

Southill Primary School



Attendance Policy

March 2024

Adopted by the Governing Body on:	20 March 2024
Next Review Date:	Annually
Last Review Date:	11 November 2021

Attendance Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Southill Primary School's Child Protection Policy. The school recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount and takes seriously its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and young people in its care. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them.

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. Southill Primary School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

The school will aim to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- Promoting opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently
- Ensuring that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have achieved, and are achieving, success
- Reporting pupil attendance to parents each term
- Offering positive verbal reinforcement to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time and developing an action plan to help them catch up with any missed curriculum and promote future attendance if necessary
- Setting achievable personal attendance goals for those who are causing concern.

Communications

This policy is available on the school's website, and is issued to all parents/guardians electronically when any updates are made. It is issued to all new parents/guardians before the start of school. It is also available in hard copy for any parent/guardian who may request a copy.

Statements of expectations

a. Pupils

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

What is expected of the pupils:

- To respect themselves and others

- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually
- To act with responsibility to their own and others' learning.

b. Parents

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly, and stays in school for every lesson after they have registered.

If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance at school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, education welfare services and other agencies where such a child's attendance is irregular.

What is expected of our parents:

- To keep requests for their child to be absent in term-time to a minimum
- To make medical and dental appointments out of school time
- To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence (if known) or on the first day of absence and **every day thereafter** until the child returns to school
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness
- To work closely with the school and to resolve any problems that may affect a child's attendance
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will not be authorised except in special or exceptional circumstances
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times, such as periods of testing
- To support their child and recognise successes and achievements
- To build a positive attitude to school and encourage their child to value their education.

c. School

School attendance will be positively supported wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount. The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions. A register of attendance has to be taken once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register has to record whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or is absent. If a pupil is absent the register must record whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised. The registration period is from 8.55am – 9.25am and any pupils arriving after the registers close at 9.25 am will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

What is expected of the school:

- To create a school ethos to which pupils want to belong
- To meet the legal requirements set out by Government

- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance
- To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent-condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the 1996 Education Act
- To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance
- To encourage open communication channels between home and school
- To describe procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees
- To refer parents to the Attendance Department of Dorset Local Authority for high or frequent numbers of unauthorised absences due to term-time holidays, for which these referrals may lead to a fine
- To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum
- To provide an environment that is conducive to educating every individual pupil

d. The Local Authority

Dorset Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the support of the Attendance Department, the Local Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. Dorset LA may also act as an enforcement agency and, as well as providing guidance and support through its officers, may fine or take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The court may fine the parent and put in place a School Attendance Order (SAO), an Education Supervision Order (ESO) or a Parenting Order.

School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance

Recording

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school at **8.55am**. Pupils arriving after this time will be considered as 'late' and should enter the school through the main entrance. If any pupil arrives late the office staff will ask the child or parent to record the child's name and reason for lateness on our computerised logging system. The registration period is from 8.55am – 9.25am and any pupils arriving after the registers close at 9.25am will be marked as an unauthorised absence. The register is taken again at 1.00pm.

All staff need to be aware that any child arriving late **MUST** register at the office so that they can be part of the register count should evacuation procedures (such as a fire drill) need to be used.

Daily attendance information is recorded electronically into our registration system.

Reasons for absence should be given on each day your child is absent from school ('poorly', 'ill' or 'unwell' is not a reason – more details are required please) and should be done by telephoning the school office. The school may then decide if it can authorise the absence or must record it as an unauthorised absence. This decision will be made within the guidance set out in the 1996 Education act, which identifies the following reasons as acceptable reasons for an authorised absence:

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith.

A reason for a period of absence is always required. If no reason has been given the school will contact all the named persons it has telephone numbers for, to attempt to elicit an explanation. **If no contact is made by 10.00am then the Dorset Council Attendance Officer and/or the Police will be called.**

Monitoring

The Headteacher will review the attendance of all the school's pupils on a termly basis, and also any pupils identified as cause for concern. When children's attendance falls below 90%, a phone call or letter to parents will inform them of the school's concerns and offer support to resolve any problems that may be preventing a child from attending. The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and, if there appears to be no improvement, the parents will be invited to a meeting to plan to resolve any issues preventing their child from attending. If the parent/s do not attend the meeting or after such meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve a formal referral to the Dorset LA and the Attendance Panel will be made.

The electronic registration system provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant to provide information to assist the school strategically manage attendance issues.

Requests for leave of absence

If a parent wishes to request a period of leave they are required to complete a 'Request for Child's Absence' form and submit it to the Headteacher. Headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

Penalty Notice due to unauthorised leave of absence

Penalty Notices will be applied for the following reasons:

- 3 or more consecutive school days (6 or more sessions) of unauthorised absence (G coded within the school's register) are recorded during the first ten days from the date on which the school reopens at the start of a new academic year in September;
- 5 or more consecutive school days (10 or more sessions) of unauthorised leave (G coded within the school's register) are recorded AND where the attendance level in the 10 school weeks immediately preceding the unauthorised leave falls below 90%, with the majority of absences within that period being recorded as unauthorised (O, U and/or G coded);
- Where a parent fails to make an application for leave during term time AND where a pupil has 5 or more consecutive school days (10 or more sessions) of unauthorised absence recorded (G coded within the school's register). N.B. Previous attendance patterns will not be considered in such cases.

Responding to a Penalty Notice

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

It should be noted that penalty notices are issued to each parent, for each child.

Provision of work for the absence period

Parents should note that, if they choose to take their child out of school for a holiday in term-time, the school will not provide additional work for them to take. This is due to the extra workload it places on the teacher to set, prepare and mark the child's work. It is the school's position that, should parents wish their child to complete work set by the teacher, then the child should be left in school to do this.

Policy statement

The importance of regular attendance

Our group of non-academy primary schools in Weymouth and Portland are committed to working together to ensure we offer parents and carers a consistent approach to promoting good school attendance. This approach and the rationale behind it is described below.

It is essential to the future happiness and employment prospects of children and young people that they form good habits of regular attendance at school from an early age and that good attendance is maintained throughout their time at school.

It is the parents' and carers' responsibility to ensure that their children attend school. This is a legal requirement and one that should be taken seriously. However, our schools would rather take a more positive approach by focusing on the very definite and positive aspects to regular attendance which will benefit all child's learning and wellbeing.

Good attendance in primary school is important for many reasons:

- It helps children do well in their learning. The best place children can learn is in class with their teacher. **The more often they are in class, the more progress they will make.**
- Being in school regularly is good for children's mental health and wellbeing. Not only are they able to develop their sense of belonging as part of the school community, children are able to develop their confidence in learning and social situations. This helps them to enjoy school and to find it rewarding.
- It allows children to take part in and enjoy the varied activities and events that develop more rounded aspects of children's character and enrich their experience of school.
- Good attendance improves academic performance and reading skills. Research shows that students who attend school regularly achieve better results in exams and assessments than those who miss school frequently. **Every day in school counts**, and missing even a few days can affect children's progress and confidence.
- Good attendance helps children learn how to socialise with others, to follow directions and develop the confidence to solve problems creatively. These are essential skills for life beyond education and for future employment. Employers look for people who are reliable, punctual and cooperative, and good attendance demonstrates these qualities.
- Good attendance may also lead to the earlier identification of more serious concerns for families. If families are struggling with any issues that affect a child's attendance, such as illness, anxiety, bullying or family problems, the school can offer advice, guidance and support to help overcome them.
- Good attendance increases children's chances of doing well later in life. Evidence shows that students who have high attendance throughout their time in school tend to have higher incomes and better job opportunities in the long term.

Children should only be kept off school in exceptional circumstances

Every moment in school counts, and days missed add up quickly. For example, a child who is absent for three days will miss over 19 hours of school - time they will never get back. The higher a pupil's attendance, the more they are likely to learn.

Holidays in term time

No school will authorise absence for a holiday during the term.

Whilst we all understand the financial pressures which make these holidays more attractive, we ask parents and carers to prioritise their children's learning. There are 6 designated holiday periods in the school year, of around 12 weeks in total, and we ask all parents to use these times instead.

If parents or carers disregard the need for regular attendance, and still insist on removing their children for a holiday, any such absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may be liable to a penalty notice from Dorset Council. It may also result in legal action.

Absence through illness

If a child is ill, parents and carers **must** inform the school as soon as possible. Our schools all operate a targeted 'First Day Call' system, which means that, if no notification has been received, parents and carers will be contacted to find out why the child is not in school. There are clear safeguarding concerns in these situations and it is important parents and carers understand their responsibilities to keep school informed of any absence.

Whilst we understand that children do become ill, children who lose a lot of time at school can suffer in the long term from significant gaps in their learning. Schools have the right to request evidence of illness and will do so if a child builds up considerable absence through illness over a period of time. If a child's health continues to affect their education, schools are obliged to make a referral to the School Medical Officer to ensure that all that can be done is being done.

Absence for appointments

Wherever possible, parents and carers should make all appointments outside of school hours. Removing a child from class to attend an appointment, or bringing them in late, is very disruptive to the child, the teacher, and the rest of the class.

If the appointment is unavoidable, parents and carers should be ready to provide evidence, such as the appointment confirmation letter.

Lateness

We also ask parents and carers to ensure that children arrive at school on time every day. Being late can disrupt the child's learning and affect their confidence and self-esteem. It can also cause inconvenience for other pupils and teachers who have to repeat or delay lessons.

In summary

Children's attendance is really important. Parents and carers are asked to do all they can to help children attend as much as possible, and, especially, to avoid holidays in term time.

If a child is going to be absent for whatever reason, parents and carers should let the school know as soon as possible.

We are here to support all families and children to achieve good attendance. If any parent or carer has any concerns or difficulties that may affect their child's attendance, we ask that they contact us as soon as possible. We can offer advice, guidance and practical help to improve the situation. We can also link parents and carers with other agencies that can provide further support for their family.

We appreciate parents and carers cooperation and partnership in ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. Together, we can help every child reach their full potential and enjoy their time at school.

This policy statement has been agreed by the Headteachers of the following schools:

Paul Mason	Southill Primary School
Andrew Johnson	Conifers Primary School
Leif Pallister	Bincombe Valley Primary School
Kathy McCann	Radipole Primary School
Fiona Daykin	Holy Trinity Primary School
Wanda Roberts	Wyke Regis Primary Federation
Jo Luxon	St George's Primary School