



Sherborne St. John Church of England Primary School

Policy for Attendance

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Reviewed: October 2017, 2019, Jan 2021, Spring 2024

Person(s) responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy: Miss Sarah Jolliffe

Due for review: Spring 2026

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council. This Attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- admissions
- anti-bullying
- behaviour
- child protection
- exclusion
- safeguarding
- special educational needs
- teaching & learning

At Sherborne St John C of E Primary School, the lead practitioner for attendance is the Headteacher.

Section 1- Rationale / Statement of Intent:

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 children 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. Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age, who are registered to a school, attend regularly. All pupils must be punctual to their lessons.

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 children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital they are 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.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

The purpose of this policy is to outline ways in which matters of attendance and punctuality will be managed in order to ensure school and parents can work together to achieve and maintain high standards in this area in accordance with current legislation and Government and Local Authority guidelines.

Section 2- Operating the Policy

Promoting Good Attendance

Every child has a fundamental right to be educated. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. Pupils with a high level of attendance are likely to be more engaged with education and will benefit more from the many and varied experiences offered by our school.

To help us all to understand the expectations of good attendance, we will:

- Provide information on matters related to attendance in our Newsletters
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is
- Contact families directly when attendance rates fall below expected levels and offer support where necessary

Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

The Headteacher (as Attendance Leader) will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. They will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately, analysed and that attendance issues are identified at an early stage with support put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parent/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. An email, message or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school.**

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately
- Liaise with the Headteacher on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Ensure their child attends every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Ensure their child arrives in school on time.
- Register their child at the Reception Desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by email if a phone is unavailable.
- Discuss with the headteacher or class teacher any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Responsibilities of School Office:

The School Office is responsible for ensuring the accurate recording of absences and is usually the point of contact for parents reporting absence. If an absence is not reported by 9.30am, a member of the admin team will telephone parents requesting the reason for the absence. If the parent does not notify the School Office by lunchtime, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Responsibilities of the Governing Body:

Attendance data will be monitored termly by the Full Governing body through the Headteacher's report.

Section 3- Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 8.45am and again for the afternoon session at 1.00 pm.

Lateness /Punctuality

It is essential to be on time at the start of the school day. The start of the school day is an important time when children settle into class and teachers give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work, time with their class teacher, vital information and cause disruption to the lesson for others.

- The school doors are open between 8.35am and 8.45am.
- The school day begins at 8.45am and **all pupils are expected to be in school by this time.**
- Morning registration closes at 9am.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M' if we have been made aware of the appointment in advance.
- Parents are asked that where possible routine doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 100 day period the school or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

Parents are asked to collect their child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns as necessary with other agencies i.e. children's services

Procedures for absence

First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter; this is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence (by 9.30am);

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you by 9.30am; This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%

- Issue a Fixed Penalty Notice if absences are unauthorised and hit the threshold set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct.

Third Day Absence

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parents/carers after three days of absence, the school is required to start a child missing in education procedure as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends and wider family. Members of school staff may visit the family home to try to establish contact.

Ten Day's Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of being missing'. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and monitor their attendance closely.

Section 4- Request for Leave of Absence:

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **(Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **There are no rules on this** as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday **and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.**

Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the school office in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will **be unauthorised** and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct, parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code (see section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and parents are expected to cooperate by not taking children out during school time.

Section 5- Understanding types of absence:

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an **exceptional reason** for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes but is not limited to:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - truancy before or during the school day
 - absences which have not been explained
 - term time holidays
 - moving house
 - illness of parent

Note: Traveller families and service personnel families may have special arrangements and should contact the headteacher for guidance.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/ carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday or having a birthday treat.

Days of Religious Observance

Participation in a day of religious observance, by the religious body to which the parents belong, is classified as an authorised absence; however, holiday taken around the religious observation would not be approved unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Section 6- Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Legal Measures for absence taken when the headteacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. Non-approval of a parent/carers request for leave of absence or
2. A holiday that has been taken without permission

And

the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued.

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from <https://documents.hants.gov.uk/code-of-conduct-issuing-penalty-notices-for-unauthorised-absence-from-schools.pdf>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

Unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

- 1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period**
- 2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued **to one or more parent/carers** for each child. **N.B** This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one PN for each child to each parent

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

For further information parents/carers should visit Hampshire County Councils website at: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents#step-7>

Section 7- Advice and Guidance

My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat

to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you but consistency and a caring supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to:

- Give the school office comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling.

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport.

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is

away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

Section 8- Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.