



# Sylvester Primary Academy Attendance and Punctuality Policy September 2019

## 1. Introduction

Good attendance is directly related to a child's enjoyment and achievement at school and is vital to promote successful learning. We strive to provide a welcoming and caring environment whereby all members of the school community feel wanted and secure. We all take responsibility for welcoming a child into school and into the classroom, with a smile, whenever they attend.

Persistent or long-term absence has a negative impact in all areas of school life, not just on academic achievement but also on the development of key skills and friendships. Interrupted attendance makes teaching and learning difficult and undermines the educational process leading to educational disadvantage:

An effective system of incentives and rewards acknowledges the efforts made to improve attendance and timekeeping.

The Local Authority, the school and parents each have a role to play in promoting good attendance.

We expect all children to be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. However, we will challenge the behaviour of children and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

We understand that children are sometimes reluctant to attend school and that the reasons for this are varied and may be complex. We aim to resolve any problems with regular attendance by making early contact with parents and offering support including referral to the Learning Mentor. Where children are anxious about coming to school, the Learning Mentor can offer practical support and help develop strategies to manage anxiety and encourage attendance.

## 2. Aims

Our overall aim is to promote a whole community approach to improving attendance and punctuality.

- To improve the overall percentage of attendance of children at school.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for the whole school community, including parents, staff and children.
- To provide support advice and guidance to parents and children.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysis of attendance data
- To develop and maintain positive communication between home and school.
- To establish a system of rewards and incentives.
- To work together with the School Attendance Service and other services or agencies
- To recognise individual needs of children who have been absent for a prolonged period and who are returning to school

## 3. Expectations of Pupils

We expect that all our pupils to attend school regularly unless absence is genuinely unavoidable. We also expect them to arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.

## 4. Expectations of Parents and Carers

Parents have the main responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school. We expect all parents and carers:

- to encourage their child to attend school – all parents and carers are responsible for ensuring children attend school regularly and on time
- to inform a member of staff of any problem that may hinder their child from attending school, as soon as possible

### 4.1 What to do if a child is absent from school:

If a child is to be absent from school, parents should report absence by ringing the school office to report the absence. If an absence is expected to continue beyond **three** days, parents are asked to maintain regular contact with the school to indicate how long the child is likely to remain absent. When a child returns from an absence, parents should write a note to the teacher explaining the reason for the absence.

Parents are asked to ensure that the school office has up to date contact details for parents and carers so that absences may be followed up.

## 4.2 Medical/Dental Appointments

Where possible, appointments should be arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents should inform school in advance, preferably in writing, when the appointment is and provide evidence of the appointment.

If a child needs to leave school during the course of the school day, e.g. a medical appointment or to go home for lunch, parents/carers must attend the school office to sign the child out of school and to sign them back in again.

## 4.3 Requests for holidays in term-time

Holidays should be arranged during school holidays and holidays in term-time will not be authorised under any circumstances.

Where a pupil is absent from school without permission of the school, the parent/carer of the pupil may be issued with a £60.00 Penalty Notice per parent per child. If the notice remains unpaid after 21 days the penalty increases to £120.00. If the notice remains unpaid after 28 days the Local Authority may commence proceedings under section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act in the Magistrates Court.

If children are taken away for a two week holiday every year and have an average number of days off for sickness and appointments, then by the time they leave at sixteen, they will have missed **a year of school**.

## 4.4 Punctuality

We expect all parents and carers to ensure that children arrive at school on time. The school day starts at 8.50am.

Doors are closed promptly at 8.50am. If a child is late for school, the child should be taken to the school office where their attendance can be recorded and any school meals orders taken.

The responsibility for lateness and attendance rests with the parent and any concerns are raised with the parent and not with the child.

If a child arrives after 8.50am they will be recorded as late.

## 5. Responsibilities of School

Responsibility for promoting school attendance is shared by everyone in school. All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each child attends school regularly and on time. In addition to this there are specific responsibilities:

### Principal

- to oversee the implementation of the whole policy
- to report to the local governing body and The Wade Deacon Trust

### Class Teacher

- to ensure that registers are completed accurately and on time
- to record all reasons for absence in the register
- to discuss attendance and punctuality with pupils and parents/carers on a regular basis
- to liaise with the Principal and Learning Mentor over any concerns
- to encourage a positive attendance and punctuality ethos in class time

## Learning Mentor

- to monitor school attendance
- to carry out first day response calls to families if no reason has been given for absence
- to prepare class attendance and punctuality figures weekly
- to provide termly attendance and punctuality figures to parents
- to set attendance targets
- to work constructively with identified cohorts/classes of children to improve attendance
- to initiate contact and meet with parents in cases of prolonged unexplained absence
- to liaise with the School Attendance Service, Principal, Class Teacher and other external agencies as appropriate
- to organise the return and reintegration of long term absentees in conjunction with the class teacher
- to complete statutory Attendance Service audit requirements
- to complete statutory Department for Education Attendance returns and audits

## Attendance Service

- to support the Learning Mentor with school based attendance initiatives and parent meetings/home visits
- to regularly update the Learning Mentor on the children they are monitoring.
- for the School Attendance Officer to work closely with the school and meet regularly with the Learning Mentor in dealing with any pupils whose attendance/punctuality is causing concern.

## Administrators

- to provide support to the Learning Mentor in the management of SIMS data
- to provide support in the documenting of punctuality in the absence of the Learning Mentor
- to provide administrative support in the sending out of attendance and punctuality letters

### 5.1 Parents and Carers can expect the following from school:

- regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance and punctuality
- contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing a valid reason
- immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us
- initiatives to encourage good attendance and punctuality
- regular register checks to identify any patterns of absenteeism and lateness

### 5.2 Registers

The Principal is required to keep an attendance register for all pupils and this register is taken twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. For each child, the register is marked either as present or absent. If a child is absent the register must state whether the absence has been authorised by the Principal or not.

**Authorised** absence is absence with the permission of the Principal including absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided e.g. illness.

**Unauthorised** absence is absence without permission from the Principal and includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- keeping a child off on Monday because the family is tired after a weekend away
- keeping a child back from school because they are waiting for a delivery
- keeping a child off for a whole day for a doctor's or dentist's appointment
- not providing a reason for an absence

If a child is absent and a parent or carer has not reported the absence to school, then the school office will make contact with parents on the first day a child is absent from school.

### **5.3 Monitoring unauthorised absence**

Unauthorised absences will be reported to the Attendance Service via regular meetings to discuss the next appropriate action.

If a child returns to school with a note that has an unacceptable reason for the absence then the class teacher will refer the note to the Learning Mentor. The Learning Mentor will then arrange to inform the parent or carer that the absence has been categorised as an unauthorised absence.

The Learning Mentor will categorise this as unauthorised on the absence form. If unauthorised absences continue then the Learning Mentor will liaise with the School Attendance Service.

### **5.4 Attendance Problems**

We aim to support parents and carers to help remove any barriers which prevent a child attending school. These could be barriers which the child has or which the parent has. Our starting point is always one of support. In return, we expect parents to contact school at an early stage and to work with us in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful and we try to resolve attendance issues within school.

The School Attendance Service visits school regularly and will follow up any cases where difficulties remain unresolved. The School Attendance Officer will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the School Attendance Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

## **5.5 Responding to Attendance Problems**

The school uses a Red, Amber, Green system to categorise attendance. Attendance of 96.1% or above is Green. Attendance of 90-96% is Amber and attendance below 90% is Red.

Every half term parents are sent a letter advising them of their child's attendance by reference to the Red, Amber, Green system.

Parents of all children with attendance below 90% are invited to attend an Attendance Panel which consists of the School Attendance Officer and Learning Mentor.

The Learning Mentor will monitor the attendance of children whose attendance is in the amber zone, below 96%. The Learning Mentor will make contact with parents/carers, after which the Learning Mentor will monitor the child's attendance for four weeks.

After a four-week period, the situation will be re-assessed. If attendance has not improved, parents are invited to a meeting with the Principal. Attendance will again be monitored for a further 4-week period. If the child's attendance has not improved over that time, then the case is referred to the Local Governing Body.

If a child has already been identified by the school as being cause for concern then the parents/carers will be contacted by telephone on the first day of absence. Where there is no response, a home visit may be made by the Learning Mentor and School Attendance Officer. If there is still no contact, the case is formally referred to the School Attendance Service. A child who is identified as being cause for concern may be referred to the School Attendance Service earlier than is indicated above.

The Governor's Attendance Panel may also be convened.

## **5.6 Responding to Poor Punctuality**

Any child arriving after 8.50 am is late. Using the Late Register, the class teacher and the Learning Mentor will identify those children with poor punctuality. A meeting will be arranged with parents. The class teacher and the Learning Mentor will then monitor punctuality over a four week period. If punctuality improves then no other meeting will be convened. If punctuality has not improved over the four weeks, then the case is referred to the Headteacher's Attendance Panel.

## **6. Reintegration**

The return to school for a pupil after a long-term absence requires special planning. Working in partnership, the class teacher and the Learning Mentor will be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and the management of that programme. Programmes will be tailored to suit the pupil's individual needs. All staff will be sensitive to the needs of the pupil and problems will be notified to the Principal as soon as possible.

Where a pupil has been temporarily excluded, this will be treated as authorised absence. While the pupil remains on the register, the school will recognise its responsibilities towards the pupil by setting work for the excluded pupil.

## **7. Missing Children**

If a child has not attended school for 10 days and no reason has been given, the child is then reported to the attendance service as a missing child. The child is known as a CME (child missing in education). The attendance service will then follow the missing children procedures.

This also applies if a child has left the area and no future destination has been given. Sylvester Primary Academy will only remove pupils from role when it has been confirmed by the new school that they have arrived.

## **8. Rewards and Incentives**

In consultation with the School Council, a system of rewards and incentives was decided and is detailed in the attached plan.

Good attendance is also promoted and encouraged by:

- celebrating attendance and punctuality in weekly whole school assemblies using the traffic light red (below 90%), amber (below 96%) and green zones (96.1% and above)
- raise awareness of good attendance with Attendance Weeks and talks from the attendance service
- recording good attendance on individual pupil records
- reward pupils with good attendance
- provide reward systems for any pupil defined to have made a special effort in attendance
- good attendance rewarded each term
- children who achieve 100% attendance over the whole school year receive an award for excellent attendance
- giving children the opportunity to work with the Learning Mentor to raise their levels of attendance
- meeting with parents who are concerned that their child may be experiencing difficulties which may hinder their child's attendance at school
- working in partnership with the local authority through initiatives such as Attendance and Punctuality Assemblies
- Regular Attendance Reports to be sent home
- Regular Meetings between the Learning Mentor and the School Attendance Officer

