

# Swaffham Prior CE Primary School



## Attendance Policy

**Approved by:** Governors

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019

**Last reviewed on:**

**Next review due by:**

## Aims

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Support children and their parents/carers to have the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Meet the overall school target of 96% for pupil attendance;
- Ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer;
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Take steps to ensure attendance meets or exceeds Government targets;

## Introduction

Swaffham Prior 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. You can find further details on School attendance and the law on the Cambridgeshire County Council website via the following link:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/school-attendance/>

## Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for 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:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

The school will ensure that all members of the committee know of the policy and have access to it.

Pupils must arrive in school **by 8.45am** on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at **8.45am** and will be kept open until **8.50am**. The register for the second session will be taken at **1.00pm** and will be kept open until **1.05pm**.

## School's Procedures, Roles and Responsibilities

### Registration

- i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers and Higher Level Teaching Assistants are responsible for completing the attendance registers.
- ii) The register will be called promptly at 8.45 am and 1.00 pm by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.
- iii) The registers will close at 8.50 am and 1.05 pm. Any pupil / student who arrives after the closing of the register will count as absent. Pupils who arrive before the register closes but late will be counted as present but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para 4.5 on page 4).

**All** staff (teaching and support) at Swaffham Prior Primary School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and 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.

### Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (amended) September 2018 later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable.
- ii) Swaffham Prior Primary School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence, as it will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at Swaffham Prior Primary School will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 2 weeks, the absence will remain unauthorised.
- iv) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:
  - (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
    - a pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's / student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered;
    - in exceptional circumstances, permission has been granted for leave due to bereavement;
  - (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;

(c) where the pupil / student has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand);

(d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, eg extreme weather conditions;

(e) 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.

- v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:
- no explanation has been given by the parent;
  - the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
  - the pupil is shopping during school hours;
  - the pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, eg a birthday;
  - the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday

### **Approved educational activity**

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

### **Staff Training**

The School Attendance Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

### **Parents' / carers' responsibilities**

The prime responsibility for ensuring 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), who will be supported and encouraged by Swaffham Prior Primary School.

Swaffham Prior Primary School expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school. Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (amended) September 2018 7.3 Parents will also be expected to:
  - notify the school on the first day of absence, by telephoning the school before 9.00am, or by speaking to the school secretary whilst dropping off siblings;
  - ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
  - work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
  - contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. The school will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

### **Unplanned absence**

- Parents must notify the school on every day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by **9.00am** or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

- ***Please contact the school office by phone, email or, if siblings are in school, in person.***
- Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.
- If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.
- If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

### **Medical or dental appointments**

- Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.
- However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

***Please notify the school office by phone, email or in person with any medical correspondence.***

- Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found below.

### **Lateness and punctuality**

- A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes are monitored for frequency of lateness. If the lateness is persistent, the parents will be requested to give Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (amended) September 2018 adequate reason. If this is not sufficient to resolve the problem, the Education Welfare Officer will be informed.

4.7 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the main school office. It is important that all pupils arriving late following this procedure.

4.8 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day report to the main school office.

*Where persistent lateness is identified, the school may work closely in partnership with parents to draw up an action plan to address the issue.* Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes (see para. 2.3 (iii)) will be marked 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 / student to be late. Such a reason will not include reasons such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil / student who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence (see para. 4.3). If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and could result in a penalty notice under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

### **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 or form tutor.

Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

### **Post-registration truancy**

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil / student goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil / student will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. Swaffham Prior Primary School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately

### **Monitoring and Analysis of Data**

#### **Attendance Leader**

The Attendance Leader 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. This person, known as the Attendance Leader, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body half termly. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

The head teacher, supported by the School Office Administrator (Attendance Leader) will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body). The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection. to track the attendance of individual pupils, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

Attendance is monitored by class and by reasons for absence. If a class teacher has particular concerns about an individual child's attendance or punctuality, she/he should inform the Head teacher. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

Attendance is formally monitored by the head teacher and EWO each half term. The school has adopted the following Local Authority procedures for attendance below 96%

- 96% - attendance Letter 1 (where appropriate and depending upon circumstances)
- 95% - 92% attendance Letter 1 or Letter 2 (where appropriate and depending upon circumstances), a school meeting requested, and recorded, and, if necessary, a support plan put in place or an EHA offered
- 90% or below Letter 3 (where appropriate and depending upon circumstances), a school meeting requested, and recorded, and, if necessary, a support plan put in place or an EHA offered

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

If attendance continues to deteriorate then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer. The Education Welfare Officer can become involved when attendance is 89% or below and there are unauthorised marks.

The head teacher will liaise with the Education Welfare Officer where there are other or more immediate concerns over attendance. Formal referrals are made using the Statutory Intervention Form

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

## **Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance**

Attendance has a very high profile at Swaffham Prior Primary School and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in classes. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment, and attendance figures are published in school reports and shared at parent evenings.

### **First-day calling**

Swaffham Prior Primary School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil / student is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify, at an early-stage, pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the pupil's home will be visited by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. A letter will be hand delivered, requesting that the parents contact the school to explain the pupil's absence.

### **Meetings with parents**

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's / student's absence over a 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil / student to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

### **Children with an ongoing medical condition.**

Supporting a child with a medical condition that has impacted their attendance is not the sole responsibility of one person. The school will work collaboratively with medical staff within the organisations being used and with outside agencies where support may be needed. The school will draw up a Medical Healthcare Plan with parents and with advice from medical health professionals. This will evidence reasons for absences from school and how provision can be altered to cater for the medical needs of the pupil. For short term absences, school will provide work/homework and activities for school work missed. The first 3 weeks of absences remains the school's responsibility from their in house support procedures. For prolonged support, current medical evidence is required and a treatment plan put in place. Support from 'Education Support Team for Medical Absence' team (ESTMA) is sought through a referral using a EHA Hub (Early Help Assessment form). They will provide a personalised program, reintegration support and signposting to other services.

### **Promoting Good Attendance**

Every Friday, in Celebration Assembly, the class with the best attendance for the week will be awarded the school mascot to take care of for the next week.

### **Referral to the Education Welfare Service**

If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the pupil / student is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

### **Term-time Holidays**

Term-time holidays are not permissible and will not be authorised.

*Prior to June 2013, the Education (Pupil registration - England) regulations 2006 allowed for Head teachers to grant leave of absence for a term time holiday in 'special circumstances' and for extended leave in exceptional circumstances. Amendments to these regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave. It is made clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and the head teacher determines the number*



*of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. The regulations make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term time holiday. If parents take their child on a holiday in term time this will be counted as an unauthorised absence – this is the same as truancy and each parent will be at risk of a Penalty Notice being applied for each child who is absent from school for a holiday.*

There are various reasons that may make it difficult for service families to take holidays together outside term time. Including operational tours, overseas or afloat, however, the MOD recognises that the educational needs of the Service children affected will always be a critical factor when determining whether term time absence should be granted. MOD guidance states that the decision on whether to authorise term time holidays for the children of service personnel sits solely with the head teacher of their school. To assist Head Teachers in making their decision on absence applications, Unit Commanding Officers and their welfare staff will be asked to provide advice, verification and endorsement as required.

### **Extended leave of absence**

Extended leave of absence are not permissible and will not be authorised.

### **Governors' responsibilities**

Governors monitor school attendance. Attendance data is reported to the Full Governing Body in the head teacher's report. The governing body 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 Governing Body of Swaffham Prior Community Primary School reviews and monitors attendance of all pupils and strategies to enhance attendance through the Education and Learning Committee work plan. This is shared with all Governors and reviewed every term.

### **Sanctions for poor attendance – Penalty notices**

The use of sanctions is a critical part of the toolkit available to every Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and should be utilised alongside other strategies. The decision to apply a Penalty Notice must be based on clear threshold criteria. Please refer to the Local Authority Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices in Appendix A.

Threshold criteria for applying a penalty notice:

- **Unauthorised absence pattern developing**
  - Attendance at 90% and below over previous 4 weeks –warning letter to parents that if attendance does not improve over monitoring period a penalty notice may be applied – school to discuss cases with the Educational Welfare Officer.
- **Ongoing unauthorised absence**
  - Attendance at 90% and below over previous 6 weeks – referral to Education Welfare Officer who may apply a penalty notice as an alternative to prosecuting through the Magistrate Courts.
- **Holiday in term time**
  - Evidence that child has been taken out of school for the purpose of going on a family holiday for three or more consecutive school days - Education Welfare Officer will apply a penalty notice to each parent for each child. This will result in a £60 fine per parent per child, rising to £120 if it is not paid promptly.

### **Late Letters**

If a child is late more than 3 times in a half term, a letter reminding parents of their duty will be sent out.

### **Pupils Persistently late i.e after registers closed ('U' code)**

Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (amended) September 2018 Attendance at 90% and below over previous 4 weeks – referral to Education Welfare Officer who will warn parents that if attendance does not improve over monitoring period, a penalty notice will be applied.



### **Pupils Excluded**

Found in public place during school hours, in the first 5 days of exclusion Evidence of when child seen in public place – referral to Education Welfare Officer. Penalty notice will be applied.

### **Parenting Contracts**

Parenting Contracts for irregular school attendance have been developed in response to the provisions of Section 19 Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. Parenting Contracts are in line with the philosophy behind the Children Act 1989 which emphasises that Local Authorities must make every attempt to work in partnership with parents to avoid instituting court action wherever possible. Parenting Contracts are intended to:

- Improve the pupil's attendance to an acceptable level by identifying obstacles and agreeing a plan to overcome them
- Agree details of how to achieve change through determined actions

Following the Parenting Contract meeting should these objectives not be met, a PACE Interview under caution will be held to help provide a formal process whereby consideration can be given to the institution of action either under the Children Act 1989 or the Education Act 1996. The PACE interview Should a student's attendance fail to improve, in spite of help from the school and an EWO, parents will be invited to a formal PACE interview held under caution. Before a meeting begins parents will be formally cautioned under the under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

### **Reviewing the policy**

The school will review this policy each year with its allocated Education Welfare Officer and Governing body.