



Sutton CE (VC) Primary School

Attendance Policy

October 2023



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Statement of Intent:

Sutton Primary School aims to ensure the achievement of high levels of attendance and punctuality by all pupils. Good attendance and punctuality helps the children to settle in school and not miss out on vital learning and social experiences. Children with poor attendance can fall behind and catching up can be tricky. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that there is good attendance. The senior leadership team monitor attendance and will contact parents should they become concerned.

Children need to be in school every day unless ill or there are exceptional circumstances. We expect every child to have a minimum attendance of 96%.

Aims of the Policy

To promote regular school attendance thus offering all pupils equal access to learning.

Objectives of the Policy

- Create a clearly understood attendance procedure that is effectively communicated to and understood by parents/carers
- Ensure pupils are in school for the maximum number of days
- Meet government attendance targets

This policy is designed to help all concerned adults to enable children to attend school regularly and thus be offered the most consistent access to learning as is possible.

Good attendance at school is essential for a pupil's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. 100% attendance is possible, but in the event of your child being away from school it is essential that you inform the school of the reasons for the absence.

The Department for Education states that an attendance record of 96% or above is good. Where a pupil's attendance falls below 96% the school is obliged to notify the pupil and their family to improve the overall attendance.

School Responsibilities

To communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school

- Maintain appropriate attendance data
- Have appropriate registration processes in place
- To follow up absences and lateness if parent/carers have not communicated with the school the reason why their child is not in school
- Inform parents of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences
- To have systematic and consistent daily records which chart absence and lateness
- To report to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAO)
- To report to the Governing Body on attendance at least three times per year
- To consistently administer the attendance procedure
- To ensure the registers are taken twice daily at the start of the morning and afternoon session
- To promote good attendance

Parent Responsibilities

- To have children in class ready for teaching by the start of the school day at 08:55am at the latest
- To inform school **every day** of any absence by 8:30am, or as soon as practically possible
- To make appointments for leave in writing on the school's **Leave of Absence Form** giving the reason for the request.
- To work with the school to improve lateness and attendance
- Where possible to avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day

If parents, guardians or carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should:

- Talk to their child, it may be something simple they need help in resolving
- Talk to their child's class teacher in the first instance.

Authorised Absences

The Department for Education states that 'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence. It has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences, which are through unavoidable causes.

Parents may not authorise their child's absence – only the school can do this on the basis of an explanation provided by the parents, should the parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence the school will record such absence as unauthorised.

Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention – the school follows the most recent NHS advice regarding the return of a pupil after they have suffered from sickness or diarrhea. Currently this is for a return to school 48hrs after the last bout of illness.
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments – we expect absences to be kept to a minimum: **routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible**
- Days of religious observance notified in advance
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement of a very close relative, serious illness.

There are other absences, such as 'Approved Sporting Activity' that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absences are those which staff at the school do not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence by the parent/s. Unauthorised absences are where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by the parent(s)/carers
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The following activities are examples of what would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- Shopping
- Over sleeping
- Birthdays or family celebration
- Taking unauthorised holiday
- Returning late from a holiday
- Unexplained absence
- Truancy
- Minding the house
- Avoidable transport issues
- Caring for relatives
- Awaiting repair people
- Keeping children off school without good reason

The Process for Monitoring Attendance

Each school will have a person responsible for recording the instances of absence and lateness and discuss weekly with the Headteacher. Where issues persist the following will be initiated:

- If concerns persist the school will write to the parent/carer using the three tier letter system.
- If the concerns persist the school will arrange a meeting between the parent/carer and school representative
- If the concerns persist the school will make a formal referral to the Local Authority's Educational Welfare Service to deal with the on-going issues.
- Should concerns persist the LAAO will agree action (as above). Please note that ultimately the Local Authority can take legal action (See Appendix 1).

Absences during Term Time

The Department for Education makes it clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, amended in September 2013, made it clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Penalty Notice. If a Penalty Notice is issued a separate Notice will be issued to each parent of each child.

As of January 2018 the rate per parent per child will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days.

If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed 'Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time'. These may be obtained from the school office or website.

Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents will be informed within 7 school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

There are approximately 190 school days within a year (380 sessions) which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 13 weeks of school holidays; please ensure your holidays are taken during this period.

Lateness

- Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite.
- Classroom doors open at 8:40am in EYFS and KS1 and 8:45 in KS2 each day. Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time. Pupils will be marked late if they arrive at school after the registers have been taken by 8:55am. The school gates will be shut at 8:55am. Children who arrive after that time must come into the building via the main office, where they will be asked to sign in on the Inventory System providing a reason for being late.
- Lateness will be monitored.
- If the arrival at school is after 9:15am the pupil will receive a 'U'. This equates to an absence although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with Health and Safety.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence code 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during the school holidays.
- Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils.
- Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents or carers of pupils who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists parents or carers will be invited to attend a meeting at the school to discuss the problems they face.

Sickness absence

Please notify the school on each day of the absence. We reserve the right to request a doctor's note or proof of appointment regarding recurring and frequent illness.

The Role of the Local Authority Attendance Officer

The Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) strives to support schools, parents and pupils with the aim of ensuring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. However, the Education Welfare Service also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

Section 444 of the Education Act states that 'if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence.

Cambridgeshire County Council through the Education Welfare Service may issue a Penalty Notice or prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly.

A Penalty Notice can be issued as long as the following criteria apply:

- At least 8 sessions (equivalent to four school days) of unauthorised absence by the pupil during 8 weeks.
- A school will refer a case to the LAAO if attendance is below 90% over the previous 8 weeks with the majority unauthorised.
- Other than in specific circumstances the parents will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given 15 school days to affect improvement. Within the 15 day period further unauthorised absence will trigger the issue of a notice without further warning.

In exceptional circumstances the Local Authority reserves the right to:

- Issue a Penalty Notice for a first offence
- Issue a Penalty Notice without warning

Governors

It is the Governing Body's legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in their schools. The schools attendance figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

Appendices

Appendix One: Three Tier Letter System

Appendix Two: Copy of Leave of Absence For

Letter 1:

Name and address of parent

Date

Dear

Name of Pupil – DOB

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to «percentage_attendance»% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have a negative impact upon their learning and, as I am sure you are aware, it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

I will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If the absence is due to a medical reason please ensure that we have been informed so appropriate support can be put in place.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me. However, it does no harm in speaking with the teacher or attendance team, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Enc Record of attendance
 School Attendance Leaflet

Letter 2:

Name and address of parent

Date

Dear

Name of Pupil – DOB

I am writing to inform you that «forename»'s attendance is still causing concern. We are aware that many pupils were unable to access education due to COVID and school attendance is now more important than ever. Therefore, we need to meet with you urgently to discuss the situation.

You are required to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss this matter further at the date and time below.

Date:

Time:

Should «forename»'s attendance remain irregular; we may have to refer this matter to the Local Authority who could consider more formal action. This might result in a Penalty Notice Fine and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under **Section 444 Education Act 1996**, and a fine of up to **£2500 and/or 3 months in prison**.

Absence due to self-limiting illness can be authorised in the first instance but a child who is absent frequently due to a medical reason, including repeated self-limiting illnesses, medical evidence will be required.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support your child in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve «forename»'s attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be initiated. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Encs Record of Attendance
School Attendance Leaflet

Letter 3:

Name and address of parent

School ref:

Date

Dear

Name of Pupil – DOB

It was disappointing that you failed to attend the Parenting Contract Meeting scheduled on xxx.

As you did not attend the meeting I am setting a target/s for xxxx which is as follows:

- 90% or above attendance target over the next 6 school weeks monitoring period (insert dates)
- Absences due to self-limiting illness can be authorised in the first instance but a child who is absent frequently due to a medical reason, including repeated self-limiting illnesses, medical evidence will be required.
- Prompt communication when XXX will be absent. Parents should contact the school by 8:30am as per School Attendance Policy

Therefore, if the attendance is not 90% or above over the 6 school weeks monitoring period then you are at risk of a Penalty Notice Fine or prosecution under **Section 444/4441(A) of the Education Act 1996**. If targets are not met or unlikely to be met then this case is likely to proceed to enforcement actions.

It is important that, if you have any questions or queries, you contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix Two: Copy of Leave of Absence

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CAREFULLY

As a parent or carer you are strongly urged to avoid leave of absence from school during term time. Should this be absolutely unavoidable then you should fill in this form and return it to the school office prior to the absence.

The Government implemented new legislation that came into effect from September 2013 which means that's schools may only authorise leave of absence in **exceptional** circumstances. A parent or carer does not have any right to leave of absence during term time and if your request is refused, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This could result in legal action being taken or a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

A Penalty Notice involves a fine of £60 per child, per parent/carers if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 per child, per parent/carers if paid within 28 days. Should a parent/carers on whom a notice is served fail to pay the full amount within the specified time he/she will be liable to prosecution in a Magistrates Court where on conviction a sentence of a fine up to £2500 or up to three months in prison may be imposed. Penalty Notices may only be served in accordance with the terms of the County Council's local code of conduct, a copy of which is retained by the school.

Should leave of absence be taken after permission has been withheld, then this will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This will appear both in the school register and in your child's report. Persistent unauthorised absence may result in the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer and possible legal proceedings.

I request that.....(name of child) be granted leave of
absence from Sutton CE (VC) Primary School

from to

Total days absent from school

Please explain the exceptional circumstances that require a leave of absence during term time:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Signature of parent.....Date.....

.....

Please print name of parent completing this form

Office use only:

Authorised / Unauthorised.....Headteacher.....