



## **Attendance Policy**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Southill Primary School's Child Protection Policy. The school recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount and takes seriously its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and young people in its care. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them.

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. Southill Primary School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

The school will aim to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- Promoting opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently
- Ensuring that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have achieved, and are achieving, success
- Reporting pupil attendance to parents each term
- Offering positive verbal reinforcement to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time and developing an action plan to help them catch up with any missed curriculum and promote future attendance if necessary
- Setting achievable personal attendance goals for those who are causing concern.

### **Statements of expectations**

### **a. Pupils**

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

What is expected of the pupils:

- To respect themselves and others
- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually
- To act with responsibility to their own and others' learning.

### **b. Parents**

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly, and stays in school for every lesson after they have registered.

If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance at school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, education welfare services and other agencies where such a child's attendance is irregular.

What is expected of our parents:

- To keep requests for their child to be absent in term-time to a minimum
- To make medical and dental appointments out of school time
- To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence (if known) or on the first day of absence and **every day thereafter** until the child returns to school
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness
- To work closely with the school and to resolve any problems that may affect a child's attendance
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will not be authorised except in special or exceptional circumstances
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times, such as periods of testing
- To support their child and recognise successes and achievements
- To build a positive attitude to school and encourage their child to value their education.

### **c. School**

School attendance will be positively supported wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount. The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions. A register of attendance has to be taken once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register has to record whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or is absent. If a pupil is absent the register must record whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised. The registration period is from 8.55am – 9.25am and any pupils arriving after the registers close at 9.25 am will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

What is expected of the school:

- To create a school ethos to which pupils want to belong
- To meet the legal requirements set out by Government

- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance
- To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent-condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the 1996 Education Act
- To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance
- To encourage open communication channels between home and school
- To describe procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees
- To refer parents to the Attendance Department of Dorset Local Authority for high or frequent numbers of unauthorised absences due to term-time holidays, for which these referrals may lead to a fine
- To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum
- To provide an environment that is conducive to educating every individual pupil

#### **d. The Local Authority**

Dorset Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the support of the Attendance Department, the Local Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. Dorset LA may also act as an enforcement agency and, as well as providing guidance and support through its officers, may fine or take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The court may fine the parent and put in place a School Attendance Order (SAO), an Education Supervision Order (ESO) or a Parenting Order.

### **School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance**

#### **Recording**

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school at **8.55am**. Pupils arriving after this time will be considered as 'late' and should enter the school through the main entrance. If any pupil arrives late the office staff will ask the child or parent to record the child's name and reason for lateness on our computerised logging system. The registration period is from 8.55 am – 9.25 am and any pupils arriving after the registers close at 9.25 am will be marked as an unauthorised absence. The register is taken again at 1pm

All staff need to be aware that any child arriving late **MUST** register at the office so that they can be part of the register count should evacuation procedures (such as a fire drill) need to be used.

Daily attendance information is recorded electronically into our registration system.

Reasons for absence should be given on each day your child is absent from school and should be done by telephoning the school office. The school may then decide if it can authorise the absence or must record it as an unauthorised absence. This decision will be made within the guidance set out in the 1996 Education act, which identifies the following reasons as acceptable reasons for an authorised absence:

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith.

A reason for a period of absence is always required. If no reason has been given the school will contact all the named persons it has telephone numbers for, to attempt to elicit an explanation. If no contact is made by 10.00am then the Dorset County Council Attendance Officer and/or the Police will be called.

### **Monitoring**

The Headteacher will review the attendance of all the school's pupils on a termly basis, and also any pupils identified as cause for concern. When children's attendance falls below 90%, a phone call or letter to parents will inform them of the school's concerns and offer support to resolve any problems that may be preventing a child from attending. The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and, if there appears to be no improvement, the parents will be invited to a meeting to plan to resolve any issues preventing their child from attending. If the parent/s do not attend the meeting or after such meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve a formal referral to the Dorset LA and the Attendance Panel will be made.

The electronic registration system provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant to provide information to assist the school strategically manage attendance issues.

### **Requests for leave of absence**

If a parent wishes to request a period of leave they are required to complete a 'Request for Child's Absence' form and submit it to the Headteacher. Headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

### **Penalty Notice due to unauthorised leave of absence**

Where family holidays or extended leave are taken without authorisation for a period longer than 5 school days, the school will apply to Dorset County Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices will be applied for the following reasons:

- If parents have not sought permission from the Headteacher before taking their child out of school for a holiday in term-time
- If the Headteacher has refused the request but the absence occurs anyway
- If a pupil has not returned to school by the agreed date and no satisfactory explanation is provided.

### **Responding to a Penalty Notice**

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

It should be noted that penalty notices are issued to each parent, for each child.

### **Provision of work for the absence period**

Parents should note that, if they choose to take their child out of school for a holiday in term-time, the school will not provide additional work for them to take. This is due to the extra workload it places on the teacher to set, prepare and mark the child's work. It is the school's position that, should parents wish their child to complete work set by the teacher, then the child should be left in school to do this.