



SOUTHWICK CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY STATEMENT - ATTENDANCE PARENTS'/CARERS' SUMMARY

We believe pupils can only take full advantage of their education if they attend school regularly and punctually.

The Education Welfare Service has a key function in working closely with schools, families, teams within the Education and Libraries Department and other agencies in order to promote excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality.

PARENTS AND CARERS RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs which they may have. Most parents choose to fulfil this responsibility by registering children at a school.

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance.

Parental Responsibilities:

- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time, appropriately dressed and in a 'ready to learn.' (i.e. not too tired or too hungry to learn.)
- Work in partnership with the school to help their child/children gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- Work in partnership with the school to take an active interest in their child's school career, to reinforce our policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evenings and other meetings where necessary.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies (as and when appropriate) to resolve issues relating to non-attendance.
- To acknowledge that they have been in receipt of the school's Attendance Policy.
- Notify the school if their child is absent. This needs to be done on the first day of absence, preferably before 10am. Parents should also provide an explanation for the absence which should be confirmed, preferably in writing, when the child returns to school. Such letters should be clearly dated by the writer.
- Parents are advised to avoid arranging medical or dental appointments during school hours and not to book holidays during term time as this is disruptive to children's learning.
- Parents must consult school *prior* to any holiday in school time giving maximum notice and seeking agreement from the Head Teacher on an Absence request form - See Appendix 1. Statutory Assessment periods should be avoided at all cost.

Absence requests will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

SCHOOLS RESPONSIBILITIES

The School is responsible for supporting the attendance of its pupils and for dealing with problems which may lead to non-attendance.

- To maximise attendance rates as one of their key tasks.
- Support parents in ensuring regular and punctual attendance.

- To respond promptly to any issue which may lead to non-attendance or irregular attendance.

We aim to be sensitive to the needs of the individual parent. The School recognises that some parents may have difficulty understanding written communications. We also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school. Effective lines of communication are a priority.

High priority is given to attendance and punctuality. Up to date attendance data is available in which authorised and unauthorised absence are clearly identified.

In the event of unexplained absence the school will seek an explanation from parents or carers. Should the Head Teacher consider that the explanation is unsatisfactory or, is proven to be untrue, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

School staff will make a written record on the 'Absence/late Arrival/leaving form', (appendix 1) when notified by a parent, or representative, of a child's absence on the first and subsequent days. This will be filed by the admin officer, together with other absence letters. For any child, not in school by 10am, the admin officer will contact the parent or carer to ascertain the cause of the absence and to ensure the whereabouts of the child is known. Under Safeguarding legislation, if we are unable to ascertain a child's whereabouts after five days (two days for looked after children) a report will be made to the school's Education Welfare Officer.

The school will only record authorised absence on receipt of a satisfactory oral or written explanation by the parent (see symbols inside front cover of register).

The teacher or admin officer will add a date to any letters that are not dated, in order that the school and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) are clear as to which absence the note refers.

The Head and Governors do not authorise term-time holidays except in exceptional circumstances such as bereavement. The Head has the right not to authorise absences where it is considered to be detrimental to the pupil or against DFES or LEA guidance. Parents must complete an 'Absence Request Form. (Appendix 2). It will be promptly returned to the parents.

The admin officer will carry out a regular 90% sweep of their register and notify the Head teacher promptly if children are absent often, or without an explanation. She must also report significant patterns of absence, lateness, or any information received that suggests absenteeism.

The Head Teacher will contact the parents promptly should there be concern regarding punctuality or absence.

The Head Teacher will meet the EWO regularly to monitor attendance, and seek advice, or action, whichever is most relevant.

During critical periods, such as return following serious or recurring illness, a return after a traumatic event or during the period leading to a phase transfer, staff will be alerted to the possibility of poor attendance. Such an occurrence will be reported to the Head Teacher.

Attendance levels will be noted on the annual reports, including where a child has arrived late in school but before the register closes, with a comment by the school if it is particularly good, significantly improved, or of concern.

Following a long term absence the school will meet with parents, or carers, to establish a re-integration procedure. This will be agreed with regard to individual circumstances, but will be designed to ensure as short a delay in full-time education as is possible in the relevant situation.

The school will meet parents to discuss differentiation and flexibility in the curriculum where this is an issue that bears on a pupils' poor motivation or attendance. The school will communicate with outside agencies.

The teachers and the Head will ensure effective liaison with other phases.

Governors will be informed and involved in ensuring high levels of attendance. They will review the School Attendance Policy regularly and will ensure that it is properly disseminated, reviewed and evaluated.

Every encouragement will be given to communicate to all parents the contents of the School's Attendance Policies and the schools expectations of punctuality and high levels of attendance through giving a copy to new parents and publishing it on the school website.

THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Education Welfare Service fulfils the statutory duty to ensure regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

The primary responsibility of the Education Welfare Service is to promote the excellent attendance of all pupils in Wiltshire.

Further information about the Education Welfare Service's Service Level Agreement with school is available on request.

Education Welfare Officer Consultation Visits

The allocated Education Welfare Officer will visit the school regularly, as stated in the Service Level Agreement. Along with the Head Teacher the purpose of the visit will be to:

- Identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This will include regular examination of attendance registers.
- Agree on action which needs to be taken by the school and/or the Education Welfare Service.
- Feedback and exchange information in relation to work which has been undertaken by the Education Welfare Officer and/or the school.
- Identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters.
- Offer advice on strategies for improving attendance.

Once a referral has been agreed, the Education Welfare Officer will undertake casework with pupils and their parents. This may include:

- Making home visits in order to assess the situation and agree a way forward.
- Arranging meetings between the school, parents and pupil.
- Offering specific support to parents and individual pupils, either at school or elsewhere.
- Facilitating attendance meetings, case discussions and other meetings.
- Enabling the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies.

The Education Welfare Officer may also arrange for the pupils to receive specialist support such as counselling or group work.

The Education Welfare Officer has the responsibility to advise, support and assist in cases of both fixed period and permanent exclusions.



Absence Request Form

Taking your child out of school during term time may harm your child's academic progress.

Absences may only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher in EXCEPTIONAL circumstances.

Circumstances which are notified to the school or Local Authority **after** a decision has been made by the Headteacher will not be considered. Therefore please be certain to provide details of the exceptional circumstances relating to your application below and attach any supporting evidence.

Please read the attached Local Authority leaflet which explains Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised Leave of Absence during term time.

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of Child(ren) | |
| Date of Birth | |
| Class | |
| Date of First Day of Absence | |
| Date of Return | |
| Number of Days requested | |
| Known siblings and school(s) attending | |

Special Circumstances (reason) for holiday to be taken during term time:

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Signed: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Carer: _____

For school use:

Attendance%:

Total sessions pupil absent this academic year:

Total unauthorised absence this year:

Request authorised: Yes/No

**PENALTY NOTICES FOR UNAUTHORISED LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME
(PREVIOUSLY CALLED HOLIDAY ABSENCE)**

**s444A and s444B Education Act 1996 &
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006**

**Information for Parents and Carers
June 2014**

What are s444A and s444B of the Education Act 1996?

Section 444A and section 444B of the Education Act 1996 give powers to the Local Authority (LA) to issue Penalty Notices where the parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

Why are these powers available?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority at both national and local level. Missing school reduces a pupil's educational attainment and life chances.

What is a Penalty Notice?

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and is used to try and secure an improvement in a pupil's school attendance without the need to appear in Court. As long as the penalty is paid the Penalty Notice enables parents or carers to discharge their potential liability for prosecution for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

What are the costs?

Payment of £120 is required within 28 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice; this sum is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid in full within 28 days the LA is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of your child's poor school attendance. If you plead guilty or are found guilty the Courts have a wider range of options which could include a maximum fine of £1000. In addition a Parenting Order could be imposed.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent for each child and payment is required for each Penalty Notice issued.

Who issues them?

The Local Authority through the Education Welfare Service.

How are they issued?

By post to your home.

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

Yes. You will not be prosecuted for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However, legal proceedings might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Penalty Notice, depending upon the circumstances.

When are they issued for unauthorised Leave of Absence

Penalty Notices are issued for absence taken during term time where the leave of absence has not been authorised by the school or an absence has not been requested in advance and pupil will have had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised leave of absence during the previous six months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

What is unauthorised Leave of Absence?

- A parent has made a request for leave of absence in term time and this has not been agreed by the school;
- A parent has not applied leave of absence in advance of the absence (the regulations do not allow retrospective approval);
- If the parents keep the child away from school for longer than was agreed, the extra time is recorded as unauthorised.

When can Leave of Absence be authorised?

Amendments made to the 2006 regulations in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013** make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.

Why have I received this leaflet?

This leaflet is sent to parents in Wiltshire to inform them of the extended use of Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence or for parents who have requested leave of absence during term time.

If the leave of absence you have requested is not agreed by the school and your child's total unauthorised leave of absence amounts to 10 or more sessions (5 school days), continuous or aggregated within the previous six months within the current academic year the Education Welfare Service will be notified. The six months includes all unauthorised leave of absence up to the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

Following this notification from a school that a parental request for a leave of absence in term time has not been authorised and the leave of absence is taken the Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child.

What can I do now?

If the leave of absence that you have requested is not authorised you are advised not to take your child out of school.

Who can I discuss this with?

In the first instance talk to your child's school; otherwise the Penalty Notice Officer can be contacted on:
Tel: 01722 438123 Email: PNLO@wiltshire.gov.uk