



Attendance Policy

February 2018



SHERWELL VALLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Purposes

1. To have clear, relevant guidelines for keeping registers which are carefully and routinely carried out by staff.
2. To ensure that good attendance has a high priority with pupils, Parents/Carers and teachers.
3. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence and address patterns of absence.
4. To understand the action that can be taken by the Local Authority's Attendance Improvement Service to ensure good attendance.

Rights, responsibilities and roles

School

1. All relevant staff will understand and apply the school's registration process.
2. All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session electronically.

NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable as they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.

3. The school will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to Parents/Carers through a variety of media: the school's website, newsletters, and school prospectus and parents meetings.
4. All absenteeism and lateness will be recorded accurately and monitored.
5. All pupils' with attendance below 95% will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.
6. The school will have clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness, allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
7. The school will annually review its Attendance Policy and associated procedures in consultation with the Local Authorities Attendance Improvement Service.

Parent(s)/carer(s)

1. Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action.
2. Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
3. Parents/Carers are responsible for immediately informing the school at which their child is registered of the reason for any absence by phone call or in person on the first morning of any absence and thereafter. This should be done before 9.30am.
4. Parents/Carers should not take their child on holiday in term time and are to be made aware of the potential consequences of a Penalty Notice being issued or subsequent prosecution of doing so without the school's prior written permission.

Authorised/Unauthorised absence

All absences must be explained by Parents/Carers. The Headteacher will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence.

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences *may be* as follows:

- Illness (1)
- Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement – see Appendix 1
- Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (2)
- Absence for rehearsals at a theatre event can be recorded as “education off site” if license has been received from the Local Authority.

This list is not extensive.

(1) Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a child has been absent for 3 days or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below 91% and/or the child is regularly away from school due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. Medical evidence can be in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication or an appointment card showing name of child and date they visited.

If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, a Healthcare Plan should be completed by the parent and submitted to the School.

(2) Unavoidable medical/dental appointments

All routine (non emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a child need to have an appointment during school hours, such as in an emergency, hospital or CAMHS appointment, evidence of this will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school recording the absence as unauthorised.

Holidays in term time/ Leave of absence

Legislation

From the 1st September 2013 amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006¹ came into force.

These amendments remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Requesting the absence

All requests for a child to be absent from School during term time must be made in writing at least a half term in advance of the proposed absence by completing the absence request form obtainable from Reception.

The Headteacher or person with delegated responsibility will decide whether or not to authorise the absence, on a case by case basis, and will only do so where there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision.

If the absence is unauthorised and still taken, the school may request the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice to the Parents/Carers for the unauthorised absence.

If no absence request is made

If a child is absent from School during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the School will write to the Parents/Carers to inform them that the absence has not been authorised and that a Penalty Notice may be issued.

If the Parents/Carers can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an **exceptional circumstance** and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the said absence, then a Penalty Notice will not be issued.

Please be aware:

Parents/Carers who take their child out of school without prior written authorisation from the school may be subject to a £60 penalty notice per child, per parent from the Local Authority.

Parents/Carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

Non-payment of the penalty within those timescales may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court under s444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per child. A 'parent' can be any person, whether a natural parent or not, who has care of the child or young person.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

First day reporting

- On the first day of any absence the Parent/Carer should ring school before 08:50am to inform the school that their child will be absent from school and give a reason for that absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is to be requested.
- Admin staff must keep a log of absence calls and reasons received each day.
- Registration marks must be made available immediately after registration in order that where necessary; any absenteeism can be followed up by admin staff.
- If any member of staff is concerned about an absence, the concerns will be raised with attendance/administrative staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge of the absence. If there are still concerns they should be passed to the Head teacher or Deputy Head teacher.
- Between 09:30am – 10:30am attendance/administrative staff will phone the Parents/Carers of any pupil whose absence is unexplained.

- If a child remains absent for a second day without any notification as to why, the school will call any other contacts that have been provided, including grandparents and work.
- If a child remains absent for three days without any notification, a member of staff will visit the home address.
- If, after three days, the school has concerns about the child's whereabouts and wellbeing, the school will contact the Torbay Education Safeguarding Service (TESS) for advice.
- It remains the schools responsibility to try to contact the parent and visit the home if necessary.
- If after 10 days, the child has continued unauthorised absence, a Child Missing Education (CME) referral will be made to the Attendance Improvement Service.

If the child is subject to a child protection plan or if the school has particular safeguarding concerns and feel the child is at risk of immediate harm, the school will immediately notify the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) without waiting for 10 schools days.

A child may be referred to the MASH if it is considered that they have totally disengaged from learning and/or the parent is subject to statutory intervention.

Lateness

There are two negative results caused by children who constantly arrive late. These are:

- The loss of education suffered by the child which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

- Pupils who arrive after 8:50am are considered 'Late' (L) and will be required to enter the school via the School Office to sign in and record the reason for their late arrival.
- Children who arrive after 9:10am should be considered as 'Late (after registers close)' (U).
- Registration staff will record the appropriate late mark in the registers and these will be entered into the computerised attendance programme.
- Late gates will be implemented on a regular basis.
- All pupils' attendance records will be checked every half term for lates before registers close (L) and lates after registers close (U).

- Where these late arrivals cumulate to 5 or more in a half term the school will write to Parents/Carers of the pupil in question to discuss any support needs and ways of accessing support.

Attendance letters

Where a child's attendance falls below 90%, the following actions should be taken:

Attendance letter 1 will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 90%.

Attendance letter 2 will be sent 2 weeks after letter 1 or later in the same academic year if attendance has not improved, inviting Parents/Carers into a meeting with the Family Support Worker.

Attendance letter 3 will be sent if Parents/Carers do not attend the meeting and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting Parents/Carers into a meeting with the Headteacher.

If, at any time, a child has 10 or more unauthorised absences equating to 10% within a 6 months period, the school should attend a legal consultation with the Local Authority to consider legal options available. Legal options include: Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and Prosecution. Please see the Local Authority website for further details.

Appendix 1: Agreed exceptional circumstances

This school has agreed the following additional exceptional circumstances:

- Critical illness of a close relative (Mother, Father, Sibling, Grandparent) living elsewhere in the country (maximum of 3 days authorised absence will be given),
- Forces children - one day for a departure or repatriation event,
- Forces children – up to 5 days authorised absence will be granted prior to or following their parents departure overseas,
- Where the parent's employment is in a hotel or their main income is derived from a holiday related business e.g. café owner etc. where taking holiday during the school holidays would result in loss of income (written evidence required – maximum of 5 days authorised)
- Child taking part in a national competition or extra-curricular exams.