



*'Learning from Each Other' -
'Achieving Together'*

Attendance Policy

Date of Policy: **Autumn 2019**

Person(s) Responsible for Policy: **Head**

Committee Responsible: **GSG**

Term of Review: **Autumn 2020**

Introduction

Swindon Village Primary school is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance. We also recognise the link between attendance and safeguarding of children. The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding Policies which are available on the website www.swindonvillage.co.uk.

Aims

As a school, we will:

- be open to all pupils for 380 sessions each school year (where possible);
- accurately record and monitor attendance, absenteeism and lateness, completing a register twice each day at 8.50am and 1.30pm;
- clearly distinguish between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised according to criteria laid down by the DfE;
- submit accurate attendance returns to the DfE (via the Local Authority and SIMS) within the stipulated time frame;
- set annual targets and submit these targets in accordance with the relevant regulations;
- work with families, pupils and the Education Inclusion Service to support and promote good attendance for all pupils;
- support the attendance of our pupils, responding to issues which might lead to non-attendance.

School's Role and Responsibilities

We aim to create an ethos and culture which encourages and values good attendance. All staff (teaching and support) at Swindon Village Primary School will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

The Head Teacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. As the Attendance Lead, the Head Teacher will ensure that up-to-date attendance data is regularly made available to all staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that the Governing Body is fully aware of attendance data and targets.

Parents' Role and Responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring that children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child). Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are registered regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children.

Parents should:

- have an expectation that their child will attend school unless physically unfit to do so;
- work in partnership with the school, taking an active and positive interest in their children's work and activities and attending parents' meetings and consultations, etc...;
- ensure that their child goes to bed at an appropriate time in order to be alert and rested for the following day;
- ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day, properly dressed, having had breakfast and with the right equipment for the day;
- ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable;
- telephone the school on the first day of absence and keep school updated if absence is longer than a few days;
- not take family holidays during term-time;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child's school life or if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend. Swindon Village Primary School will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.
- **Wherever possible, try to arrange appointments for out of school hours. If this is unavoidable the child should be brought to school before and after the appointment.**

Pupils' Responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher. Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn.

Governors' Responsibilities

Section 175 (2) states that the governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

The governors at Swindon Village Primary School monitor attendance closely and will contact any family where attendance has been identified as an issue. Failure to improve poor attendance may result in a referral to the Education Inclusion Service.

Registration and Lateness

The School Attendance Officer will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training. The school office will record any child leaving or entering the school at times other than registration.

The registers will close at 9.10am and 1.35pm. Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Any child arriving late but before the closing of the register will be marked as late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked as absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late.

Late Collection Procedure

- Children should be collected at 3:15pm (Rec/KS1) 3:20pm (KS2) or, if attending an after school club or activity, at the allocated finish time.
- If a child is not collected they will be taken to the school reception. Emergency contact numbers will be used if the school is unable to contact parents/carers.
- Social Services will be informed if a child is left uncollected one hour after the official collection time. If parents/carers have an emergency that means they are going to be significantly late, school should be informed as soon as possible.

Safeguarding

Registers are checked daily and phone calls are made to homes where pupils have not arrived in school and where we have not received a phone call or message from home to explain the absence. Parents are encouraged to ring school by 9.30am on each day of absence (or to provide a letter for longer planned absences or those due to longer term illness.). Phone calls home will be made before 10.00am each morning to ensure pupils are safe and being cared for. If there is no answer from the parents mobile or home contact numbers, the Attendance Officer will refer the child to the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and when appropriate to do so the DSL may arrange for a home visit by at least two members of staff.

Authorised Absences

A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head Teacher. The school will accept the following as reasons for authorised absence:

- The child is too ill to attend. In cases of recurring absences through illness, parents may be asked to produce a medical certificate;
- Where the pupil has an emergency dental/medical appointment. (Routine appointments should be made after school or during the holidays) Parents should return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send them to school beforehand;
- Participation in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority;
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's / student's parents belong;

- Other exceptional circumstances* recognised by the Head Teacher as justifying absence and for a very limited period.

*The National Association of Head Teachers' Guidelines for Exceptional Circumstances are classed as "rare, significant or unavoidable" and if an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term time, then it would not be normal to authorise absence.

Requests for absence during term time

Our intention is that children are required to attend school for 190 days each year, thus leaving 175 days for other activities to take place. The school holiday dates are published well in advance and we therefore expect parents/carers to book family holidays and other events during school holidays. **Term-time holidays will not be authorised at Swindon Village School unless it is deemed exceptional.**

The school will not authorise absences other than those in exceptional circumstances. Family holidays, day trips, shopping or birthdays are not classed as exceptional. Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. An accumulation of unauthorised absences will lead to a referral to the Education Inclusion Service and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

If an absence in term time is **unavoidable**, parents should complete an 'Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances' Form and submit this to the Head Teacher, explaining reasons for the absence. However, time off school is not a right and any decision to authorise absence is at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

In line with the guidance from the DfE, leave of absence during SATs, and other external exam periods will not be authorised by the school and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

Policy on Prosecution

Unauthorised absence which result in 10 or sessions being missed will result in the issue of a Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority in accordance with Gloucestershire County Council's Code of Conduct. The Penalty Notice is £60, per child per parent/carer, if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in you being served a summons to appear at the Magistrates Court.

If a pupil who is registered at a school fails to attend that school regularly and attempts by the Educational Entitlement & Inclusion Team and the school fail to ensure that the pupil returns to regular attendance, the Educational Entitlement & Inclusion Team behalf of the County Council, will, unless there are mitigating circumstances, consider taking legal action by issuing a summons against the parents to appear before the magistrates court under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act.

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Education Inclusion Service have the power to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to the parents of a child who fails to attend school regularly. Education Inclusion Service may also issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to the parents of an excluded child who is found in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion). Fixed Penalty Notices may only be issued in accordance with the terms of a local Code of Conduct. (Copies of this Code of Conduct are available from the Education Inclusion Service Legal Manager.)

If you take your child out of school for a period exceeding 20 school days without the permission of the Head Teacher, the child will be removed from the school roll unless evidence of sickness or unavoidable cause explaining such absence is provided to the school. If your child is removed from roll, upon your return you will have to reapply for a place at the same or another school. Due to the demand for school places there is no guarantee that there will be a vacancy at the school of your choice.

Supporting Vulnerable Groups

We will endeavour to support the school attendance of any group of children who may be vulnerable. Such groups might include:

- looked after children;
- young carers;
- children from families under stress;
- children who have serious medical conditions that prevent full time attendance at school;
- children transferring school or entering school outside the normal year of entry.

Whilst we respond sympathetically to these situations, we balance this with a recognition that these children are nevertheless fully entitled to participate in all educational activities. In these situations we will offer appropriate support, which may include:

- home visits to support children's attendance and ensure parents are aware of school procedures
- support for children and parents to overcome any barriers to educational inclusion, such as actual or perceived bullying, trauma;
- working closely with the Education Inclusion Service or other outside agencies (Educational Psychologists and other County Council support) to develop an appropriate attendance strategy.

Our Strategy to Promote Good Attendance

Swindon Village Primary School gives a high priority and value to attendance and punctuality and ensure that specific strategies are in place in order to achieve this. We recognise the crucial importance of early intervention and provide appropriate strategies;

- The school has a designated Attendance Officer who is responsible for all matters related to attendance, for reporting concerns to the Head Teacher in a timely fashion and for liaising with the Education Inclusion Service.
- Registers are checked daily and phone calls are made to homes where pupils have not attended and where we have not received a phone call or message from home to explain the absence. Parents are encouraged to ring school by 9.30am on each day of absence (or to provide a letter for longer planned absences or those due to longer term illness.). Phone calls home will be made before 10.00am each morning to ensure pupils are safe and being cared for. If there is no response, the Attendance Officer will refer to the DSL (Designated safeguarding Lead).

- Unauthorised absences are referred to the Head Teacher weekly and reported to the Governing Body.
- Lateness is registered in a separate book. If children arrive after the gate is closed, their parents must bring them to the office to sign them in and explain their lateness. Lateness is monitored and repeated lateness is referred to the Head Teacher, who will contact parents to discuss the issue. Continued lateness will be referred to the Education Inclusion Service.
- The Attendance Officer and Head Teacher collect and make effective use of attendance data to monitor progress/trends and set targets for improvement – for individuals, classes, year groups and the whole school. This includes benchmarking our attendance patterns against other primary schools;
- The Head Teacher provides parents with regular attendance information and guidance through newsletters.
- Induction meetings for new parents convey the importance of good attendance and offer support to parents in maintaining high attendance.
- The Governing Body will support the Head Teacher in targeting families whose attendance is consistently and significantly below expectations. This may be done by letter or by meeting with those families.
- The school employs a Parental Support Advisor who supports families where poor attendance is an issue.
- The school ensures that reasonable steps are taken by the school before a referral is made to the Education Inclusion Service.
- The school aims to offer an interesting and accessible curriculum which encourages regular attendance and to ensure steps have been taken to meet children’s social and pastoral needs.
- The school stresses to parents the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term-time.
- **Parents of children who are deemed as persistently absent (i.e. under 90% attendance or if lateness causes a concern) will receive a warning letter. If the child’s attendance does not improve they will be invited to attend an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM)**

Related Policies

- Health and Safety
- Confidentiality and Whistle Blowing
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Anti-bullying + Hate
- Positive Behaviour
- Preventing and Dealing with Racist Behaviour
- Children Missing in Education
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019
- Safer Recruitment
- E-Safety + Acceptable Use Policy
- SEND + Local Offer
- PSHE and RSE
- Staff Handbook
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints
- Offer of Early Help

This policy is reviewed annually by the Head Teacher in consultation with staff, pupils, governors and parents.

This Policy was adopted formally in September 2015. It will be reviewed annually in line with the Governors' Timetable for Policy Review.

Signed..... (Head Teacher)

Signed..... (Chair of GSG)

Date