

Pupil Attendance Policy



1. Introduction

We recognise the importance of good attendance to pupil achievement. We aim to maximise pupil attendance, so that all children are able to take the fullest possible advantage of the high quality learning experiences available to them.

2. Responsibilities

Maintaining good attendance is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – parents/carers, staff and children. All schools have a responsibility to proactively manage and optimise attendance. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly. This means that the child must attend every day that the school is open, unless the child is too ill to attend, or if permission for an absence has been given by school.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their children attend school regularly, and that they are punctual, appropriately dressed, properly equipped, and ready to learn.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (appointment card/letter)
- Ensuring that they do not request time-off in term time, unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Holidays are not classed as 'exceptional circumstances'.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and support offered.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, and ensuring complete accuracy in doing this.
- 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.
- Informing the DHT or HT where there are concerns, and providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring impact, once actions have been taken to address attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Following up absences with parents and carers, where no reason for absence has been given and note explanations on the register or passed on to admin staff.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.

The Deputy Headteacher and Headteacher are responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- 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 LA Attendance Team.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties, reasons for absence and possible avenues of support.

Administration staff are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information, ensuring complete accuracy.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Contacting parents/carers of absent children where no contact from home has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late, are collected early or go home late.
- Ensuring the Late Book is completed, and that lateness is tracked and acted upon.
- 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 Deputy or Headteacher
- Meeting with the DHT on a monthly basis, to review attendance and address concerns.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Children

At primary school age, a child's attendance is very much linked to the role of parents and carers. However, it is still the case that if we as a school help children understand the importance of good attendance, and if children feel valued and feel positive about coming to school, this in turn can influence parental attitudes and actions.

3. Registration

Registers will be taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. The morning registers are taken between 8.55-9.00, and the afternoon registers are taken just after 1.00pm. Any child who arrives at school after 8.55 should enter via the school office doors, accompanied by a parent/carer, and their name will be recorded in the Late Book. Parents/carers will be encouraged to offer an explanation for lateness.

4. If a child is absent

We ask parents to contact the school on the morning of the absence, before school starts, and to keep us informed on a daily basis (unless the parent/carer knows that an absence of several days is needed e.g. following GP advice). The parent can contact school by telephone, text, messaging service or email...and from October 2024 via the Arbor Parent Portal or App. If no message has been received, our staff attempt to make contact with the parent/carer, on the morning of the first day of absence – we use a text messaging system as a first line of contact followed by a phone call, and we ask the parent/carer to return our contact at the earliest possible opportunity. Texts and phone calls will also be made in the afternoon, particularly in the case of families with concerning levels of attendance.

5. If there are concerns about ongoing absence

Where there are concerns about absence – for example if there are several unexplained absences, lengthy unexplained absences or 'odd days' etc., the school will contact the family and will seek to resolve any issues through discussion. We are also able to obtain support from the Local Authority Attendance Team.

The DHT meets with one of our Admin Officers on a monthly basis, to review attendance. However, office staff and class teachers will also flag-up concerns on an ongoing basis.

6. Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are not permitted by law. These are known as 'unauthorised absences'. Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory
- If a child does not like a particular lesson
- If a child or parent does not feel they wish to come to school one day
- Waiting on a delivery
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Because it is a child's birthday
- Holidays in term-time
- Parents/carers are unwell.
- A Friday or Monday off, as part of a 'long weekend' away.

We have made it clear to parents and carers that such absences are unacceptable, and that they damage learning.

7. Tracking attendance & absence / Following up concerns about attendance/absence

The school tracks all absences, and in particular we look at and follow-up unauthorised absences. Each case is looked at on an individual basis, as so much depends upon context and circumstances, but typically we would: (i) Follow-up all unauthorised absences – including one off days - with text messages, phone calls and/or an informal word at the start or end of the day, (ii) Where patterns of unauthorised absence emerge, we ask that the parent/carer comes into school for a discussion. If contact is not able to be made, home visits are carried out by a senior leader accompanied by a member of the admin team. Where concerns arise following an unsuccessful home visit, a referral will be made to the police to request a welfare visit.

Referrals to other services and organisations will be discussed with parents and carers as a means to supporting families and children attending school regularly. This could include Early Help, counselling or mental health services and / or the LA Attendance team.

Every case is different, and it is our experience that ongoing contact with the family, comprising support and monitoring – a firm but caring approach – is the most effective strategy.

8. Strategies for promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

- We provide an environment in which pupils feel safe and welcomed. Pupils are made to feel that their presence in school is important; that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow-up action will be taken. This includes the Early Years Foundation Stage, recognising the importance of setting good habits for the future.
- We have an exciting, engaging curriculum, characterised by well-taught lessons which meet the needs of all pupils. There are also a range of extra-curricular activities.
- Every family receives a half-termly personalised update on their child's attendance. Where attendance has dipped below various trigger points, we have a set range of particular actions, though all issues are looked at on a case by case basis, personalised to each family.
- We have a weekly Attendance Assembly promoting good attendance and providing prizes for 100% attendance (prize draw)
- SAM (School Attendance Matters) – a cuddly toy dog – is presented to the class with the best weekly attendance!
- If a class achieves 100% attendance in a particular week, this is celebrated in assembly and a small treat given e.g. extra Golden Time.
- Termly Certificates are awarded to children who achieve high attendance: 98% - Bronze, 99% - Silver, 100% - Gold. Annual Certificates are also awarded, with gift vouchers for pupils achieving 100% over the course of a full school year.
- Parents are reminded regularly of the importance of good attendance e.g. Newsletters.
- Persistent Absenteeism will be monitored, and challenged through meetings with the DHT/HT.

- Punctuality will be closely monitored, and the parents/carers of children who are persistently late will be asked to come into school to meet the HT/DHT.

9. Term Time Holidays and Term Time Leave

From the 1st September 2013 DFE amended the regulations surrounding holidays in term time. These amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any request for leave in term time should be placed in writing to the HT in advance of the absence.

Following a written request for leave of absence, the HT will issue parent/carer with a letter stating whether absence will be authorised. If it is not authorised, and if the parent/carer subsequently takes the leave, the HT will request that the parent/carer makes an appointment to visit school to discuss the absence. This gives the school the opportunity for further investigation, the chance to stress the importance of good attendance, and to make the legal position clear. The attendance of families taking absence in term time, where leave has not been authorised, will be reviewed on a monthly basis (by the DHT & Admin Officer), with follow-up action taken where necessary. LA Fines?

10. Fines for poor attendance

Schools are able to ask the Council to issue fines for poor attendance, where particular criteria are met (in terms of the number of consecutive days of absence). To date, we have used fines in a small number of cases, and we will keep this under review as an ongoing option.

11. Absences caused when families move house and/or move school

- Children will be removed from the school roll once it is confirmed they have been admitted into their receiving school. If a child leaves without notification of a forwarding school or address the following process will be implemented:
- Attempts will be made to contact Parent/Carer or other family members.
- If unsuccessful a referral will be made as a Child Missing from Education and sent to Sunderland's City Council's Attendance Team. This will happen following 5 days of unauthorised absence. After twenty school days of unauthorised absence the child's CTF file will be uploaded onto the S2S secure site.
- If however there are safeguarding concerns, advice will be sought from the LA Attendance Team and a Child Missing from Education referral will be completed immediately. Discussions with other professionals/agencies will be carried out as appropriate.
- The child's details will be added onto the weekly IAT 9 form and submitted to the Attendance Team.
- If a child leaves without notification of a new school, but the Parent/Carer passes on a new address, and if the distance to be travelled indicates it is not possible to reach school, the attendance team will be informed. The child will be removed from roll when confirmed by the Attendance Team and their CTF uploaded onto the S2S secure site.

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