



Simonside Primary School Attendance Policy

Policy Originator: Emma Hills and Judith Gallacher

Next review Date: September 2018 (review cycle annual)

Aims

As a school we aim to:

- ensure attendance is at least 97%;
- support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to maximise learning;
- enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities.

Rationale

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents/carers and the school staff should work in partnership in making education a success and in ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. As parents, it is their responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school and return home safely.

Expectations

We expect that all *pupils* will:

- have a positive attitude about coming to school.
- be willing to learn.
- help to make sure they arrive to school on time.

We expect that all *parents/carers* will:

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day.
- ensure that they contact the school daily of absence or, if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- only take holidays within the school holiday periods.

- do not let their child stay off for a minor ailment.
- help their child to complete any catch-up work given to them as a result of being absent from school and return it to the class teacher.
- try to make all appointments outside of school hours.
- attend any meetings as requested by the school to discuss attendance is required.
- make sure their child understands the benefits of regular attendance at school.

We expect that *the school generally* will:

- provide a welcoming atmosphere where positive relationships with children and their carers are fostered.
- provide a safe and fun learning environment, in which children make friends and learn together.
- provide good quality teaching so that all children can achieve their full potential.
- provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's concerns.
- keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality, and closely monitor every child's attendance and punctuality.
- contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body will be requested.
- encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition.
- regularly inform parents of the % attendance of all pupils.
- make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly.
- hold regular Attendance Strategy meetings to discuss any concerns with attendance and punctuality.
- implement the LA guidelines on legal monitoring and implement fines when appropriate.
- send work home to a pupil who is absent from school for more than two days.

We expect that the *governing body* specifically will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff
- annually review the school's attendance rules and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents and children to implement the rules effectively
- nominate or identify a member of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children and staff

- work out appropriate and accurate annual attendance numbers and future attendance targets, and submit these to the LA within an agreed timescale each year
- take time at governors' meetings to regularly review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site
- ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff
- ensure that senior leaders make the necessary referrals to the local authority and other relevant agencies in individual cases of non-attendance
- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future.

We expect that the *school leadership team specifically* will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full review
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- ensure that legislation and government guidance on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislative changes and how to implement them
- nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job
- report to the governing body each term and the lead governor for attendance half-terminly on attendance records, data and provision
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop and engage with multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.

We expect that the school's *teachers and support staff* specifically will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

The school has, by law, to classify every absence mark a child has as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. Schools have a duty to monitor every child's attendance and take swift action when attendance falls below the expected standard.

Authorised Absences

- ✓ Illness
- ✓ Medical/Dental (where a hospital letter or appointment card has been seen)
- ✓ Bereavement
- ✓ Agreed special occasion or exceptional circumstances
- ✓ Religious observance
- ✓ Approved sporting activity

Unauthorised Absences

This type of absence is not permitted by law. School cannot authorise absences for:

- ✗ Going to the shops or hairdressers
- ✗ Going on holidays
- ✗ Visiting relatives
- ✗ Children not wanting to come to school
- ✗ Staying off because a sibling is off poorly
- ✗ Birthdays
- ✗ Waiting for a delivery
- ✗ Oversleeping because of a late night
- ✗ Getting up late and not wanting to come into school for that day
- ✗ Keeping your child off because you are ill

- ✘ Appointments for other family members

Illness

We know that young children can be susceptible to illness and understand that if they are poorly they may need time off to recover. This is reflected in our school target for every child to have at least 95% attendance.

In all cases of absence parents should:

- Only keep their child away from school if really necessary.
- Telephone school on the first day of absence. If no contact has been made by 9.30am from parents/carer, school will phone. If contact can still not be made, the information will be passed onto our Parent Support Officer who may come and visit children's homes to investigate why they are not in.
- Keep school informed if more than one day's absence is necessary.
- Avoid medical appointments in school time, but if absolutely necessary, bring their child to school before and/or after the appointment.
- Speak to the class teacher who will be able to provide parents with work for their child if appropriate.

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time at 8.55am. Learning starts as soon as the child walks into their classroom. Being late is extremely detrimental to their learning.

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.

Registration takes place as soon as the children come into class. Any child arriving after 9:00am will receive a late mark and the number of minutes late is recorded. Any children who are late must report to the main reception and report to Miss Monaghan or Mrs Dodds to receive their mark and give the reason why they are late. Any child arriving after 9:30am will have their late arrival classed as an unauthorised absence.

We will formally monitor children whose punctuality is cause for concern. They may also be kept in class during break or lunch times to catch up on work they missed at the start of the day.

Home Time

We also record details of any pupils who are collected from school before 3:15pm (reason, number of minutes absent from school and whether an appointment card/letter has been

seen). If the reason is not connected to an appointment, or an appointment card/letter is not seen by a member of staff, the minutes absent from school are recorded as unauthorised.

If a parent/carer turns up without prior warning and asks to collect their child early we would need to see the medical letter or appointment card. If no paperwork is available there is a form called 'Request to collect my child early from school' which the parent will be asked to complete. This is to ensure we have a recorded reason for the early collection. The confirmed reason will determine as to whether the minutes absent are recorded as authorised or not.

All children should be collected promptly at the end of the day. Exceptions to this are:

- Parents who have given permission for their child to walk home
- Children going to an after-school club
- Children who are booked to attend Cuba Kids

If a child is not collected by 3:30pm and we have not been informed by a parent/carer of any reason for this, a referral may be made to social services.

Holidays

Holidays should not be taken during term time. In line with Government policy on school attendance, we will NOT authorise any holiday absences unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If parents would like their child to have time off school for any reason- including holidays and medical appointments- they are required to:

- Collect a form (Application for Leave of Absence) from the school office BEFORE the absence
- Complete the form with as much information as they can about why they want to take their child out of school and return it to school

Medical/Dental Appointments should be supported by evidence i.e. appointment card/hospital letter.

Parents are advised that we always look at every case individually and take into account their child's attendance record over the previous year before making a decision about whether the absence will be authorised or not. Mrs Thompson may want to talk to them about it before making a decision. If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

The Law

The law makes parents and carers responsible for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age (5 to 16) receive a suitable, full time education (Section 7, Education Act 1996).

Schools and the local authority monitor school absence and work with families and young people where the level of absence is causing concern.

The Local Authority may take legal action against parents/carers if their children do not attend regularly and if the absences are not authorised by the school (Section 444, Education Act 1996).

Prosecution under Section 444(1), Education Act 1996:

- 'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence. If you are found guilty, the maximum fine is £1000.'

Legal Monitoring

- A request for legal monitoring will be submitted to the Local Authority **when a pupil's attendance falls below 90% with 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absences over a period of 10 weeks**. If a parent fails a legal monitoring period, a fine between £60 and £220 will be incurred. If a case goes to court, the fine will be determined by a judge and therefore may be higher.
- Where a pupil has **10 sessions (5 days) of holiday absence over a 12 week period**, the Local Authority will issue an immediate penalty notice of £60. If unpaid this fine increases to £120. In some instances, the case can be taken to court and the penalty decided on by the judge. It is important to note that 10 sessions of holiday absence does not have to be consecutive.

Working with parents and families

Simonside staff are very willing and able to help parents/carers who are experiencing difficulties with attendance or punctuality. Some of the ways in which staff can help are:

- Offering to meet and discuss parental/pupils needs with class teacher, head teacher or our Parent Support worker.
- Parents will receive termly letters informing them of their child's attendance percentage. These are colour coded red, amber and green.
- Helping parents link up with other parents who may be able to bring their child to school on occasions.
- Contacting the school nurse about medical issues they may be worried about.
- Working with their child to help them understand how important it is to get ready quickly in the mornings and not "play up".
- Putting parents in touch with parenting advice groups who offer support.
- Rewarding children with good or improved attendance and punctuality with certificates.

Incentives

As part of our commitment to raising attendance levels in our school, we offer a number of different initiatives.

- A trophy and 'Simon', the attendance bear, is awarded to the class each week in Friday's assembly which has the best attendance. Classes collect points every day for attendance:

20 points if everyone is in and on time

15 points if everyone is in but some are late

10 points if one person is absent

5 points if more than one person is absent

These points form a total at the end of the week and the running total is recorded on a whole school display. The school celebrates the winning class.

- Classes are given a letter for every day they have 100% attendance. When they have the 13 letters to spell out 'Star Attenders' that class will have pizza as a treat.
- 'In it to win it!' Children who have 100% attendance and have been on time all week get a raffle ticket at the end of the week to put in a box. There is a box for each phase of the school: Early Years, KS1, Lower KS2, Upper KS2. Each week three tickets are taken from each box and the winners may exchange their ticket for an attendance prize from the 'Attendance shop'. At the end of each half term the weekly tickets are pooled together from each phase. Winning ticket holders win one of several big prizes e.g. a scooter, vouchers etc. Finally, all the tickets from the school are pooled together and one winning raffle ticket will win a hamper for the child's family.
- Classes who have an attendance percentage of 97% or over each week receive an extra play time.
- Termly prizes/treats for 100% attenders.
- Termly certificates for children with 95% or above attendance.

Processes

Daily

- Class teacher takes morning register at 8:55am and afternoon register at 1pm
- Office staff update late marks and minutes lost
- Office staff update absences with reasons why and details of conversation with parent/carers
- Texts are sent out to parents where child is absent and no reason has been provided
- Staff (class teacher whenever possible) may call parent to discuss absence if appropriate and if there is concern over the absence of the child (even if a reason is known)
- Kay Dixon, our Parent Support Officer, may be asked to carry out a home visit if deemed necessary (even if reason for absence is known)

- Children with more than two days absence may be sent some work home to cover work missed in school. Teachers will advise how long they have to complete the work and it must be returned to them.

Weekly

- Reward classes with the best attendance
- Assess any pupils who have less than 90% attendance and place on a 4-week school monitoring programme if necessary
- Assess any pupils who have come out of a school monitoring period to see if they have passed or failed criteria. Agree next steps for any pupils who have failed. This could include a further school monitoring period, a meeting with Head Teacher and Parent Support Officer, signing of a parent contract.
- Assess any pupils with less than 85% attendance as this is categorised as 'persistent absence'. Agree what action needs to be taken. This could include any of the above. It could also include a referral to Attendance Services at the local authority for legal monitoring, which could result in prosecution.
- Look at individual pupils with low attendance to see what percentage they can achieve and set individual targets where necessary.

Half-Termly and Termly

- Hold a half termly Attendance Strategy meeting with the Leadership Team to analyse attendance data and create half termly actions.
- Send out pupil attendance letters based on traffic light system in Oct/Feb/June.
- Update parents/carers on attendance as part of pupil individual reports throughout the year.
- Other attendance prizes and incentives to be allocated to individual pupils or groups/classes.