EMBARK
FEDERATION

Fairfield Infant and Nursery School
'Learning for Life'

Fairfield Infant and Nursery School

# Attendance Handbook

2026–27

**Love Learning, Love Life.**

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## Welcome

### A message from the Headteacher

> **We want every child to feel welcome, known, listened to, valued, supported and that they belong.**

Thank you for being part of our school community. This handbook is designed to help you understand how attendance works at Fairfield Infant and Nursery School, what we expect, and — most importantly — how we can work together to support your child.

We know that getting to school every day isn't always straightforward. Life is complicated, and many families face real challenges. We're not here to judge. We are here to listen, to understand barriers, and to find solutions together.

What we do know is that regular attendance makes a significant difference to every child's learning, friendships, confidence and future opportunities. Every day in school is a day of growth.

If your child is finding it difficult to attend, or if your family is facing challenges that affect attendance, please talk to us early. The sooner we know, the sooner we can help.

This handbook sets out the key information you need. If anything is unclear, please contact us — our details are on the back pages.

**Jenny Allin**
Headteacher, Fairfield Infant and Nursery School

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## Why attendance matters

At Embark, attendance is about much more than a number. When your child is in school every day, they benefit in ways that go far beyond the classroom.

**Learning and achievement**
Every lesson builds on the last. Regular attendance helps children keep up, feel confident and reach their potential.

**Friendships and belonging**
School is where children build relationships, learn to work with others, and develop a sense of community.

**Wellbeing and routine**
Consistent routines support children's mental health, confidence and sense of stability.

**Future opportunities**
Good attendance habits build the resilience and reliability that open doors to future education, training and employment.

**Safety and safeguarding**
When children are in school, they are known, seen and supported by adults who care about their welfare.

**Inclusion and support**
We want every child to feel they belong. We will work with you to remove barriers and make attendance possible.

**Our attendance work is rooted in Embark's core beliefs:** Family, Integrity, Teamwork and Success. We work as a team with families to support every child with honesty, care and ambition.

| 190 | 175 |
|---|---|
| school days each year | non-school days for family time and holidays |

# How we look at attendance

Attendance is about more than a percentage. Small amounts of missed time add up over a school year, and we look at the whole picture rather than a single number. The next page sets out what different attendance levels mean; here we explain how even short absences mount up, and how we look at attendance overall.

**25** lessons or sessions can be missed in just 5 days of absence. Over a school year, even small gaps add up and can be hard to recover from.

## How we look at attendance

We don't rely on percentages alone. We consider four things together:

**Volume**
Overall percentage and total days or sessions missed

**Frequency**
How many separate episodes of absence there are

**Pattern**
When absence happens — particular days, times, proximity to holidays

**Reason and context**
What we know about the child, their family and the circumstances

# Every school day matters

## What each level of attendance means — and why we aim for 100% of all possible sessions.

We are aiming for 100% attendance of all possible sessions. We know some absence is unavoidable, and we are always here to help. The table below shows how attendance percentages add up to days of learning over a year, and what each level means.

| | |
|---|---|
| 100% | **0 days off · Outstanding attendance**<br>Every learning opportunity has been maximised — a strong foundation for progress and personal growth. |
| 98% | **4 days off per year · Strong attendance**<br>A strong commitment to learning that gives a very good chance of making the most of school. |
| 96% | **8 days off per year · Minimum expectation**<br>Meets the school's minimum expectation and is around the national average. Our aim is for every pupil to attend 100% of possible sessions. |
| 94% | **12 days off per year · about 2 per half term · Below expectation**<br>Below the expected standard. Missing this much learning can affect progress and make it harder to keep up. |
| 92% | **15 days off per year · about 2.5 per half term · Cause for concern**<br>Significant learning time is being lost. Gaps can build quickly across subjects and may affect progress. |
| 90% | **19 days off per year · about 3 per half term · Serious cause for concern**<br>Around a month of school missed over the year. At this level the risk to progress and achievement increases significantly. |
| Under 90% | **More than 19 days off per year · Persistently absent**<br>This is persistent absence. The risk of falling behind and missing key opportunities is high — please talk to us early so we can help. |

**We are here to help.** If getting to school is becoming difficult for any reason, please talk to us early. The sooner we understand what is happening, the sooner we can work with you to put the right support in place.

# Missing one lesson can change the next one

## Learning is built in sequences — each step builds on the one before. Here is an example from Key Stage 1 maths that shows how one gap can make later learning much harder.

In a typical Year 1 sequence, children learn to add step by step. Knowing **number bonds to 10** by heart is a key step — it is the bridge from counting to calculating, and it is used again and again.

- **Step 1** Counting and comparing numbers to 20
- **Step 2** Finding one more and one less
- **Step 3** Number bonds to 10, known by heart — **KEY STEP**
- **Step 4** Making ten to add (bridging)
- **Step 5** Adding and subtracting within 20

**If number bonds to 10 are secure**
The child instantly knows the pairs that make ten (6 + 4, 7 + 3...). They can "make ten" to add — 8 + 5 becomes 8 + 2 + 3 — and move on to bigger numbers with confidence.

**If number bonds to 10 are missed**
Without quick recall, every sum means counting on fingers one by one. It is slower and easy to lose track, so adding, subtracting and later written methods all become much harder — and the gap widens over time.

THE SAME SUM — WITH AND WITHOUT NUMBER BONDS TO 10

$$8 + 5 = 8 + 2 + 3 = 10 + 3 = 13$$

8 + 5 = counting on... 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 — slower, and easy to miscount

## The ripple effect

One missed step can ripple forward, because the same skill is used again and again:

- Adding and subtracting within 20
- Two-digit and written methods
- Times tables and fractions
- Confident problem solving

**This is just one example.** Not every child who misses a session will struggle, and gaps can be closed with the right support. But the same pattern is true across early learning — these building blocks connect, so being in school every day really matters. If your child misses school, please talk to us and we will help them catch up.

# What we expect

Embark's expectation is that every pupil attends school every day that the school is open, arriving on time and ready to learn. We understand that some absence is unavoidable — what matters is that we work together.

## The school day

| Detail | Fairfield Infant and Nursery School |
|---|---|
| School day start and end time | School: 8.40am – 3.10pm<br>Nursery (am): 8.45am – 11.45am<br>Nursery (pm): 12.15pm – 3.15pm |
| Expected arrival time (gates open) | 8.30am – 8.40am |
| Morning register | 8.40am (closes 9.00am) |
| Afternoon register | 1.00pm (closes 1.10pm) |
| How to report an absence | Call the school office on 01298 22441, before 8.40am |
| When to report | First day of absence and every subsequent day, unless agreed otherwise |

## Lateness

Pupils arriving after the register opens but before it closes will be marked late (L). Pupils arriving after the register has closed will normally be marked absent for that session (U) — this counts as an unauthorised absence and affects overall attendance. Persistent lateness will be addressed through supportive, proportionate action.

### Every minute counts

Being late regularly adds up — here is how much learning is lost over a school year.

| | |
|---|---|
| **5 minutes late each day** | **3 days** |
| **10 minutes late each day** | **6.5 days** |
| **15 minutes late each day** | **10 days** |
| **20 minutes late each day** | **13 days** |
| **30 minutes late each day** | **19 days** |

**Medical and dental appointments:** please book these outside school hours where possible. Where unavoidable, tell us in advance and, where reasonably possible, send your child in before and/or after to minimise time missed.

✉ **Attendance contact**

School Office
01298 22441 · info@fairfield-inf.derbyshire.sch.uk
Please contact us if your child will be absent or late, or if you have any concerns about attendance.

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# Feeling under the weather?

## Let us know how your child is feeling so we can agree the right support

We know it is not always easy to tell whether your child is too unwell for school or is just feeling a little under the weather. If your child is only a little unwell, coming into school with some agreed support is usually better than missing the whole day.

Before deciding that your child needs to remain at home, please contact us and tell us how they are feeling. We can talk through what may help your child feel more comfortable in school and agree how we will support and monitor them during the day.

If your child is genuinely too unwell to attend or may pass an infectious illness to others, they should remain at home and recover.

*This is general guidance and does not replace medical advice.*

### Talk to us before deciding your child needs the day off

Tell us what is wrong and what may help. Together, we can agree whether your child can come into school with some additional support or a temporary adjustment in place.

1. **Let us know how your child is feeling**
   Tell us what is wrong, when it began and anything you think we need to know.
2. **Agree what may help**
   Talk to us about any practical support or temporary adjustment that may help your child feel comfortable and take part in the school day.
3. **Bring your child in with the arrangements understood**
   Where your child is well enough to attend, reassure them that school knows how they are feeling. We will provide the agreed support, keep a close eye on them and contact you if they become too unwell to remain.

### How we may support and monitor your child

Depending on your child's needs and the school's arrangements, the support agreed with you might include:

- staff being informed and keeping a close eye on your child;
- a quieter or more flexible start to the day;
- checking in with a trusted adult;
- access to water, tissues or a calm space;
- support with warm clothing;
- a temporary adjustment to physical activity or another part of the day;
- support with medication in line with school procedures and agreed arrangements;
- contacting you if your child becomes too unwell to remain.

### Share this information with us

Please contact us as early as possible and tell us:

- what is wrong today;
- when the symptoms began;
- what might help your child feel more comfortable in school;
- the best person to contact during the day.

**Call: 01298 22441**

**Email: info@fairfield-inf.derbyshire.sch.uk**

If, following the conversation, your child remains at home because they are genuinely too unwell to attend, please follow the school's usual absence-reporting arrangements.

**Thank you for working with us. Letting us know how your child is feeling gives us the opportunity to help them attend safely and comfortably where possible. If they become too unwell during the day, we will contact you. When they are genuinely too unwell to attend, home is the right place to recover.**

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# How we support you

Embark takes a **support-first** approach. We understand that barriers to attendance are often complex, and we will always seek to understand before we act. Our response is graduated — we start with conversation and support, and only use formal routes when support has not been effective or has not been engaged with.

1. **Early conversation**
   If we notice a change in your child's attendance or punctuality, we will get in touch to understand what is happening and offer help. This might be a phone call, a chat at the school gate, or a meeting with your child's class teacher.
2. **Targeted support**
   Where attendance concerns continue, we may agree an attendance support plan with you, make reasonable adjustments, involve pastoral or SEND teams, offer mentoring, or connect you with external support services.
3. **Formal monitoring**
   If support has not led to improvement, or has not been engaged with, we may move to formal monitoring, attendance contracts, or involvement of the local authority attendance support service.
4. **Legal intervention**
   Legal routes — including penalty notices and prosecution — are a last resort and are only used when earlier support and formal steps have not been effective or appropriate. Legal action is never a substitute for safeguarding.

**Anxiety and emotional barriers:** If anxiety or an emotional barrier is making school difficult, please share this with us as early as possible. Your child can speak to a trusted member of staff, and our pastoral, attendance and SEND teams can work with you and your child to agree reasonable adjustments and a personalised plan.

**SEND, health and medical needs:** If your child has special educational needs, a disability, a medical condition or mental health needs that affect their attendance, we will work with you to make reasonable adjustments and provide appropriate support according to individual need. Please speak to the SENCO or attendance team as early as possible.

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# Leave of absence and term-time holidays

Government regulations are clear: headteachers must not grant leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The law does not give parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.

- Any request for leave must be made **in advance** using the school's leave of absence form, available from the school office.
- Only the headteacher can decide whether circumstances are truly exceptional. Each request is considered individually.
- Absence taken without the headteacher's authorisation will be recorded as **unauthorised** (code G).
- There are 175 non-school days each year — please use these for family holidays, appointments and other activities wherever possible.
- Where leave is taken without authorisation, a **penalty notice** may be issued.

**Penalty notices**

A penalty notice may be issued where a pupil has 10 or more sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10 school-week period. This applies per parent, per child. Penalty notices must be paid within 21 days at the lower rate, or within 28 days at the higher rate. Unpaid penalty notices may lead to prosecution. A penalty notice can only be used once per pupil in an academic year before prosecution is considered.

**Talk to us first.** If your family is facing circumstances that you believe are exceptional, please speak to us before making any arrangements. We would always rather have a conversation early than issue a fine.

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# Key contacts and roles

Everyone in school plays a part in supporting attendance. Here are the people you are most likely to work with, and how to reach them. If you are worried about your child's attendance, please contact the attendance team or the member of staff who knows your child best — we would always rather hear from you early.

**Headteacher**
Overall responsibility for attendance, authorises leave of absence, leads school improvement.
Jenny Allin

**Senior Attendance Champion**
Leads strategic attendance work, oversees data, coordinates support and intervention.
Sarah Hewitt

**Attendance Officer / Team**
Your first point of contact for reporting absence, day-to-day attendance queries and support.
School Office · 01298 22441
info@fairfield-inf.derbyshire.sch.uk

**Class Teacher**
Knows your child best day to day, monitors day-to-day attendance, first to notice changes.
See www.fairfieldinfantandnurseryschool.co.uk for class teacher details

**SENCO**
Supports pupils with SEND, disabilities or medical needs, advises on reasonable adjustments.
Reece Waring

**Designated Safeguarding Lead**
Leads on safeguarding concerns, reviews attendance for vulnerable pupils.
Sarah Hewitt

**Pastoral / Wellbeing Team**
Provides emotional and practical support for pupils and families facing challenges.
Sarah Hewitt

**School Office**
General enquiries, registers, messages, visitor access.
01298 22441 · info@fairfield-inf.derbyshire.sch.uk

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EMBARK FEDERATION

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