



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved: September 2023
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A child who is not at school is missing out their education. Likewise, a child who is late for school is missing out on a very important part of the school day including setting out the context for the work for the day.

No absence during term time will be authorised unless the request is absolutely exceptional.

Our aim is for the highest level of attendance possible and for all absences to be explained with acceptable reasons. Alongside this we want to have all our children in class ready to start the school day promptly.

The Government says:

- **There is a legal responsibility for you to send your child to school every day and to be punctual.**
- **School is in session for 190 days a year leaving parents a further 175 days a year in which to have days out together and take a holiday.**
- **Absence is classed as authorised (where the school approves the pupil's absence) or unauthorised (where the school does not approve the absence).**

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' from the Department of Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Key Principles

It is vital that parents/carers and schools work together. We follow the West Sussex guidance which sets out the following principles:

- All registered pupils should attend school regularly and punctually.
- All children, irrespective of individual circumstances, should have an equal opportunity to attend school regularly.
- The school and the Local Authority, together with any external agencies, will work together with the parents or carers for the best interests of pupils.
- The school's expectations of regular attendance will be made clear from the outset.
- Where necessary, intervention and enforcement measures will be taken, especially with regard to unauthorised absences and lateness.

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Parents/carers should also ensure that their children are properly dressed and have all the things they need and are in a fit condition to learn.

Aims

- To help parents/carers understand the need for their children to attend school regularly and punctually.
- To encourage good habits in attendance from the first day at school.
- Ensure that parents/carers and staff are fully aware of the need to keep accurate records of attendance and the necessary procedures.
- To minimise the number of absences and late arrivals.

School Procedures

1. Promotion of good attendance and punctuality

Prior to admission to Southway all parents / carers are invited to a meeting at which the importance of good attendance is discussed.

On admission to school, all parents/carers are given guidelines on good attendance, punctuality and what to do in case of illness.

Additionally, parents/carers are asked to sign a Home-School Agreement. The school's prospectus and website also promotes good attendance.

2. Records of Attendance

Children's attendance details are recorded in the registers at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions of each school day. Therefore, a day off school counts as 2 absences. This information is kept on a centrally held, secure database.

The school office collates information about absences, taking phone calls and emails from parents / carers and completing a daily absence sheet which is transferred into the school management information system.

The school is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office as a data processor under the Data Protection Act 2018.

3. Reporting absences

- It is the parents/carers responsibility to inform the school by 9.00am on the first day of the child's absence. Parents / carers may either leave a message on the school answerphone, message via the MCAS app, e-mail the school office or speak to a member of staff.
- If the child is ill then the school should be notified of the nature of the illness, and if possible, the expected date of return. Parents should contact the school on 01444 233824 or email parentline@southwayjunior.co.uk / welfare@southwayjunior.co.uk. **This should happen by 9.00am on the first day of a child's absence and then on each morning for the duration of the absence.** If no contact has been received from parents / carers, the school office will send parents / carers a text message and email. If no response is received from the parents / carers then the session is marked as unauthorised. Ten or more unauthorised sessions could lead to a fixed penalty notice being issued by WSCC Pupil Entitlement: Investigation or further action taken.
- If parents / carers find it difficult to send their children to school because of personal problems, or the children are reluctant to attend because of a home or school problem, then parents/carers should contact the school or WSCC Pupil Entitlement: Investigation. If parents / carers fail to notify the school then it is the school's responsibility to find out the reason for the absence either by contacting the parents / carers or by involving Pupil Entitlement: Investigation.

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Lateness

- Lateness is discouraged and persistent lateness is unacceptable. Where pupils miss registration and fail to provide an adequate explanation they will be marked with an unauthorised absence for that session. Ten or more unauthorised sessions (code U) could lead to a fixed penalty notice being issued by WSCC Pupil Entitlement: Investigation. If a child arrives late and misses registration they must be signed in at the school office.
- Registration is open from 8:35am – 8:45am. Any pupil arriving between 8:45am and 9.00am will be recorded as 'late before the register closes' (code L). After 9.00am any pupil arriving will be marked as 'late after registration closes' (code U), which is classed as unauthorised absence.

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will write to the parent/carer, including a copy of the child's registration certificate. If there is no improvement, the school may arrange a meeting with the parent/carer and make a referral to WSCC.

4. Absence / Withdrawal from Learning

All absences are registered as authorised or unauthorised. If a parent / carer wishes to request withdrawal from learning they should complete the appropriate form (Appendices 1 & 2), which is available on the school website or from the school office. Some absences may be authorised, examples of which are listed below. All other absence requests will be unauthorised but still require a withdrawal from learning form to be completed.

- Illness: If the school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence is treated as authorised. Children who experience long term absences are supported both during and after their absence through direct contact with the parents/carers.
- Medical or dental appointments which cannot be arranged outside of the school day. If a pupil has an appointment during school time the parent/carer must report to the office to sign their child in and/or out of school. Children should come to school before and after an appointment wherever possible. Parents/carers must complete a withdrawal from learning (medical/dental) form which should be given to the school office before the day of the appointment.
- Religious observance: Parents/carers should give advance warning of absence if it is necessary for their child to take part in a day of religious observance.
- Education off-site e.g. an educational visit arranged by the school.
- If a parent/carer wishes to remove their child from the school roll, i.e. starting at a new school, a Notice of Withdrawal from School form must be completed and returned to the school office.

The school does not have to accept the parents/carers offered explanation as a valid reason for absence. If there are doubts about the reason offered, the reason given for an absence is not acceptable, or if no reason is given, then the absence is treated as unauthorised.

5. Monitoring Attendance

Information from the school database is used to monitor attendance.

The school will analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils where attendance may be coming a concern.





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Below is a table of action that will take place regarding your child's attendance:

Attendance %	Action
100% - 95%	No action needed
95%	Requires improvement 1 st attendance letter to parents/carers is triggered and identified as "below Government guidelines for attendance" Meeting with parent organised to discuss barriers to attendance
93%	At risk of persistent absence 2 nd attendance letter to parents/carers is triggered and request for medical evidence (such as doctors note, prescription/prescribed medication, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence)
Below 90%	Persistent absence Referral to West Sussex

This will be applied to all students in the school (medical exemptions, HCP's and hospitalisation etc will be taken in to account).

Patterns of absence or lateness, or other concerns, may also be shared with the West Sussex County Council Pupil Entitlement: Investigation Team to check attendance records and discuss any problems. The Pupil Entitlement: Investigation (PEI) is available to support parents / carers who may be having difficulties in ensuring that their children attend school regularly. Fixed Penalty notices may be issued, and where necessary, legal action may be taken. A guidance leaflet about Fixed Penalty Notices is available on the school website or from the school office.

The school will also provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders to facilitate discussions with pupils and families. Attendance will also be monitored termly and yearly, both across the school and at an individual level, and reported on to the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body. This will help to identify pupils or cohorts that need targeted support / interventions.

6. Right of Appeal

If a parent wishes to appeal against unauthorised absence they need to do so in writing to the Chair of Governors within 1 month from receiving the unauthorised absence.





A guidance leaflet for parents and carers

Penalty Notices to Address Poor Attendance at School Advice to Parents and Carers

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act gives powers to Local Authorities and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance. The powers came into force on 27th February 2004.

Why has it been introduced?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and juvenile crime as well teenage pregnancy. Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer term life opportunities.

What is a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN)?

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (those for which the school cannot or has not given permission). Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. A Fixed Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court whilst still securing an improvement in a pupil's attendance.

What are the costs?

The Fixed Penalty Notice is issued with an invoice for £120 and 28 days are given for you to settle the Penalty. If the Fixed Penalty Notice is paid within the first 21 days the amount payable is reduced to £60. The fine is per parent, per child.

How are they issued?

By first class post to your home.

When are they used?

West Sussex County Council considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absences occur:

- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps)
- Inappropriate parentally-condoned absences
- Excessive holidays in term time or excessive delayed return from an extended holiday without prior school permission. Parents who take a holiday in term time may incur unauthorised absence for their child and the absence may be referred to the Pupil Investigation Team for their consideration as to whether a Fixed Penalty Notice should be issued.
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register closes).

In every case a pupil will have a minimum of 10 school sessions (i.e. 5 school days – a school day is two sessions AM and PM) lost to unauthorised absence in a 10 school week period. This may be for a holiday that was requested and unauthorised by the Headteacher, withdrawal of children from school during term time that was not requested in advance, frequent late arrivals at school or lengthy absence due to illness without any supporting medical documentation. However, there are some occasions where they are issued outside of these criteria.

The Authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions. Attendance is of such importance to all of us that the Authority will use the powers if this is the only way of securing a child's attendance.

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Is a warning given?

There is no longer a 15 day monitoring period to improve attendance / lateness.

Is there an appeals process?

No, there is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued but on receipt of a warning you can make representation should you wish.

How do I pay?

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with Penalty Notices.

What happens if I do not pay?

You have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full, after which the Authority is required under the Act to commence proceedings in the Magistrates court for the original offence of poor attendance by your child.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However, it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Notice, depending upon the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school and support agencies such as Education Welfare.

Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?

Yes, the Local Authority and your child's school will give you advice and support if you need help to secure improvement in your child's attendance. It is very important that you speak with the school or with Pupil Entitlement: Investigation at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's attendance.

The contact number is: 0330 222 8200

You may also find it helpful to read West Sussex's information leaflet on fixed penalty notices, available on the school website.





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APPENDIX 1

PARENTAL REQUEST for WITHDRAWAL FROM LEARNING
(except medical/dental requests – please use other form)

Child's Name	
Date of birth	
Year Group & Class	
Name of person making request & relationship to child	
Address	
Phone Number	
Dates your child will be absent from school	From: _____ To: _____
Time collecting & returning	From: _____ To: _____
Reason for withdrawal <i>(please provide further information overleaf)</i>	
Total number of school days requested	
Details of siblings at other schools where absence has been requested too.	

I confirm that the information I have given on this form is true. I understand that if I do not fully complete this form, fully respond to requests for further information or that ultimately the absence is not authorised, my child's attendance will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. I understand that I must ensure my child attends school regularly and that failing to do so is a criminal offence which may result in legal proceedings being taken against me, either through a penalty notice or by prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Signed: Date:.....
 (Parent/Carer)

Full Name:

- I regret to inform you that based on the information provided I am not able to authorise this absence. Should you wish to discuss the decision I have made, please do not hesitate to contact me.
- I regret to inform you that based on the information provided I am only able to authorise part of the absence requested. Should you wish to discuss the decision I have made, please do not hesitate to contact me.
- Due to the absolutely exceptional circumstances I am able to authorise this absence.

Signed: Date:.....
 Mr P Newbold, Headteacher

Why is this absence exceptional? (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

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Unless further information is required, a decision will be sent to you within 7 school days.

Absences will only be authorised if this request is made in advance of the dates your child will be absent from school AND if the circumstances of the absence are exceptional. Parents should be aware that they do not have the right to take their child out of school during term time.

The law states that parents must ensure their children regularly attend school to receive their education. The Headteacher can only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional is likely to be rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

Whether the absence is exceptional is at the Headteacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation and can vary from school to school. A week's absence for holiday and a week's absence for illness would give an attendance figure below 95%. The government considers attendance unacceptable below 95%. The Headteacher will consider the reasons for your absence request.

You may be asked to provide evidence to support your request. Please note that having already booked a holiday will not be considered as a good reason for term time absence. In relation to 'unavoidable' absence, the Headteacher will consider whether the event could have reasonably been scheduled at another time. Issues of cost will not be considered as an exceptional reason.

If you wish for this absence to be authorised, you will need to fully explain (together with evidence) why the circumstances of this absence are exceptional.

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APPENDIX 2

Withdrawal from Learning For Medical/Dental requests only

Child/children's name/s :

..... Class:

..... Class:

Please tick box Medical Dental

For medical and dental requests, the request will be authorised and notification will not be sent to parent/carer.

Total number of school days' absence requested

From (first day)..... To (last day of absence).....

Time collecting Time returning to school..

I wish to request permission to take my child/ren out of school for the following reason:

.....
.....

Parent/Carer's signature Date

Parent/Carer's name: (block capitals) Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms.....

NB Please read notes overleaf

For office use only: Attendance %age to dateNo of days absent to date..... Absence Code.....

I regret to inform you that based on the information provided I am not able to authorise this absence.
Should you wish to discuss the decision I have made, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Due to the absolutely exceptional circumstances I am able to authorise this absence.

Signed _____

Date _____

Mr P Newbold, Headteacher

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Request for withdrawal from learning **Additional Notes**

Our aim is for the highest level of attendance possible and for all absences to be explained with acceptable reasons.

The Government says:

- **There is a legal responsibility for you to send your child to school every day.**
- **Your child should be in school for at least 95% of all sessions.**
- **If your child takes 2 weeks holiday a year, this will immediately take their attendance down to 95% - without any additional absences for illness.**
- **School is in session for 190 days a year leaving parents a further 175 days a year in which to have days out together and take a holiday.**

Absence

All absences are registered as authorised or unauthorised. Examples of authorised absences are:

- f. Illness: If the school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence is treated as authorised. Children who experienced long term absences are supported both during and after their absence through direct contact with the parents/carers.
- g. Medical or dental appointments, which cannot be arranged outside of the school day. If a pupil has an appointment during school time the parent/carer must report to the office to sign their child in or out of school.
- h. Religious observance: Parents/carers should give advance warning of absence if it is necessary for their child to take part in a day of religious observance.
- i. Education off-site e.g. an educational visit arranged by the school.
- j. Extreme family emergencies e.g. bereavement.

Only the Headteacher, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents/carers. Parents do not have an automatic right to take a child from school for holidays or other special occasions. Permission from the Headteacher must be obtained in advance. The school does not have to accept the parents'/carers' offered explanation as a valid reason for absence. If there are doubts about the reason offered, the reason given for an absence is not acceptable, or if no reason is given, then the absence is treated as unauthorised.

Withdrawal from learning

No absence during term time will be authorised unless the request is absolutely exceptional or there are clear and demonstrable educational benefits resulting from the absence. If you wish to request withdrawal from learning for the following reasons, please complete a form, which is available from the school office.

- a. Medical or dental appointments, which cannot be arranged outside of the school day.
- b. Religious observance: parents/carers should give advance warning of absence if it is necessary for their child to take part in a day of religious observance.
- c. Other absolutely exceptional circumstances, which must be fully explained.

These arrangements are made in accordance with the Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations 1981 and Guidance issued by the Department of Education "SCHOOL ATTENDANCE : POLICY AND PRACTICE ON CATEGORISATION OF ABSENCE"

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