



Sound & District Primary School

Our Children are the Future

Attendance Policy

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Governor Committee:	Curriculum
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Legislation, statutory requirements and statutory guidance

This Attendance Policy reflects the statutory requirements of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the DfE guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (2024). It also reflects Cheshire East Council expectations and Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF).

This policy has due regard to, and should be read alongside

- Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Cheshire East Council Attendance and Children Out of School Guidance

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy,
- Behaviour Policy,
- Early Years Foundation Stage Policy,
- Anti-bullying Policy,
- Special Education Needs and Disability Policy,
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy,
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy,
- Children Missing Education Policy

1. Mission Statement:

Good attendance and punctuality is essential if children are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills which will equip them for life.

Sound and District Primary School aims to achieve good attendance (aiming for 100% attendance or as close as possible) and punctuality by operating an attendance policy within which staff, children, parents, the local community and the Local Authority Attendance and Children Out of School Team can work in partnership. The school will maintain an ongoing overview of attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.

Attendance is a key safeguarding indicator. Persistent absence, unexplained absence or patterns of lateness may indicate safeguarding concerns and will be acted upon in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and Cheshire East Children Out of School procedures.

All staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality and liaise with home and other agencies when this is appropriate. Good attendance and punctuality will be seen as an achievement in its own right and recognised as such by the school.

The attendance policy is based on the premise of equality for all.

In line with Ofsted EIF, the school:

- Prioritises attendance as part of safeguarding and personal development
- Uses accurate data to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence
- Works proactively with Cheshire East Council and external agencies
- Demonstrates early help, graduated response, and clear impact

2. Aims

Our policy aims to provide clear guidance to all staff, parents and carers, pupils and governors about the responsibilities and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

In our daily practice we aim to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Ensuring that every child has access to full-time education
- Ensuring that there are good teaching and learning experiences which encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued
- Raising and maintaining a whole school community awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Acting early to identify patterns of absence and to remove barriers to attendance
- Promoting a culture of high attendance and punctuality in which good attendance and punctuality is the 'norm' and is valued by the school
- Recognising that good, regular attendance and punctuality is an achievement in itself

- Being consistent in implementation both in terms of rewards and sanctions
- Valuing the individual
- Building and maintaining strong relationships with families to enable targeted support; when necessary, to improve school attendance
- Working in partnership with parents and Cheshire East Council

3. Roles and Responsibilities

To manage and promote regular attendance the headteacher and staff will:

- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers
- Keep parents updated on the School's overall attendance and individual class attendance via newsletters and social media.
- Recognise good attendance with the children e.g. *as part of the Celebration assembly the Attendance Officers share the class attendance percentages and winners. The winning classes take away the Attendance trophy / attendance superstar for the week.*

Weekly	Class with the best attendance gets attendance treat – winning class announced on a Friday afternoon in the Celebration Assembly. Weekly “Magic Moments” newsletter on Class Dojo informing parents of attendance information e.g. Current yearly attendance and class of the week rag rated against school target.
Half Termly	A monthly item in the school newsletter regarding the importance of attendance
Termly	The classes who achieved the greatest number of weeks with highest attendance over the term have a celebration afternoon planned in.
Yearly	Children with attendance at or above the school target receive a medal/award

- Report to parents, on an individual basis, how their child is achieving in school and how their child's attendance is impacting on this via regular parent evenings.
- Follow the DfE and Government guidance in relation to school attendance
- Work with Cheshire East's Attendance and Children Out of School Team to ensure statutory attendance processes are followed.
- Build positive relationships between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance.
- Ensure that monitoring of attendance and work with families on attendance considers the individual contextual of each individual family and child's needs; in line with the Equality Act 2010.

- Utilise attendance data, analysing patterns and trends to target attendance and punctuality improvement across pupil cohorts.
- Consider the specific needs of pupils and their families where there may be other barriers to attendance (medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities) and provide support to overcome these barriers. (e.g. Early Help or signposting to other wider partners)
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

In line with the legal expectations placed on all schools we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education.
- Inform a pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences from school.
- Provide the relevant council with the name and address of sick pupils who we believe will miss 15 consecutive or cumulative days.

To manage and promote regular attendance the Governing Board will:

- Ensure that training on attendance is included in the school's continued professional development offer for all staff.
- Ensure that attendance is covered in staff and governor induction packs.
- Promote the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Make sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review and challenge attendance data, as appropriate, at board meetings. This will include recent and historic trends at a school level as well as benchmarking to comparator schools within the local authority area, region and nationwide.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. If this is not possible, parents should ensure that children attend school prior to or following their appointment. Parents should provide the school with any medical appointment cards.
- Make sure their child attends every day and on time; keeping absences to a minimum and ensuring that children are only out of school when they are too sick to attend.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence where applicable, and advise when they are expected to return; keeping school informed if the absence is likely to continue so that school and partner agencies can ensure that amendments or alternatives can be made to provision if required.
- Establish effective communication with the school and swiftly address any worries their children may have about coming to school so that we can work together to resolve this.

- Attend any meetings called by school and, where relevant, partner agencies to discuss attendance.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time and be ready to learn when they arrive; engaging positively in learning.

4. Our Procedures

The Register

We keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. On it we mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity and the nature of this
- Absent (and if authorised or unauthorised)
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances and the nature of these circumstances

Any amendments to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Registers are legal records, and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance and admission register for 6 years from the date of entry.

Punctuality

Being on time to school allows your child the best chance to settle and be prepared for the day.

8:20 Gates open

8:30 Doors open; the school day starts. Morning register is called promptly as close to 8.30 am as possible

8:40 The external doors will be closed and the gate at the back of school will be locked

Arrival between 8:40-9:00 am will result in a Late mark (L Code).

The registers are legally closed by the office 30 minutes after the start of the school day. This means that any child who arrives late after the Register is closed at 9.00 am will be registered as an unauthorised absence ('U' code in the register). This counts as half a day's absence.

Any pupils arriving after 8:40 should be taken, by their parent/carer, round to the school Reception area so that they can be recorded as being present in school for the purposes of fire/emergencies. Their parent/carer should complete the "Late Arrival Record" for each child they are bringing; explaining, in writing, the reason for the lateness.

The register for the second/afternoon session will be taken at 1:05pm and will be kept open until 1.15pm.

Persistent lateness

A child who enters a classroom late often misses the principle objectives for the day and must start to catch up so will start the day from a place of disadvantage. Their late arrival is also likely to disrupt the class and delay learning for all.

Children who are often late may have trouble settling in and mastering routines. Lateness can throw off their whole morning or even their day, especially if the late commute to school was stressful. They can often feel self-conscious about entering the classroom late. Persistent lateness may affect a child's achievement and progress in school.

Where a child is brought to school late on a regular basis their parents/carers will be invited into for a School Attendance Meeting. The school will work with you in finding solutions if there are genuine difficulties. Depending on the circumstances consideration may be given to an appropriate referral to an outside agency or voluntary service; an Early Help Assessment may also be considered to provide early help and support to the family.

If lateness persists then further involvement from the Attendance and Children Out of School Service will be requested. In cases of persistent lateness (at least 10 sessions of unauthorised lateness over a period of 12 weeks, not including school holidays) a Truancy Penalty Notice (also known as Fixed Penalty Notices) warning may be issued.

5. Absence

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, *if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.*

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If there are safeguarding concerns then a home visit may be undertaken on the first day of absence.

Only the school can authorise an absence; parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, *if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours*, this will be classed as an unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Where a parent/carer does not make contact with the school to make them aware of their child's absence communication with those parents/carers will be attempted by school on the same day; with a record being made of any action taken at each stage.

Class teachers will inform the Headteacher at all times of any concerns or action taken. The Headteacher will take overall responsibility for attendance.

Re-occurring unauthorised absence will be referred to the Attendance and Children Out of School Service; this can lead to legal interventions and a formal assessment

If a pupil's attendance falls to 96 percent, the teacher will speak to the pupil in school to discuss any issues or problems to ascertain how the school can help to improve their attendance. The teacher will speak to the parents, to discuss this with parents, if necessary.

If a pupil's attendance falls below 96 percent, a letter will be sent home raising concerns that the child's attendance has fallen below the school's expected standard inviting the parents into school to discuss concerns, identify any barriers and to discuss potential support. Early Help will be offered.

If a pupil's attendance falls below 90 percent, a further letter will be sent home explaining that the pupil's attendance is being monitored on a daily basis, and again the parents will be invited into school where next steps will be outlined. Early Help will be offered/reviewed and a referral to Cheshire East Attendance and Out of School Team will be considered.

Requests for leave of absence in term time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations say that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Relevant to children in our school these would be:

- The child is taking part in entertainment, modelling or paid sport, and the relevant regulations have been met; in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA).
- Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend

Schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion.

Discretionary leave must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with, in writing using our school's "exceptional leave" request form; giving as much notice as possible (at least a week in advance). The request will be considered by the Headteacher/Governing Board; the parent may be asked to discuss the request. We will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the Headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Attendance regulations say that leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

Generally the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Therefore holidays in term time will only be authorised by the Headteacher if the circumstances are deemed exceptional by the Head and Governing Body.

6. Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are issued by Cheshire East Council.

Term time leave: Penalty Notice fines will be issued for unauthorised term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days.

Unauthorised absence in a rolling 10 week period: A Penalty Notice may be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period. The threshold can be met with “any combination of unauthorised absence”. For example, *four sessions in term time plus six instances of arriving late*.

The period of 10 weeks can also span “different terms or school years”.

However, councils retain the discretion to issue a Penalty Notice before the threshold is met. For example: *where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below the above thresholds*.

Penalty Notice fines will continue to be issued per parent per child. For example: *3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines*.

First Offence The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular school attendance the fine will be charged at: £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days of the issue, reducing to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days. (Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)

Second Offence Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first penalty notice, for either term time leave or irregular attendance the second penalty notice will be charged at: £160 if paid within 28 days. (Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)

Third Offence On the third time that an offence is committed within 3 years of the first penalty notice for either a term time leave or irregular attendance a penalty notice will not be issued. The case may proceed to Parental Prosecution under the Single Justice Procedure. If found guilty of the offence of ‘Failure to send a child to school’ the Magistrates can impose a fine up to £1000 or legal proceedings under Section 444 (1a) can include a fine of up to £2500.

Please note that any fine served is collected by Cheshire East Council. No monies are retained by Sound & District Primary School.

7. Monitoring Attendance

Registers are reviewed and analysed frequently to ensure that any attendance issues are highlighted at the earliest opportunity so that pupils and families can be supported before patterns become entrenched.

Possible indicators of attendance issues are:

- unexplained absences
- continual broken weeks
- patterns of non-attendance on specific days
- attendance figures are below a certain agreed level
- repeated medical absences and patterns of illness
- persistent lateness.

In addition we conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends of particular cohorts of pupils; identifying potential patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance etc.

A representative from the Attendance and Children Out of School team for Cheshire East carries out a register check on an annual basis.

8. “Mobile Children”

The T code is used in the register for a pupil who is a mobile child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. This code is classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance defines a mobile child as one who is of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. To help ensure continuity of education for pupils, when their parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes in England, it is expected that the pupil should attend a school where their parent(s) is travelling and be dual registered at that school and their main school. This period of travelling for work must be agreed with the school beforehand.

The child must have attended at least 200 school sessions in the past 12 months if they are over six years old. (One school day has two sessions.)

**Please note that since the 2024 guidance was published the Department for Education have confirmed that the ‘mobile child’ only needs to be of no fixed abode whilst the parent is trading/working.*

9. Children living in a different Authority

In cases where a pupil lives in a different local authority area to Cheshire East the overarching principle is that both the local authority, in whose area the pupil attends school (the ‘School LA’), and the local authority in whose area the pupil lives (the ‘Home LA’) work together to support the pupil and family where local authority action is needed. They will agree a way forward, and will identify which local authority will lead on specific actions.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. In between reviews the policy will be updated, when necessary, to reflect local and national changes.

Appendix A

Attendance procedure flow chart



