

Attendance Policy



Named personnel with designated responsibility for Attendance:

Academic year	Head teacher	Deputy Head & Assistant Heads	Attendance Officer	Chair of Governors
2023/24	Mrs R Hocking	Mrs R Warren, Mrs S Leaver & Mrs K McCall	Mrs E Elliott	Mrs L Gray

Policy review dates:

Review Date	Changes made	By whom	Date Shared
Nov 2019	New Policy	R Taylor	January 2020
Nov 2020	Yes	R Taylor	November 2020
March 2021	Yes due to COVID	R Taylor	March 2021
July 22	Yes new monitoring system	E Elliott	November 2022
August 23	Yes	E Elliott	September 2023

Our school target is 97%

Introduction

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. Swalwell Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website or available from school office for those without access to the internet.

This policy 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 Head teacher 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 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.

Above 97%: Less than 6 days absence a year Pupils in this group will almost certainly get the best grades they can, leading to better prospects for the future. Pupils will also get into a habit of attending school which will help in the future.

95%: 10 days absence a year Pupils in this group are likely to achieve good grades and form a habit of attending school regularly. Pupils who take a 10-day holiday during term time every year can only ever achieve 95% attendance.

92%: 15 days absence a year Pupils in this group are missing three weeks of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best. The school may consider referring pupils with this level of attendance to the Local Authority.

90%: 19 days absence a year The Government classes pupils in this group as "Persistent Absentees" and it will be almost impossible for them to keep up with

work. Parents of pupils in this group could also face the possibility of legal action being taken by the Local Authority.

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 97% 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.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Attendance Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.
- Recognise the role of class teachers as they will be able to identify where attendance is having an impact on attainment.

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.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- 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 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.

Procedures

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

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Attendance Service or appropriate agencies of any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the nominated person with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

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 teachers are responsible for:

- Maintaining class registers and completing them accurately in accordance with school policy, and forwarding completed registers to school office staff after registration closes.
- Informing the nominated person where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Where poor attendance re occurs ensuring appropriate school staff are informed.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Ensuring appropriate school staff are informed of additional information provided by the child so it can be recorded in line with school policy
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

The Head teacher is 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 Attendance Service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's LA Attendance Officer
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the late Absence is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made and following up if children leave the school until contacted by new school.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early.
- 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 Head teacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance using the A Star Attendance monitoring system.
- First Day Response: Contacting home if no reason for absence is received, this may be via phone call or text message. 9.15- 9.30 each day and welfare checks.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence and on every subsequent day until the child is fit to return to school.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter) School accepts texts/ emails as long as seen by staff.
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- 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 dealt with.

Authorised absence

Authorised absence means that school has given approval in advance for a pupil to be away from school or that the explanation offered afterwards by a parent/carer has

been accepted. Decisions regarding the authorisation of absences are the responsibility of the Head Teacher.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. **Consequently, not all** absences 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, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. Some children who are classed as persistent absentees will always be unauthorised. (If their attendance is very low.)

Unauthorised absences on your child's attendance record may mean that you are liable to incur a Fixed Penalty Notice or could face prosecution. This applies to all parties with Parental Responsibility even if you do not agree with the absence.

Should my child still go to their childcare or education setting if they test positive for Covid?

Please check the updated guidance <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Registers

1. Registers are legal documents and will be marked twice a day
2. Parents must always give reasons for absence to the school.
3. Schools are to determine whether absence is authorised or unauthorised in exceptional circumstances, considering factors such as frequency, duration, attendance patterns, i.e. within reason. Staff must be observant of situations where absence is continually condoned by parents.

The guidelines below clarify possible actions

Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
Illness	Absence without a valid reason
Medical Appointment / Dental (For the time of appointment including travelling)	Latecomers beyond 30 minutes after the session has started
Family Bereavement for 1 day.	Persistent lateness within the first 30 minutes of the day
Religious Observance	Babysitting children including siblings.
Interview / Work Experience	Shopping during school time.
Excluded Children	Special occasions, e.g. birthday.
Sports / Music / Exams	Holidays
Agreed other educational activity at the discretion of the Head teacher	

Other absences which are not covered previously will be discussed with the HT.

Registration

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 within 15 minutes of morning session starting and within 5 minutes of afternoon session starting.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used. A star links to Sims for accuracy. Sims links to Cpoms for safeguarding.

Lateness

Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of 1996 Education Act. The school seeks to improve general punctuality and to improve attitude of persistent offenders by:-

- a. Informing parents of our expectations and offer ways of helping combat lateness. Leaflets, letters, website, alarm clocks form some children.
- b. Parents of persistent offenders must be contacted and reported to the Attendance Officer if no improvement. FSW and SBM can do home visits- can be phone calls to check in using info from all 3 systems.
- c. Praise and acknowledge latecomers who improve.
- d. Ensure that staff set a good example by arriving punctually for lessons.
- e. All children and parents must understand that lateness is actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases.
- f. Schools may use other incentives to improve levels of punctuality

Once the doors are closed at 9am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 30 minutes of morning session starting will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M). Evidence from parents / carers.

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, school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues. Home visits, walking bus, discussions with FSW /office/ staff.

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 full and accurate details of the reason for their absence and expected date of return. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence a request will be made to parents/carers to advise us of the reason. If no reason is given, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)

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. Office staff check 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 attempt to contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

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 Gateshead Council Legal Intervention Team 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/letter or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission

from you for the school to make their own enquiries. Alternatively, we may make a referral to the School Health Advisor to offer support.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

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

Exceptional circumstances include one parent is in the armed forces, a child has medical condition which means during school holidays would impact the child's mental health e.g. ASD or physically impaired. The child requesting authorised holiday must have a need themselves extended family need cannot be authorised.

The parent should ensure the leave can be justified by outlining the child's needs, be specific about the challenges of travelling in school holidays periods and outlining any other information that impacts their decision to take a child out of school in term time. This will allow the school to review the circumstances and give you a decision.

Please allow **10 working days** for us to review the situation before we give you a decision. The decision will be in writing, and we will explain the reasons if the request is denied.

Parents are encouraged to keep open lines of communication with school over absence as persistent absence can be considered a safeguarding matter.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 97%. Children who have over 10 days absence (for whatever reason) can be referred to the Legal Intervention Team. The over 10 day rule also runs concurrently meaning that if you have over 10 days every year you can be referred every year.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Head teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In our school parents are to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore when become concerned about attendance we will inform parents/carers of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home, parents may be offered an Attendance Action Plan. An Attendance Action Plan is an agreement which looks at ways to work together to improve attendance. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to

improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the LA Attendance Officer.

The Attendance Service will look at each case and may issue fixed penalty notices to parents where there is poor attendance.

The Legal Intervention Team working jointly with Legal Services may also consider:

- Applying for a parenting order
- Applying for an education supervision order
- School Attendance Order (If parent has not registered their child in a school)
- Community Order

Legal intervention letters will be posted to each person with Parental Responsibility. Each person with Parental Responsibility can be prosecuted even if you do not live with the child.

Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff have the responsibility for ensuring that the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. We use A Star Attendance monitoring software and regular meetings are held with the Head teacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions.

All letters are emailed through the Parent Pay system so parents need to keep their email addresses up to date with school.

Rewards & Recognition

Although good attendance is an expectation the school seeks to improve whole school attendance by offering incentives, this may include:

- 100% Certificates
- Prizes
- Positive Praise
- Letters
- School / Class Events
- Trips
- Additional Play time

Monitoring Sep 23.

