

Steyning CE Primary School, Steyning

Attendance Policy

Creating a Brighter Future



Policy Adopted:	June 2018
Policy Reviewed:	June 2018
Review requirement:	Annually
Date for next review:	June 2019

1. Introduction

Why attendance is important

Good attendance at school is essential for a pupil's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. Good attendance at school is crucial to making progress. There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem.

Statement of intent:

The school aims to work together with parents to ensure that children attending Steyning C of E Primary School attend both regularly and punctually. The school will promote regular attendance thus offering all pupils equal access to learning.

The school believes that good attendance is vital for all students if they are to gain the most from the education we provide. There are clearly documented links between regular attendance and attainment. At Steyning C of E Primary School we encourage good attendance by making the school day and pupils' learning enjoyable. Children need to feel that their contribution in school is valued and that all staff care about them as individuals. We hope that parents will assist us in our work of raising attendance levels throughout the school by:

- Ensuring the regular attendance of their child.
- Informing the school when their child is absent from school.
- Provide a reason for absence.
- Attend any meetings about their child's attendance, which may be necessary.

2. Aims and Targets

Our attendance target for 2018/19 is 97% with a particular focus on reducing persistent absenteeism.

The school will:

- Develop clear procedures to enable children to come to school.

- Ensure that all children and parents understand the issues and procedures for attendance.
- Ensure that all staff including governors, administration, support and non-teaching staff understand the issues and procedures for attendance.
- Provide a document outlining the registration procedures.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the procedure and encourage them to adopt a consistent approach to recording and monitoring registration and attendance issues.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Parents' responsibilities:

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis.
- Parents should ensure that, if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as illness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, on the first morning of absence before 9.30am. This may be done by phone, by email or in person. Verbal messages on the parent's behalf from an adult relative or representative such as a childminder or friend may be accepted at the school's discretion on the first day of absence - subsequent absences must be explained by the parent. Verbal messages from children, e.g. siblings, will not be accepted.
- Parents may not authorise their child's absence – only the school can do this, on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents.
- Parents should ensure that their child arrives on time for the start of registration (8:50 am).
- Children arriving after this time should report to the pupil office and be signed into the office.
- Parents should avoid booking family holidays during term-time. Such holidays will not be authorised unless under very special circumstances.
- Parents should work with the school to improve lateness and attendance.

If parents, guardians or carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should:

- Talk to their child; it may be something simple that needs your help in resolving.
- Talk to Mrs Harrison (Headteacher) or a member of the leadership team.

The role of the Headteacher:

The Headteacher is the key person within our school who motivates the whole staff by demonstrating a commitment to promoting good attendance by:

- Ensuring regular celebrations of good attendance take place.
- Providing regular reports to the Governing Body about attendance.
- Ensuring the monitoring and implementation of the agreed policy and procedures.
- Being available, if appropriate, for parents who may wish to discuss specific problems in school which their children are experiencing.
- Ensuring that the appropriate training is provided as required on attendance.

- Ensure the improvement of attendance is high profile within the school through a number of measures.
- Work with the LA on specific strategies to reduce Persistent absenteeism.
- Produce attendance reports for the governors and SLT about the effectiveness of policy and procedures in promoting good attendance.
- Meet with parents who are developing or have developed, a pattern of absences, and agreeing actions which may lead to the child attending more regularly.
- Agree attendance action plans with the child and the parents where a pattern of absence is a cause for concern.
- Recognising and celebrating the good attendance of their children in their assemblies, class groups and through individual praise.

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents/carers.
- Form positive relationships with students and parents/carers when discussing attendance issues.
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all students to attend and to achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually. Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues. Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Ensure that there is a named member of SLT (Mrs Harrison) to lead on attendance.
- Return relevant school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department of Education.
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through regular reporting to the Governing Body.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site are implemented.
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support students and their families.
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

The role of the Governors:

The Governing Body of the school is actively engaged in promoting good attendance by supporting and encouraging children and teachers in their work. They will achieve this by appointing an Attendance link Governor who will support the school by:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to students and their parents/carers.
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.

- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through regular reporting at Governing Body Meetings.
- Ensure that there is a named senior leader to lead on attendance.
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention.

The role of the Attendance Officer:

The school has a designated member of the Support Team to adopt specific responsibilities for attendance matters. Over time s/he will develop an overall view of attendance matters in the school by:

- Supporting the implementation of an attendance Policy.
- Organise attendance meetings.
- Supporting staff in the development of clear guidelines for promoting good attendance.
- Use attendance data to identify forthcoming shortfalls in attendance levels, and develop active strategies to reduce this trend.
- Making routine phone calls to parents and sending out letters to parents about their child's attendance.
- Consistently checking parents' explanations for their child's absence.
- Consistently contacting parents in person where an explanation of their child's absence has not been received.
- Preparing and publishing statistical data regarding attendance from registers.
- Receiving and acting upon information from class teachers about children in their year group.
- Reporting any serious difficulties and problems which may affect an individual's child's attendance to the class teacher.

The Role of the Class Teacher:

Class teachers are ideally placed because of their regular contact with the children in their class are able to assess whether the explanations received for a child's absence are reasonable.

In our school we recognise that building a good relationship with children is vital in promoting good attendance by:

- Welcoming children back after they have been absent because of illness.
- Taking specific steps to assist children returning to school when they have been absent.
- Refer their concerns to the attendance officer.

The role of Clerical and Administrative Staff:

Our administrative staff provide a great deal of valuable support to the attendance officer by:

- Passing information received from some parents at the school to the attendance officer.
- Help where possible in providing an individual's attendance data as well as other statistical information.
- Input data onto SIMs as required to do so.

School responsibilities:

- To communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school.
- The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress and personal wellbeing.
- Have appropriate registration processes in place.
- Registers will be taken in all lessons and recorded on SIMS.
- Teachers will complete registers in accordance with guidance given by the Headteacher and the SLT member in charge of attendance to ensure safe guarding of all pupils.
- Registers are monitored daily by the Admin Attendance Administrator. The Attendance Administrator will follow up absences and lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school: initially with a first day absence text and then telephone call.

The Role of Pupils:

The school believes that all children should attend regularly if they are to reach their full potential. Children should:

- Aim for 100% attendance, only being absent through genuine illness.
- Arrive at school on time for registration.
- Register with the attendance officer or front office if they arrive after 8.50am.
- Bring a note from home explaining the reason for absence following a session of absence if no phone call or email into the school has been made.

The Role of Parents:

The school believes that its children are able to achieve when:

- School and family work in partnership.
- Parents ensure that their child attends school regularly and do not allow time off from school for trivial or unacceptable reasons.
- Parents contact school on their child's first day of absence by 09.30am and provide the reason for absence and intended return date.
- Parents avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. If this is unavoidable a absence request form must be completed prior to the holiday.
- Parents attend any necessary meetings and respond as quickly as possible to any letters and information about their child's attendance.

- If an absence is known of in advance, e.g. a medical appointment, a letter to the school prior to absence is required.

It is crucial that parents adhere to this procedure to ensure that all pupils are safe and their whereabouts accounted for.

STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

- The school believes in early intervention. If a student is recorded as absent in morning registration a member of the admin staff will aim to contact parents that morning.
- If this is not possible two members of staff will do a home visit to ascertain the reason for the child's absence.
- Children whose attendance is causing concern will be supported by the Attendance Officer by a variety of methods.

Holidays

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as a right. The Education regulations state that applications for leave must be made in advance by a parent with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each application is considered individually by the school.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Days of religious observance.
- Service personnel returning from active deployment.
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company.
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

Taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt educational progress. Before completing this application form parent/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education.

Any family who persistently takes unauthorised time of during term time could be liable to a fine.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

“Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.”

Fixed Penalty Notices

Regular unauthorised absence by a child will be scrutinised by the school and may attract one or more of the following interventions:

- A warning letter.
- Request for parents/guardians to attend the school for an interview to discuss attendance.
- Referral to Local Authority (Pupil Entitlement: Investigation Team).
- Referral to Social Services (in cases of child welfare concerns).

There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

Lateness

Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite.

- Children must be in class at 8.50am each day. Registers will be taken during this time.
- Children who arrive after 8:50am will be signed into the school office.
- Lateness will be monitored by the Attendance Administrator.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays. When needed the school may require appointment letters/ cards. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping.

First day contact guidance (Sickness)

First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The correct procedure at Steyning C of E Primary School is as follows:

1. Parents / Carers to contact the School by 9.30am informing them of their child's absence.
2. As soon as registers close, the attendance administrator checks absentees against messages received.
3. For pupils for whom no message has been received, the attendance administrator will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity.
4. When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the parent will be informed that the absence will not be authorised.
5. In the event that a parent is unaware of their child's absence and believes their child should be in school, the School will double check to make sure the child is absent and a mistake has not been made in the register. If after this, the child proves to be definitely missing, the School will then contact the police to report the child as missing.
6. In the case of minor ailments, the parent will be encouraged to send the child in with an assurance that school will keep a close eye on him/her. (NB – if there has been a spate of certain symptoms in the school or community, such minor illnesses may be treated as a valid reason for absence).
7. Where no contact is made, a message should be left asking the parent to contact the school. Where it is impossible to leave a message, the attendance administrator will attempt to contact the next named contact.
8. If there continues to be no contact by lunchtime, a home visit will be made to ensure the child is safe and to ascertain the reason for the child's absence.
9. Reasons for absence are inputted to SIMS. Please notify the school in the morning and of subsequent absences. (We reserve the right to request a doctor's/consultant's letter regarding recurring and frequent illness.)
10. When no reason for absence has been received an absent letter will be sent home.

Persistent absentees

Persistent absentees are defined as children whose attendance is below 90% and where unsatisfactory reasons are given for absence. However, the procedures outlined below may apply to children whose attendance is above 90% but where there are concerns about deteriorating attendance or where patterns are emerging, e.g. regular absences on particular days or persistent lateness.

These pupils are carefully monitored by our School Attendance Officer who will add any pupils to the persistent absentee's lists. These children are carefully monitored every day. In a drive to increase attendance at Steyning C of E Primary School, the school will be monitoring absences of below 93% as a form of good practice. Letters will also be sent home on a regular basis informing parents of their child's low attendance.

Absence for part of the day

From time to time, pupils show symptoms of illness at school. School will contact parents and other family members if a child needs to go home. School asks parents to ensure we have up to date contact names and telephone numbers for this purpose.

In the event of school closure

At Steyning C of E Primary School, we rarely close except in the most difficult situation. During winter months it may become necessary to close school due to adverse weather conditions. If this closure takes place at the start of the day, parents will receive a text and it will be broadcast on local Radio.

If the weather or other condition means that a decision is taken to close school during the school day parents and guardians will be texted and asked to collect their children as soon as possible. The staff will remain on the premises until all children have been collected.

Promoting Good Attendance

We celebrate good attendance throughout our School by:

- Attendance figures are termly communicated through assemblies.
- Awarding the school attendance certificates for the class with the best termly attendance.
- By awarding individual certificates to individual children who have 100% and 97%+ for each term and for the year.