



South Wonston Primary School

Attendance Policy 2024-2025

1. Aims

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 pupils/ students 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 they are entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. 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 our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that your child is 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.

South Wonston Primary School is committed to meeting our obligation concerning school attendance through our whole- school culture and ethos that values good attendance including:

- Promoting good attendance - so children can maximise their educational and social achievements, enabling them to develop self-discipline and organisational skills to prepare them for the work environment.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

Good attendance is important so children can maximise their educational and social achievements, enabling them to develop self-discipline and organisational skills to prepare them for the work environment.

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance 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

As a school, we raise awareness of school attendance issues with key professional groups such as Education Welfare, Health, Housing and Police. This is to ensure that school attendance is a priority and that families are challenged with consistent messages from all. The primary responsibility for ensuring that children attend school rests with parents/carers. However, we promote attendance and tackle absence by involving parents from the moment their children start our school and encourage the children with targets and rewards.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996 Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Governing Board The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school.
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Attendance is also discussed as part of the Headteacher's report at the full Governing body meetings.

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.

3.3 The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Sarah Rowe and can be contacted via the school office (01962 881311 / 882506 or adminoffice@southwonston.hants.sch.uk)

3.4 The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7).
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance and working with Education Welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed penalty notice.
- Action the issuing of Penalty Notices.

The Attendance Officer is Amy Hussain and can be contacted by telephone: **01962 881311 / 882506** or by email: adminoffice@southwonston.hants.sch.uk

3.5 Classroom Staff

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately;
- Promote and reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities;
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer on matters of attendance and punctuality
- To record all attendance concerns on the schools monitoring system (CPOMS).
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence to Designated Safeguarding lead (DSL)/deputy designated safeguarding lead (DDSL).

3.6 School Admin staff School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system using the correct codes.
- Transfer calls from parents to a DSL/DDSL to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.
- Contact parents to discuss reasons for absence /lateness

3.7 Parents/Carers Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and on time.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the first day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise the school when they are expected to return.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone or email.
- 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.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child.
- Attend meetings put in place to support their child's attendance.

3.8 Responsibilities of Children:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the Reception Desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.
- Engage with any additional support eg. pastoral interventions, put in place to support school attendance

4. Recording attendance

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

4.1 Attendance Register - see Appendix 1

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day before 8:45am and again for the afternoon session at 1pm. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present.
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity.
- Absent.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry.
- The amended entry.
- The reason for the amendment.
- The date on which the amendment was made.
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for three years after the date on which the entry was made. Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45am and will be kept open until 8:50 am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1:10pm.

4.2 Unplanned Absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office (see also section 7). You can contact the school and leave a message or talk to a member of the senior leadership team on the gate between 8:35 and 8:45am.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents should inform the school office in person or by email to indicate the times of such appointments and when the child will return to school. **However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.** Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of lessons are used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others and can find being late embarrassing, leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8:45am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time.** Morning registration closes at 8:50 am. The afternoon registration closes at 1.10pm.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late (code L)
- 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.
- Due to a medical appointment, will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that, where possible, doctor and dentist appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.
- The Attendance Officer will contact parents to discuss persistent lateness and refer to the Educational Welfare Officer or issue a penalty notice if appropriate.

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good timekeeping 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 not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week 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).

Please collect your 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. If one is available, the school will place a child into the after school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

4.5 Following up Unexplained Absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Contact you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you; *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 a member of the Senior Leadership Team and/or member of the Pastoral Team, if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panel if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Third Day Absence

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence, the school is required to start 'child missing in education procedures' 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. In circumstances of persistent absence the Family Support Worker 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 pupil 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/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% (3 weeks / 30 sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Where this absence is authorised, school will meet with parents / carers in order to ascertain any underlying medical reasons for the level of absence. The school may decide not to authorise any future absences without medical evidence.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her 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 depending on the reasons for the absence we will agree a plan with you to ensure that attendance improves.

All our persistent absentee pupils and their parents are subject to an Attendance Plan or home school contract. Please see below the system we follow when supporting a child and their family when attendance has dropped below 90%.

Stage 1: A letter will be sent home advising that your child's attendance has dropped below 90%. It will advise you on how we can support getting your child into school and how we can manage any medical conditions during the school day.

Stage 2: If attendance declines further you will be invited to attend an attendance meeting and complete an improvement plan with the attendance lead and Head Teacher. In this meeting we will all take on actions, signing to agree our responsibility in upholding them. Attendance will be closely monitored and regular check-ins will be made. A pastoral intervention may be put in place to support your child (identifying barriers to coming in to school

Stage 3: If little or no rise in attendance is seen while the improvement plan is in place then you will be invited into school to meet with the Attendance Leand, Head Teacher and Chair of Governors. Additional agency referrals may be made at this point (children services, early help, legal intervention team). Future absence may be unauthorized without sufficient evidence and you may be at risk of receiving a penalty notice.

The above system is in place to support families and children. We hope to put actions into place and prevent sanctions where possible. We understand that getting your child into school can be difficult, but remember that children at this school are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and in time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for Term-Time Absence – see Appendix 2

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence for a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there WILL be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance.
- In difficult family situations, the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail).
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

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

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).

5.2 Legal Sanctions

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.

The School and Local Authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, Local Authority Officer or the Police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

South Wonston Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. We love to celebrate success.

Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance and use a variety of awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

7. Attendance Monitoring

7.1 Monitoring Attendance The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.
- We will monitor key groups such as disadvantaged, free school meals and SEND closely. Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing Attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

7.3 Using Data to Improve Attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

7.4 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence Persistent Absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school and Severe Absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Contact parents when their child's attendance drops below 96% and beyond.
- Invite parents to meet with the Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance, the Attendance Office and the Education Welfare Officer to informally discuss any possible barriers to attendance and punctuality.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.
- Where relevant the Inclusion Lead, will also support families within these meetings to assist in bringing about improvements.
- Refer to the Education Welfare Officer for statutory support if attendance concerns do not improve despite school based support.
- Seek a penalty notice for periods of unauthorised absence.
- Refer to other agencies who maybe able to offer additional support , eg. MHST

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by the Designated Senior Leader for attendance. At every review, the full governing board will ratify the policy.

9 Advice and Guidance for Parents

9.1 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 into 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.

9.2 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.

Your child will bring home a home-link book and reading journal each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day, if appropriate.

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.

EBSA

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. A clear distinction is made between those that are absent from school due to truancy and those that are absent from school due to the specific emotional distress that they experience around attending school. School plays a very important role in identifying factors associated with pupil vulnerability and the potential triggers leading to EBSA.

See EBSA documentation from Hampshire January 2021

<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/EBSA-good-practice-guidance.pdf>

9.3 Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to give the Administration Officer 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.

. Links with other policies

10. This policy links to the following policies:

- Behaviour Support Policy
- Children with Health Needs That Cannot Attend School Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding policy

APPENDIX 1 – Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|------|---|--|
| / | Present (am) | Pupil is present at morning registration |
| \ | Present (pm) | Pupil is present at afternoon registration |
| L | Late arrival | Pupil arrives late before register has closed |
| B | Off-site educational activity | Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school |
| D | Dual registered | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered |
| J | Interview | Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment |
| P | Sporting activity | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school |
| V | Educational trip or visit | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school |
| X | Not required to be in school | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend |
| Y | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| Z | Pupil not on admission register | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school |
| # | Planned school closure | Whole or partial school closure due to half term/bank holiday/INSET day |

| Authorised Absence | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| C | Authorised leave of absence | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| E | Excluded | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made |
| H | Authorised holiday | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances |
| I | Illness | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness |
| M | Medical/dental appointment | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment |
| R | Religious observance | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance |
| T | Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence | Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school |

| Unauthorised Absence | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| G | Unauthorised holiday | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school |
| N | Reason not provided | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| O | Unauthorised absence | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence |
| U | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed |

Appendix 2 - Absence request form

[Hampshire County Council Absence Request Form](#)