

Sopley Primary School Attendance Policy

From the Hampshire County Council Model (September 2015) Reviewed June 1016

This policy was drawn up using a range of national documents and guidance, listed at the end of the document. School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school Attendance Policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council.

This Attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies and procedures:

- admissions
- anti-bullying
- child protection
- exclusion
- safeguarding
- special educational needs
- teaching & learning
- behaviour & rewards

The level of attendance and punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's homeschool agreement which parents must sign following their child's admission to a school.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how, together, we will achieve this. This policy will be annually publicised in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via the school website. Alternative languages and formats will be made available where possible upon request.

Rationale

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 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 he/she is 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 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.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence 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, higher education, employment or training

Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home/School agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

Provide information on matters related to attendance in our regular newsletter, parentmail, letters to parents and on our website;

- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Set targets for the school and for classes for attendance and display these in the school;
- Look for additional opportunities for parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties as appropriate.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parent/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately;
- Promote and reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities;
- Liaise with the school administration team on matters of attendance and punctuality; and
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of Children:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Take responsibility, if age appropriate, for registering at the school office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers: Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first day of absence (before 9.30am), or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Let the school office know of any planned absences (e.g. medical appointments which cannot be scheduled out of school hours) well in advance.
- 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.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day (9.00am) and again for the afternoon session at 1.15pm.

Lateness / 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 9am and all pupils are expected to be in school by 8.55am for a 9am start.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival 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.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they 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.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see p6 'penalty notices for non-attendance' for further detail).

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 nonattendance (see p6 'penalty notices for non-attendance' 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.

What should I do if my child is absent?

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

First Day of Absence

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school office before 9.30am on the first day of absence to confirm the cause of absence;
- Contact the school office if the absence continues beyond the length of time initially indicated;

If your child is absent a member of school staff will:

- Telephone or text 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 senior member of staff 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 external agencies 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% 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.

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 on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from **September 2013: (Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. **The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this** as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. **There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.** Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the school office in advance and before making any travel arrangements. Any supporting evidence for the request must be attached to the application.

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 with the code (see p6 for detail).

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 wherever this can be avoided.

Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absence:

- **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:

- parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings

- absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures

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.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence
 - The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school: Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
 - Parenting orders
 - Penalty notices
 - Education Supervision Orders
 - Prosecution

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available

from <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendanceguidance-forparents/possible-penalties.htm>

Penalty Notices for non-attendance- Hampshire's Code of Conduct

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions - these do not need to be consecutive (codes G, U, or O on the register)
- persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code O), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

Legal Measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined parent/carers' request for leave of absence:

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. non approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence; or
2. a holiday that has been taken without permission and the unauthorised absence (coded G) is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued.

If a child has other types of unauthorised absence (coded O and U) and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. **10 sessions (5days) of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week school period**
2. **1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's Attendance Policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council

will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parent/carers** for each child. **N.B** This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days.

If the fine remains unpaid then Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

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/attendanceguidance-forparents/possible-penalties.htm>

Advice and Guidance for Parents

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. Please come and talk to us.

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 for breakfast and getting ready 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.

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! Help them to prepare for the next day.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to give the School Administration Team information about their plans including any date of a move and your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C (an authorised absence).

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport

Parents of able children can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national or international event or competition. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is **for work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.

Policy agreed by Full Governing Body: Autumn 2015

Appendices

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states: The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient fulltime education suitable- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and [b] To any special needs he may have. either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child. The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act. Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping:

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/UKSI-20061751.pdf>

Guidance documents on attendance:

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording:

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/absence-andattendance-codes.pdf>

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/Governancemanagementandfinance/Page4/DCSF-01488-2008>

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website

Hampshire County Council Guidance is available on Hantsweb at

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/attenguidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

For national guidance refer to:

1. 'School attendance' 2015 located at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schoolattendance>

2. National Association of Headteachers guidance document on 'Authorised Absence' 2014

<http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-and-pupils/naht-issuesnew-guidance-onauthorised-absence/>

For county advice and guidance refer to:

1. Guidance on recording absence

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrensservices/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsencemaindocument.pdf>

2. <https://www.gov.uk/child-performance-licence-england-scotland-wales>

3. Guidance on approval of 'Extended leave of absence' see county guidance

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/attenguidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parentalresponsibility-measures-forbehaviour-and-attendance>