



SOUTHWICK CE PRIMARY SCHOOL
POLICY STATEMENT - ATTENDANCE

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Southwick Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure that pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum time available.

Our policy applies to all children; this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who attend our school via our school website and has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures outlined in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. Through this Policy we aim to:

- improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality;
- achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues;
- create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school;
- raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education;
- work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence;
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties;
- recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils;
- ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually;
- maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters;

- developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness;
- supporting pupils/families who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance;
- developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

DEFINITIONS

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences, including illness, supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school, therefore an absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- maintain appropriate registration processes as required by law thus providing daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness;
- collect appropriate attendance data;
- communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils;
- follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school;
- inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence;
- strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time by applying penalty notices in line with DfE expectations;
- work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality;
- refer any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve to the Educational Welfare Service ;
- report attendance statistics to Wiltshire LA and the DfE when requested;
- staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns with the Headteacher.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and informing the Head where there are concerns ;
- emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- following up absences with immediate requests for explanations which should be noted on the online register;
- Discussing attendance issues at parents evenings where necessary

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- overall monitoring of school attendance including trends in authorised and unauthorised absence;
- contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues;
- monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised;
- making referrals to the Education Welfare Service and providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO;
- liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration staff

The Admin Officer is responsible for:

- collating and recording registration and attendance information;
- taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence;
- ensuring the Absence/Late sheet is completed;
- contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made;
- recording details of children who arrive late or go home;
- keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher;
- sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

PARENTS AND CARERS RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs, which they may have. Most parents choose to fulfil this responsibility by registering children at a school.

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance.

Parental Responsibilities:

- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time, appropriately dressed and 'ready to learn'. (i.e. not too tired or too hungry to learn.)
- Work in partnership with the school to help their child/children gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- Work in partnership with the school to take an active interest in their child's school career, to reinforce our policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evenings and other meetings where necessary.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies (as and when appropriate) to resolve issues relating to non-attendance.
- Notify the school if their child is absent. This needs to be done on the first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence, before 9.00am. Parents should also provide an explanation for the absence which should be confirmed, in writing, when the child returns to school. Such letters should be clearly dated by the writer.
- Parents are advised to avoid arranging medical or dental appointments during school hours and not to book holidays during term time as this is disruptive to children's learning.
- Parents must consult school **prior** to any holiday in school time giving maximum notice and seeking agreement from the Head Teacher on an Absence request form - See Appendix 1. Statutory Assessment periods should be avoided at all cost.

Absence requests will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Education Welfare Service fulfils the statutory duty to ensure regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

The primary responsibility of the Education Welfare Service is to promote the excellent attendance of all pupils in Wiltshire.

Further information about the Education Welfare Service's Service Level Agreement with school is available on request.

Education Welfare Officer Consultation Visits

The allocated Education Welfare Officer will visit the school regularly, as stated in the Service Level Agreement. Along with the Head Teacher the purpose of the visit will be to:

- Identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This will include regular examination of attendance registers.
- Agree on action which needs to be taken by the school and/or the Education Welfare Service.
- Feedback and exchange information in relation to work which has been undertaken by the Education Welfare Officer and/or the school.
- Identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters.
- Offer advice on strategies for improving attendance.

Once a referral has been agreed, the Education Welfare Officer will undertake casework with pupils and their parents. This may include:

- Making home visits in order to assess the situation and agree a way forward.
- Arranging meetings between the school, parents and pupil.
- Offering specific support to parents and individual pupils, either at school or elsewhere.
- Facilitating attendance meetings, case discussions and other meetings.
- Enabling the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies.

The Education Welfare Officer may also arrange for the pupils to receive specialist support such as counselling or group work.

The Education Welfare Officer has the responsibility to advise, support and assist in cases of both fixed period and permanent exclusions.

REGISTRATION

All the school doors open at 8.40 am (when the bell goes) to enable all pupils to enter their classroom and be ready for the register to be called at 8.45 am. Children arriving after the last name on the register has been called will be marked as late. Children will be marked as unauthorised for the morning session if they arrive after 9 am for KS2 and 9.05 am for KS1 and 1.10 pm for both KS1 & KS2 in the afternoon

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher at 8.45am and at 1.00pm. All attendance records are documented using SIMs software. Attendance registers are legal documents and are stored securely and are available to view via SIMs.

LATENESS

Once the doors are closed at 8.45am, the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way will be marked as late/unauthorised in the attendance record. Children who have attended an early dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later will have the absence recorded as a medical absence if there was no opportunity to attend school prior to the appointment.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues through a school attendance meeting.

ABSENCES

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. The Admin Officer checks all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. For safeguarding reasons if we are unable to reach the main contact we will ring all emergency contact numbers supplied.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of these. Initially concerns are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and where possible, support will be offered by the school to help improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

The Education Welfare Officer visits the school regularly to check and monitor attendance. She carries out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 85%) and works with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff, have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Remote education

If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), schools will offer access to remote education, if a child is well enough to access this.

Attendance and Covid-19

Parents should follow the most up-to-date government guidance regarding covid-19, current is staying off school for 3 days after a positive test and attend only then if the child is feeling well enough.

SOUTHWICK CE PRIMARY SCHOOL
We believe that all are equal in the eyes of God



Absence Request Form

Taking your child out of school during term time may harm your child’s academic progress.

Absences may only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher in EXCEPTIONAL circumstances.

Circumstances which are notified to the school or Local Authority **after** a decision has been made by the Headteacher will not be considered. Therefore please be certain to provide details of the exceptional circumstances relating to your application below and attach any supporting evidence.

Please read the attached Local Authority leaflet which explains Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised Leave of Absence during term time.

Name of Child(ren)	
Date of Birth	
Class	
Date of First Day of Absence	
Date of Return	
Number of Days requested	
Known siblings and school(s) attending	

Special Circumstances (reason) for holiday to be taken during term time:

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Signed: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Carer: _____

For school use:

Attendance%:

Total sessions pupil absent this academic year:

Total unauthorised absence this year:

Request authorised: Yes/No

Wiltshire Council

PENALTY NOTICES FOR UNAUTHORISED LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

s444A and s444B Education Act 1996

&

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Information for Parents and Carers

March 2021

What are s444A and s444B of the Education Act 1996?

Section 444A and section 444B of the Education Act 1996 give powers to the Local Authority (LA) to issue Penalty Notices where the parent/carers is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

Why are these powers available?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority at both national and local level. Missing school reduces a pupil's educational attainment and life chances.

What is a Penalty Notice?

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and is used to try and secure an improvement in a pupil's school attendance without the need to appear in Court. As long as the penalty is paid the Penalty Notice enables parents or carers to discharge their potential liability for prosecution for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

What are the costs?

Payment of £120 is required within 28 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice; this sum is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid in full within 28 days the LA is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of your child's poor school attendance. If you plead guilty or are found guilty the Courts have a wider range of options which could include a maximum fine of £1000. In addition a Parenting Order could be imposed.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent for each child and payment is required for each Penalty Notice issued.

Who issues them?

The Local Authority through the Education Welfare Service.

How are they issued?

By post to your home.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the penalty but my child is still missing school?

Yes. You will not be prosecuted for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However, legal proceedings might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Penalty Notice, depending upon the circumstances.

When are they issued for unauthorised Leave of Absence

Penalty Notices are issued for absence taken during term time where the leave of absence has not been authorised by the

school or an absence has not been requested in advance and pupil will have had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised leave of absence during the previous six months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

What is unauthorised Leave of Absence?

- A parent has made a request for leave of absence in term time and this has not been agreed by the school;
- A parent has not applied for leave of absence in advance of the absence (the regulations do not allow retrospective approval); or
- If the parents keep the child away from school for longer than was agreed, the extra time is recorded as unauthorised

When can Leave of Absence be authorised?

Amendments made to the 2006 regulations in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013** make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.

Why have I received this leaflet?

This leaflet is sent to parents in Wiltshire to inform them of the extended use of Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence or for parents who have requested leave of absence during term time.

If the leave of absence you have requested is not agreed by the school and your child's total unauthorised leave of absence amounts to 10 or more sessions (5 school days), continuous or aggregated within the previous six months within the current academic year the Education Welfare Service will be notified. The six months includes all unauthorised leave of absence up to the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

Following this notification from a school that a parental request for a leave of absence in term time has not been authorised and the leave of absence is taken the Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child.

What can I do now?

If the leave of absence that you have requested is not authorised, you are advised not to take your child out of school.

Who can I discuss this with?

In the first instance the Penalty Notice Officer can be contacted on:

Tel: 01722 438123 Email: PNLO@wiltshire.gov.uk