at school. The parent may respond via the FAMILY App in the first instance, however a telephone call with the parent, at some point within the school day, is required to discuss the absence. This will also apply on the second day of absence.
- If the school cannot reach both the parent/s and all of the pupil's emergency contacts (of which there must be at least two on record), the school will contact the pupil's social worker (if applicable), or the police.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained.
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation and will ensure proper and appropriate safeguarding action is taken.
- On the third day of absence, where First Bridge School have still not been notified of a reason for the absence, a home visit will take place by two members of the leadership team.
- On day three if a reason is not established having carried out all of the above, First Bridge School will inform the Initial Consultation and Advice Team (ICAT) in liaison with the headteacher (who is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead), as well as the child's Local Authority.
- Social care services will be informed at every stage if the pupil is either on a CIN/CP Plan or considered a Looked After Child.

## **Strategies for promoting attendance**

We encourage and reinforce good attendance with a range of rewards, such as certificates and trophies.

Where there is concern about attendance, individualised strategies will be implemented according to each pupil and family's needs, such as the ASPs referenced above. The strategies may involve outreach support for the family, working with and providing training for transport providers, behaviour management strategies to support pupils such as token economy systems.

## **Attendance monitoring**

### **Monitoring and analysing attendance**

Daily absences are monitored on an individual basis by the headteacher, who is also the DSL.

The leadership team monitors, reviews and analyses attendance and absence rates regularly, as formally so at leadership-team meetings every half term.

### **Using data to improve attendance**

The school:

- ensures key staff have access to attendance information to facilitate discussions with pupils and families where necessary.
- uses data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions that are put in place, to inform future strategies.

### **Reducing persistent and severe absence**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of available school sessions. Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of available school sessions. Both persistent and severe absence from school can be a safeguarding concern. We therefore closely monitor attendance data to identify patterns and trends of persistent absence. The headteacher (who is also the DSL) and the wider leadership team hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school considers to be especially vulnerable or are persistently or severely late or absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school. We ensure that the leadership team works with parents and professionals to support the family, providing access to and/or making

referrals to, wider support services (such as social care services) to remove barriers to attendance.

### **Reporting to parents**

The school regularly informs parents about their child's overall attendance, including via the annual review process and in written reports.

### **Reporting to additional bodies**

The school will, when required and requested, share attendance and absence information with the Local Authority and Government. The school will also, when requested, share attendance and absence information as part of a school inspection. During the sharing of this data, individual pupil information may be shared.