



William Morris Primary

Attendance and Absence Policy

INTRODUCTION

Regular attendance at school is essential for the effective education of all pupils; there is a clear link between good attendance and good progress. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

AIMS

- To maximise the attendance of all children thus supporting high levels of attainment and achievement.
- To provide an environment which encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those at the school.
- To monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty.
- To analyse attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice.
- To work closely with, and make full use of the support from the wider community, including the Education Welfare Service, school nurse and multi-agency teams.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Our Attendance Policy is available on the school website. Reminders about holidays in term time, absence due to illness and term dates are published in monthly newsletters.

REGULATIONS

Parents / carers of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act (1996) to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full time basis; children reach statutory school age the term after their fifth birthday. Children are required to attend school for 190/365 days per year. (In very exceptional circumstances, a temporary part-time timetable can be agreed to meet a pupil's individual needs.)

Term dates are published in advance by the Local Authority and can be found on www.swindon.gov.uk. The school selects an additional 5 days for training, called Teacher Development Days. The school notifies families of term dates and the training days during terms 5 or 6 of the preceding academic year. Regular reminders of term dates, TD days and the importance of regular attendance are given via regular school newsletters.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following people have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

Governors

- To set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy.

Head Teacher

- To monitor individual pupil, group and whole school attendance and punctuality.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of policy and practice.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to agree annual attendance targets.
- To communicate with parents/carers regarding significant concerns about their child's attendance.
- To arrange meetings with parents/carers whose children have poor attendance to discuss support and set attendance targets.
- To work in partnership with outside agencies, as appropriate, when attendance and/or punctuality is an issue.

Class Teacher

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class.
- To record the reasons for absence given to them on the appropriate recording sheet.
- To communicate with parents regarding their child's absences.
- To raise any concerns about a child's absence with admin staff or the head teacher.
- To respond promptly to any query raised following analysis of registers by admin staff.
- To organise work to be sent home for children in their class who are expected to be absent for an extended period through sickness.

Admin Staff

- Where possible to obtain at least two emergency contact numbers for each pupil.
- To input attendance data using the Sims system.
- To monitor and track attendance patterns for all children and prepare relevant attendance reports for the head teacher and Education Welfare Officer as appropriate.
- To contact any parent who has not informed the school as to why their child is absent on the first day of absence.
- To ensure that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child at the end of each week.
- To make a judgement, in conjunction with the head teacher, whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Inclusion Team

- To work with families to improve pupils' attendance rates.

Education Welfare Officer / Legal Lead for Attendance

- Following a referral from the school, to work with families to improve pupils' attendance rates.
- To support the school in securing good attendance through regular contact and monitoring individual children's attendance.
- To enforce the law regarding school attendance.

Medical Personnel

- Specialist staff and the school nurse may be involved in ensuring the best possible attendance by a child with a severe medical condition. A 'Care Plan' is likely to be needed and on-going communication between the family, school and appropriate medical personnel is essential.

ADMINISTRATION

The school uses the ICT based Sims system to store and monitor data in relationship to attendance.

Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Registers are returned to the School Office after the closure of the registration period. Children who arrive at school after registration has closed are recorded as 'U' and this is classified as an unauthorised absence. Children who arrive late before registration closes are recorded as 'L'. This is not classed as an absence.

Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Failure to complete a register accurately leaves the school vulnerable to complaint from parents or carers and creates a risk if an emergency evacuation has to take place.

ABSENCE

Lateness

- Pupils can arrive at school from 8.30 a.m. and the classroom doors open and 8.50 a.m. when the school day begins and the register is taken. The doors will be closed at 8.55 a.m.
- Pupils arriving after 8.55 a.m. will be considered as late.
- Pupils arriving after 8.55 a.m. must report to the School Office so that their attendance can be recorded as late, 'L'.
- Pupils arriving after 9.25 a.m. when the register has been closed will be officially absent for the morning session. This will be considered an unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory reason is given, for example a pre-notified or emergency doctor's appointment. 'U' will be recorded.

Illness and Unexpected Absence

- Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide the reason for the absence and to give an update on each subsequent day of absence.
- In the case of gastric illnesses, parents are asked to keep their child away from school until they have been clear of sickness/ diarrhoea for a full 48 hours.
- Office staff will contact parents on the first day of absence if a reason for absence has not been given.
- If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, the Head Teacher will be informed.

Medical (including dental) appointments

- Whenever possible, parents/carers are encouraged to make medical appointments out of school hours.

- An absence request form must be completed for a child to attend a medical appointment. Such requests will be authorised. Parents/carers may be requested to provide written confirmation of these appointments.
- When appointments must be in term time, parents are encouraged to ensure their child attends school for as much of the day as possible e.g. returning to school after the appointment. There is a file in the foyer which is used to sign children in and out.

Holidays during Term-Time

Legal Background and DfE Guidelines

Whilst schools are required to consider parental requests for absence from school in term time, it still remains the legal duty of parents to ensure the regular attendance of a child of compulsory school age. Failure to do so could result in the Local Authority issuing a penalty notice or prosecuting the parents in the Magistrates Court. DfE guidelines clearly state that absence from school can be taken in exceptional circumstances and this means that the parent must make a strong case for taking a child out of school in an academic year. Exceptional circumstances must be explained fully to the school who will then consider the request. Any medical appointments/procedures during school time are always authorised but school does require evidence such as appointment cards or letters.

Parents should not expect that schools would automatically agree to an absence from school during term time. All requests are at the discretion of the Head Teacher and can only be authorised by the Head Teacher or member of staff with designated authority in the absence of the Head Teacher.

Please note a holiday taken during term time will not be authorised.

When an absence is approved then it is an authorised absence. Should parents keep their child away in excess of the agreed period, then the extra time will be treated as an unauthorised absence.

Where parents take the child out of school without permission, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Parents will be informed in writing that such an absence is recorded as unauthorised and a fixed penalty fine will be issued.

An absence request can only be made by the parent with day-to-day care and in some circumstances this parent may have to request an absence on behalf of other adults. This safeguards against an estranged parent making a request without the knowledge of the parent who has care and control

If an unauthorised absence is taken, the school will refer the paperwork to the Education Welfare Officer Local Authority and a fixed penalty notice may be issued. Currently this is £60 per parent per period of absence. The money is collected by Swindon Borough Council and is used to improve school attendance across the Borough. (If the fine is paid within 21 days then it is £60, within 28 days then £120) For example, if 2 parents take 2 children out of school for a holiday for 2 weeks, it would be a fine of £240 if paid within 21 days and £480 within 28 days.

Child Performers

Parents of a child performer may seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. A Local Authority licence must be obtained. Head Teachers should be sympathetic to requests that are supported by a licence as long as the school is satisfied that this will not have a negative effect on a child's education.

Other Absences

Other requests for absence from school will be considered on an individual basis and a decision will be made as to whether the absence can be authorised and which absence code is appropriate. A request for absence form should be completed as explained above. Other absences which may be authorised, in cases where the school is notified in advance by the parent/ carer, include:

- Days for religious observance
- External examinations e.g. dancing
- Educational events e.g. swimming in a gala
- Visiting a new school
- Significant family events such as a funeral of a close family member.

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that leave has been granted before taking a child out of school for a holiday or other absence. This is especially important where a request is made late, giving the school insufficient time to consider the request and respond in writing.

Persistent Absenteeism

Attendance rates are continuously monitored and analysis takes place each term. The head teacher and EWO discuss outcomes at regular intervals. Swindon Borough Council considers attendance between 90 and 95% to be irregular attendance. We recognise that a child is classed as being a persistent absentee when their attendance falls below 90%. Where there are concerns that a child is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee we will arrange for a joint problem solving meeting to be held with the Head Teacher, EWO and parents/carers.

Children missing education

In accordance with KCSIE September 2018 we understand that children missing education may be at risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation, and we work to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future. We follow guidelines set out in the DFE Attendance Guidelines September 2018 and the schools responsibilities set out in the DFE Children Missing Education 2016.

We fulfil our duty to inform the Local Authority of any pupil who has been admitted to another school and is going to be deleted from our admission register, who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent for a period of 10 school days or more. If a Looked After Child or a child subject to a Child Protection Plan goes missing, we will refer them to social services within 48 hours. We also consider making a referral for any children being withdrawn from school with the intent to be electively home educated where there are safeguarding concerns. We recognise that 'Child missing from education' and 'Child missing from home or care' have been added to the list of specific safeguarding issues schools must be vigilant about.

[/739764/Guidance on school attendance Sept 2018.](#)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children Missing Education - statutory guidance.pdf

REPORTING TO PARENTS AND CARERS

- All absences, both authorised and unauthorised, and lateness will be reported to the parent/carer towards the end of the academic year with their child's report. During the year, parents may request information about their child's attendance; they will receive a printout of their child's attendance and may check that the information provided is accurate.
- In order to give parents/carers information about the impact of absence from school upon their education, attendance posters/ information provided by Swindon Borough Council will be used alongside this policy.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Attendance data will be analysed termly (six times a year) to identify patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with: unusual patterns of absence; Monday and/or Friday absences; lateness; periods of extended absence; unauthorised absences. The attendance of Pupil Premium children will be compared with that of all pupils. The circumstances of all children with attendance below 90% will be considered. This data will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer as part of our on-going partnership working. If concerns are raised by analysis of attendance information, parent discussions will occur, either through telephone calls to the parents/carers by the head teacher and/or formal letters stating the attendance of the child and that there is an issue.

The head teacher and Education Welfare Officer will discuss the impact of the school's Attendance Policy and the strategies used to promote good attendance annually.

Signed.....

Name of Governor..... Date

Review date

To be reviewed every 2 years