

SHERWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

**POLICY FOR
ATTENDANCE**

October 2017

**Sherwood Primary School
Pupil Attendance Policy**

MISSION STATEMENT

We aim to create a happy, caring environment in which children develop self-confidence and independence and are encouraged to be considerate and show respect for others, while reaching their true potential.

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

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.

In accordance with our mission statement we will encourage good attendance for all pupils, by offering an environment in which all pupils feel valued and part of the school community.

Why Regular Attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence also disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- Report to you termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Acknowledge good or improving attendance;
- Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before

leaving for high school;

- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

We will develop a procedural framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities for:

- Parents and carers
- Pupils
- School staff
- Governors

This framework will complement this policy, and identify how we will deliver our aims in respect of regular and punctual attendance.

This procedural framework will include guidance on:

- Registration
- What constitutes unauthorised absence
- Consistent use of symbols for authorised absence
- Holidays in term time/Extended leave
- Systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality for individual pupils
- Systems for dealing with absence
- Criteria and systems for referral to the local authority and other agencies
- Systems for reintegrating pupils who have been absent
- Systems for monitoring whole school attendance and Action Planning
- Appropriate alternative curricular arrangements

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the local authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence is authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription, appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

From September 2015 a pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be prioritised and parents will be informed of this promptly. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Due to the serious nature of persistent absence, school will always consider requesting support from the local authority attendance team in order to address the matter. School will also consider requesting that the local authority **issue penalty notices**, or use other sanctions, as a means of improving attendance.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone, leaving a message on the answering machine or you can call into school and report to reception.

If you leave a message on the answering machine, we may still contact you by telephone to clarify the reason for absence. It would therefore be helpful if you could give a specific reason for absence rather than using the term 'unwell'.

If your child is absent we will:

- We will text you to remind you to contact school.
- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you,
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our attendance lead and/or head teacher if absences persist,
- Consider using parenting contracts or panel meetings in order to identify barriers to regular attendance and agree targets for improvement,
- Refer the matter to the local authority school attendance team, where appropriate,

- Consider requesting that the local authority issue penalty notices in accordance with LCC's Code of Conduct, or use other legal sanctions, as appropriate, in order to improve attendance

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with us in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the head teacher,
- Home visits,
- Use of parenting contracts,
- Use of the common assessment framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the local authority school attendance team),
- Use of attendance panels,
- Use of penalty notices
- Referrals for legal action

The Local Authority School Attendance Service

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). PAST will also support school in trying to resolve the situation by agreement and will work to support school and parents in achieving improved levels of attendance.

Use of Legal Measures

Sherwood Primary School defines irregular attendance in line with the thresholds set out for the use of penalty notices within the Local Authorities Code of Conduct.

If other ways of trying to improve the attendance of an individual pupil fail, and we consider attendance to be irregular, where absences are unauthorised the case may be referred to the School Attendance Legal Team (SALT), who can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the magistrates' court.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at **8.55am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. The afternoon session starts at **1.00pm** and again, prompt attendance is expected.

Registers are marked by **9.00am/1.05pm** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.25am/1.15pm** the registers will be closed. In accordance with regulation, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a penalty notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the head teacher and/or a member of the pastoral support team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave in Term Time

Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.

All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form, available from the school office.

It is important that parents understand that leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional. Therefore, parents are advised to provide school with any relevant information regarding their request at the point of application if they believe the circumstances are exceptional. Information provided after a decision has been made will not be considered.

In considering the request we will also look at various factors such as:

- The timing of the request:

When a pupil is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.

Pupils should not be absent where possible, both immediately before and during assessment periods.

- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already a cause for concern, or could become concerning, as a result of taking leave. For example: If attendance is already below 97.5% or the absence will impact on this target.
- Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a penalty notice.

In certain circumstances, where leave has been agreed, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

The specific criteria which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll in these circumstances are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended.

Religious Absence

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.

Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Use of Penalty Notices

Our school may request the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence, in accordance with the local Code of Conduct.

Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons

The introduction of new statutory guidance on 1st September 2014 places much more emphasis on the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils; whether their condition is short or long term. The school will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be as a result of specific practices or resources used within school or by sourcing more appropriate provision at another establishment.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence
- Avoid any leave in term time, but apply in advance using form if the reason for leave is unavoidable/exceptional
- Attendance at meetings in school
- Participation in parenting contracts and common assessment framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher:

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision
- Where there is ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided and log this information accordingly
- Input and update the attendance registers
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, following Absence Flowcharts 1, 2 and 3 (see appendix), and using parenting contracts where appropriate

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Governors

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures
- Authorise the head teacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the head teacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

Monitoring, Analysis, Action Planning

School will adopt systems for monitoring attendance at both individual pupil and whole school level, and will analyse patterns and trends of non-attendance to inform future Action Planning and target setting in respect of whole school attendance matters.

Expectations regarding regular attendance

As a school, we aim to have all of our pupils in school every day. Whilst we recognise that pupils may have unavoidable absences at times due to illness and other unavoidable cause, we aim to reduce unauthorised absence and to work with parents and pupils to minimise absence where possible.

Our minimum expected level of attendance is 97.5%. We know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. As stated previously, Sherwood Primary School defines irregular attendance in line with the thresholds set out for the use of penalty notices within the Local Authorities Code of Conduct.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletters and we ask for your full support.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Review of Whole School Attendance Policy

Date of Policy: 22nd November 2017

Date Review Due: October 2018

School will review this policy annually and will review the associated procedural framework at least annually.

Linked Policies:

- Admissions
- Anti-Bullying
- Behaviour
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Children
- Equal Opportunities
- Single Equality Policy
- Special Educational Needs

Sherwood Primary School Pupil Attendance Policy Procedural Framework

This document forms part of Sherwood Primary School's Pupil Attendance Policy, and will be reviewed (annually).

In drawing up this procedural framework, the school has taken due regard to the outcomes for children identified under Every Child Matters, and on duties arising from Section 175 of the Education Act 2002.

Current Status

Improving attendance is a priority for the school. During the Academic Year 2016-2017, our pupils overall absence was 3.07%.

Rights and Responsibilities

The school expects parents to:

- Ensure children attend regularly, and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence and give a reason for the absence
- If an absence lasts longer than 3 days parents should contact school every third day to give a reason for the prolonged absence
- Complete an absence return form
- Avoid holidays in term time wherever possible
- Make early contact with school where they become aware of an issue which may cause problems with attendance
- Attend meetings if concerns are identified
- Participate in Attendance and Parenting Contracts where appropriate
- Support the school in agreed interventions/action plans

The school expects pupils to:

- Attend school regularly
- Be on time for registration
- Adhere to our systems for late registration
- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school e.g. early bedtimes to allow punctual attendance

School Staff

Overall responsibility for these attendance procedures lies with the Head Teacher. Mrs. Maddock is our attendance officer. She has day to day responsibility for attendance matters. In the absence of the attendance officer Mrs. Lee will assume the day to day responsibility for attendance.

The Attendance Officer will:

- Prepare registers for distribution to classes
- Record attendance and absences in SIMS Attendance Manager
- Make first day contact with parents of absent pupils for whom we have had no reason for absence by text or telephone call by 10am.
- Amend absence codes once reasons for an absence are known
- Review registers and identify trends of absence
- Send out letters of concern to parents (see hierarchy of letters)
- Send out letters of congratulation for good attendance to parents

- Monitor the absences of those pupils identified with attendance problems and in conjunction with the Headteacher, make appropriate referrals to the Pupil Attendance Support Team
- Make notes in SIMS about the reasons given for absence for pupils whose attendance is a concern.
- Monitor and record attendance of any pupils who are receiving education elsewhere
- Liaise with the school's admissions officer, head teacher and CME officer with regard to children missing education
- Collate whole school attendance data and work with the Head teacher to analyse this data
- Keep an attendance file
- Submit attendance data to the Local Authority and the DCSF where required

The class teacher will:

- Ensure that attendance registers are marked according to school policy and the Pupil Registration Regulations 2006

All staff will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- Welcome pupils back and help re-integrate pupils after a period of absence
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To be aware of the part all staff can play in ensuring attendance is seen as important for all pupils
- See pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all staff, even if the co-ordination and management of attendance are designated responsibilities of specified staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Procedures

Registration

All staff with responsibility for registration. Registers should be marked consistently and accurately. Staff should ensure they use the correct attendance and absence symbols.

Registration sheets are brought to the classrooms before each registration session by pupils. Registers should be marked at 8.55am and 1pm. Morning registration officially closes at 9am and registers should be returned to the office along with any absence letters. Afternoon registration closes at 1.05pm. **Registers should always be totalled to enable a quick headcount in the event of fire.**

Late registration arrangements

The names of any pupil arriving after 9.00am are recorded in The Late Book in the school office. These pupils are given the registration code "Late before the register closed" by the attendance officer.

Pupils arriving late must enter school through the main entrance. They are signed in by the office staff. They are recorded as "Late after registers closed" by the attendance officer.

Signing out arrangements

Pupils leaving the premises during the school day must be collected by a parent, or another adult who has been entrusted by the child's parents, from the main entrance. They must be signed out

by a member of staff in the appropriate book held in the school office. Children returning from an appointment during the school day must be signed in by a member of staff.

Arrangements for recording messages from parents by telephone

These are recorded in our attendance book with the reason for the absence or appointment noted. Parents are requested to give a specific reason for absence or detail a child's illness. The attendance office may contact parents by telephone to clarify the reason for absence.

Arrangements for retaining messages from parents re absence from school

All absence letters and records of phone messages from parents are kept by the attendance officer until she has entered the correct absence code in SIMS Attendance Manager. In cases where there is a concern about the pupil's attendance the notes are kept in a secure file, notes are made in SIMS to detail the reason for the absence. Pink leave of absence requests for holidays are kept in the individual pupils file after authorisation.

Amending absence codes

The attendance officer or in her absence the member of staff delegated by the Headteacher amends absence codes once reasons for absence have been established. If she is unsure about amending a code she consults the Headteacher.

Dual Registration

In the case of pupils with dual registration (e.g. pupils temporarily in support units) the attendance officer contacts the establishment the pupil is attending each week and the code is amended as appropriate.

Acceptable reasons for absence

The attendance officer monitors the reasons for absence as she enters the codes into SIMS. In the case of absence due to sickness, if a pupil has not returned after 5 school days and the parents have not been in contact with the school to explain why the absence is prolonged, the attendance officer makes contact with the parents. This also happens if there is a pattern of absence (see flow charts). The absence may also be discussed with the Headteacher or another member of the SMT. If after investigation, it is felt that the illness is not genuine the decision will be taken not to authorise the absence. The attendance officer usually discusses this decision with the Headteacher and parents notified of the decision to mark the absence as unauthorised.

Strategies for promoting/improving attendance

The school promotes the need for good attendance with parents through:

- Newsletters
- Posters
- The home school contract
- "First day calling" system
- Letters to parents (see hierarchy of letters in SIMS)

The school promotes the need for good attendance with pupils through:

- Assemblies,
- Posters
- PSHE

- Involving pupils in setting targets for attainment and monitoring progress

Incentives and rewards:

- Termly attendance celebration in assembly – certificates for 100% attendance
- Annual attendance celebration – certificates and prizes for 100% attendance

Curriculum and School Ethos

- Learning is fun – creative curriculum
- Individual needs catered for
- Range of after school clubs to engage “hard to reach pupils”

Vulnerable pupils

- Anti-bullying policy
- Lunchtime supervision – play activities, clubs
- Family support workers
- Multi agency support

Attendance Panels

When pupil absence is persistent, parents will be asked to appear before an attendance panel if:

- There has been no improvement following letters from school
And/or
- There has been no improvement following help and advice from the school and support has not been accepted

The attendance panel will comprise of: The Head Teacher and/or Assistant Head Teacher,
A Pupil Attendance Support Worker
A member of the Governing Body

Referral to LA Attendance Officer (PAST)

If there is no improvement a referral will be made to the Local Authority for intervention support.

Parenting Contracts

The school may invite parents to sign up to a parenting contract in cases where there has been no improvement in attendance by the date of the review which follows an attendance panel.
(see sample Parenting Contract)

Penalty Notices

The Governing Body will seek to use Penalty Notices in the following circumstances:

- Unauthorised holidays in term time or unauthorised extended leave
- For persistent absences after all other means of improving pupil attendance have been exhausted

CAF

If at any stage in this process the school has concerns about the pupil's welfare which cannot be resolved by school alone a CAF will be completed.

Removal from Roll

The attendance officer is responsible for identifying pupils who may have gone missing. When a pupil is absent and the attendance officer is unable to make contact with parents through daily phone calls, the following procedure will be followed after 3 days or sooner for vulnerable pupils:

1. The attendance officer will contact other family members and neighbours known to the school
2. If the pupil is on the CP register the Social Worker will be contacted
3. If contact is not made she will contact our Community Police Officer
4. After a maximum of 10 days a Missing Child referral will be made

The child will only be removed from roll when the LA officer for Children Missing Education advises it is safe to do so. The decision will be made by the head teacher.

Systems for dealing with attendance issues

School based systems for dealing with punctuality issues

The system for late registration is shown under registration procedures

- A system of letters is kept in SIMS to be used to draw parent's attention to punctuality issues
- The TA may be asked to work with pupils and parents regarding punctuality
- The use of Parenting Contracts will be considered for persistent punctuality issues.
- The use of Penalty Notices will be considered for persistent punctuality issues.

School based systems for dealing with absences

1. The attendance officer will contact those parents who do not contact school on the first day of absence.
2. Letters of concern will be sent (see hierarchy of letters)
3. The parents will be invited into school to discuss concerns
4. Consider attendance panel
5. Refer to LA attendance officer (PAST)
6. Consider a parenting contract
7. Consider CAF referral
8. Consider Penalty Notice
9. Consider prosecution

NB the order these strategies are implemented may vary on a case by case basis

Monitoring, Analysis, Evaluation and Action Planning

- The attendance officer collects the data
- The attendance officer and Headteacher meet each month to analyse the data and decide what actions to take as a result of the analysis
- Frequency and nature of feedback re analysis of attendance data to
 - Governors - termly
 - Staff - monthly
 - Pupils - monthly
 - Parents – monthly

What we analyse data for:

- Patterns of broken weeks by individual pupils
- Patterns of absence for individual pupils
- Misuse or inconsistent use of absence codes across the school
- Trends in reasons for absence
 - Extended medical leave
 - Use of C
 - Holidays/Extended Leave
 - Exclusions, etc
- Trends in particular groups (ethnic groups, gender), or years

Signed (Headteacher):

Signed (Governing Body representative):

Date: 22nd November 2017

Review date: November 2021 (or before based on Local or National Policy)