



**SEDGEFIELD  
HARDWICK**

*INSTIL · INSPIRE · INNOVATE*

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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This policy has been compiled in accordance with the Local Authority guidelines and DCSF regulations regarding pupil attendance.

*Aims and Objectives of the Policy:*

- To ensure there is a robust system of attendance recording and monitoring in place in school;
- To ensure we are an inclusive environment and all children have the opportunity to access mainstream education;
- To ensure safeguarding protocols are upheld and that there is a formal system of tracking children with poor attendance;
- To uphold the Statutory regulations as deemed fit by Durham County Council and DCSF.
- To support initiatives that promote good attendance.

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## Registration of Pupils:

### The Statutory Requirements

Parents, schools and the LA's share legal responsibilities in respect of school attendance. Parents of children of compulsory school age must ensure that they receive an efficient and suitable full-time education (Section 7 Education Act 1996).

All schools (other than independent schools for boarders only) must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, a pupil should be marked present or absent. (Pupils Registration Regulations 1995).

Local Authority's must ensure that parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations as to their children's education including, where necessary, by action through the Courts. (Sections 437-448 Education Act 1996).

Schools are required to collect and publish data on their rates of unauthorised absence for the preceding year. (Education [Pupils Attendance Records] Regulations 1991).

Schools must maintain an admission register/school roll (electronic version as per SIM's database)

(Education[Pupil Registration] Regulations 1995). This should be updated annually. A child that is on the Admission register should also be on the Attendance register.

Children's names may be deleted as follows:-

1. When the child 'has been registered' at another school. Children should not be removed from the register on a 'promise' by parents, only when the school is informed by another school that they have actually admitted the child (or after four weeks if they have moved away but no subsequent school has been in contact – see below).
2. When parents have given written notification to the school that they are educating the child 'otherwise' than at school. The school must then inform the LA's Inclusion & Attendance Team who will advise on exactly when the child's name should be deleted.
3. When the child has stopped attending and no longer 'ordinarily resides' at a place which is a reasonable distance from the current school. This does not give the school power to remove the name of a child who has stopped attending but who is still living at the same address. It only covers children who have physically moved their home address, if there is no contact from any other school.
4. After four weeks continuous absence and 'both the proprietor of the school and the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil'. The school cannot act without consultation with the Local Authority first to make a joint decision.
5. At the **end** of the exclusion process regarding permanent exclusion.

Sedgefield Hardwick Primary use the SIMs Attendance package for recording numbers present every day, incorporating the pre-printed, pre-dated Capita Registration Forms.

Class Teachers are responsible for marking the register as soon as possible after 8.55am when school session commences, and again at 1pm after the lunch break. If the Office receive a call

from a parent notifying the school of an absence, a note will be included in the register and the teacher should refer to this when completing the roll call.

➤ **All pupils present or absent are to be marked with a \.** This should be recorded if the child is not in school by **9.05am** or **1.15pm**:-

- \ denotes PRESENT
- M denotes ABSENT with known medical reason
- C denotes ABSENT with authorisation
- O denotes ABSENT unauthorised

Registers are closed at this time unless exceptional circumstances, such as bad weather, result in an extension of this period (at the discretion of the Head Teacher and not to exceed 30 minutes).

If a child is late, (i.e. after registration) they will already have been marked absent. They will now be marked present as well. **This double marking denotes late.** The double marking will be completed by the Class Teacher if the register has not yet been sent to the Office. It will be completed by Office Staff if the child comes into school after the register has left the class.

Please note if a child comes in late they should be sent to the school office where amendments to the register will be completed by the office staff.

#### **Absence Recording & Monitoring:**

Children may arrive late to school for several reasons, be it after an early medical appointment or if they have genuinely been late through 'sleeping in' etc.

Medical appointments are classed as approved absence and will be coded as such within the attendance database.

Late children, with no approved reason for their lateness other than the fact that they are genuinely late, will be recorded with an 'L' in the attendance database

If children are persistently late:-

- i) a letter should be sent to parents (3 non recognised occurrences – i.e. non appointment lateness)
- ii) a record of the time of arrival will be kept by the Office.
- iii) If the problem persists there will be direct intervention by the Head Teacher, which may involve referral to the Inclusion & Attendance Team.

A Late Registration Record is kept in the Office, and followed up by the Office Staff.

**Registers should always be returned to the office as soon as possible to comply with the emergency procedures in case the building had to be evacuated quickly and children had to be accounted for.**

Children leaving school in school hours must be signed off the premises for purposes of ensuring an accurate record in case of emergency evacuation. This is done at the office. Only named contacts may collect a child unless we have been advised by the parent otherwise.

To keep our children safe, we request all parents to support our systems for informing us of pupil absence.

If parents know a child is poorly and will not be attending school or are going to a medical appointment first thing that morning, we advise parents **MUST** telephone the school office before **9.30am** to inform us of the absence. The school office is very busy particularly first thing on a morning, and the telephone is often engaged but we would appreciate parental perseverance in contacting us.

If we have had no contact from a parent/carer by 9.30am, we **WILL** proceed to contact the responsible adult via the Contact information sheets held in school to establish a reason for the absence. The contacts will be worked through in order of priority, so for instance if we cannot reach the first contact we will try second contact and so on.

If we have **not** managed to contact the child's main carer, we will leave messages with other contacts informing them of the absence and it will then be **their** responsibility to inform the parent. The school's responsibility for the absence would then be relinquished and **no further investigation would be taken by us that day.**

In the event that we have been unable contact **anyone** listed on a child's contact form, we will log the fact we have tried to make contact in our own records and **no further action will be taken by us.** This follows advice sought from the Education Department Inclusion Team, as children are not considered officially 'missing' until a reasonable time period has elapsed. This is the situation that concerns us the most and the reason why we request parents are proactive in contacting us.

It is also important that the names and telephone numbers held in our records for all children are complete and up to date. Update forms are always available from the school office in the event of a change of number etc. and parents are regularly reminded of the procedures in place (*see also the annual School Brochure*).

If we still have not heard from either the parent or another nominated carer regarding the reason for absence by the second day of that absence, we will have to notify the Inclusion & Attendance Team and there would be the possibility of Police intervention as the absence would have passed the 24 hour cut-off period and the child would be considered officially 'missing'.

Absence is monitored closely in school to enable us to:

- identify trends and patterns of absence
- identify those children who are persistently late with no good reason
- identify children whose general attendance is very poor

Where such cases are identified, a system is in place for contacting parents and flagging the levels of absence/punctuality concerns. In the majority of cases, the pattern will improve but it may be necessary to closely monitor certain children given their family background or historic data.

Where the school feels that the internal monitoring system has not been appropriately acknowledged by a parent/carer and a satisfactory impact on improving attendance or punctuality not achieved, the matter will be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Team for investigation. This may involve a home visit by the Inclusion Officer to establish why attendance has deteriorated with a view to providing a framework of further support.

#### **Leave of Absence Requests:**

Under regulation 12 of the Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations 1981, schools have discretionary power for leave to be granted for the purpose of annual family

holiday or an annual holiday during term time. Such permission is granted in accordance with arrangements made by the Governing Body of the school. Only in *exceptional circumstances* may the amount of leave granted exceed (in total) more than two weeks in any school year. No parents can demand leave of absence for the purposes of a holiday as a right.

There is an 'Authorisation of Leave of Absence During Term Time' form that parents should complete prior to leave being requested. The school will honour most normal requests but there are conditions:

- ✓ **No** leave will be granted to ANY child in Year 6 during the week of the Key Stage 2 examinations, and this would be recorded on the pupils attendance record as an unauthorised absence if the parent still saw fit to keep the child off school during this period;
- ✓ Leave may be refused where there has already been significant absence from school for holiday purposes, or if the child's general attendance is considered poor, without a justifiable reason for that absence

Leave from school for holidays is discretionary, not an automatic entitlement.

Parents may request leave for purposes other than family holiday, such as bereavement leave or attending a sporting tournament, and leave would be granted at the schools discretion. Parents should discuss their requirement prior to leave being taken.

#### **Unauthorised Absence:**

The majority of absences from school can be explained easily and the school try and be proactive in recording and tracking absences. If a child is absent for a period of time for which no reasonable explanation has been derived, we will write to the parent/carer requesting appropriate clarification of the absence. If there is still no reasonable explanation, the absence will be logged as unauthorised against the pupils record.

Leave of absence taken during SAT's week for Year 6 children will NOT be authorised.

#### **Fixed Penalty Notices:**

From February 2008, Durham Local Authority launched the use of Fixed Penalty Notices to address irregular school attendance. This means that the parents of any pupil absent from school for 10 days (or 20 half days) over an eight-week period, where the absence is unauthorised, will incur a £50 fine. This Penalty may rise to £100 and ultimately a Court summons if the Penalty remains unpaid. Please be aware that the use of a Fixed Penalty Notice will also take effect if your child is absent from school for a holiday, which has not been authorised by the school. The Local Authority is following in the steps of many other local authorities in the country that use Fixed Penalty Notices to prevent poor patterns of unauthorised absence developing. As a school we welcome this new policy, which runs alongside the proactive and positive encouragement and campaigns from the Attendance Team, Every Schoolday Counts. Penalty Notices will be issued by post to parents home address' after possibly just one warning, or in the case of missed exams/tests, without warning. At Sedgfield Hardwick Primary regular and punctual attendance is paramount as it has a direct link to achievement and attainment. Whilst we realise that the majority of parents/carers are conscientious and ensure their children make the most from their invaluable school education, as a school we support the Local Authority's stance and will notify parents of their intentions to use Fixed Penalty Notices. A copy of the Code of Conduct relating to this legislation is available from the school office on request.

#### **Children Missing From Education**

As part of the Every Child Matters agenda the Government imposed a statutory requirement on all local authorities to identify children missing from education.

In Durham, we are concerned about any child or young person who is missing out on their educational entitlement, as it may not only be their attainment that is at risk, but their safety and welfare too.

We will proactively encourage parents and staff to share any information they may have regarding children that they think or know is missing education, to ensure we can make sure they are safe, and registered at school or an alternative educational setting as soon as possible.

*Who are children missing from education?*

These are children and young people of compulsory school age (age 5-16) who are not on a school roll: being otherwise educated in alternative provision at home, or in private education, and who have been out of education for a substantial period of time.

*Why do children go missing from education?*

There are a number of reasons, including:

- they don't start school at the appropriate time and so they do not enter the educational system
- they are removed by their parents due to disinterest, problems at school or poor attendance
- they cease to attend due to exclusion, illness or bullying
- they fail to find a suitable school place after moving to a new area
- the family move home regularly.

If a member of staff has a concern about a child that they know that may fall into this category, or is approached by a parent who may know of a child in this position, it is important that the Attendance Team are informed as soon as possible. By doing so, we are ensuring the safety and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable members of our community. The more a child misses their education, the more likely those problems are of becoming entrenched. The Head Teacher should be informed in the first instance where such occurrences are identified.

***First Day Contact:***

Children who are expected to join Sedgefield Hardwick Primary School as part of normal transition have an opportunity to meet their class teacher before entry to Reception. This gives the child and the teacher a chance to familiarise themselves with each other. The expected roll is regularly checked for additions/deletions by the Admissions Team. Admission/contact forms are received by the school office prior to the beginning of the Autumn Term. There is therefore a framework in place to pick up any children who do not arrive at school on first day transition. If school attempts to locate the child/parent are unsuccessful, the details will be referred to the Inclusion & Attendance Team for further action.

**Attendance Targets and Reporting:**

Statutory Instrument no 2261 (The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007) came into force in September 2007, requiring the Governing Body of every maintained primary and secondary school to set and submit to the Local Authority a target for overall absence for the academic year.

The targets are reviewed annually; the DCSF guidance suggest that targets should be realistic but aspirational. The annual school target is the total number of absences, which the Governing Body intends that the pupils at the school will not exceed in the school year, expressed as a percentage of the total possible attendances by pupils at the school.

The purpose of target setting is to assist the school in:

- reducing levels of absence for children in particular groups
- to reduce levels of absence for a particular reason
- to reduce levels of persistent absence

Sedgefield Hardwick Primary are proactive in setting realistic targets with a view to reducing pupil absence, which in the main fall into the categories of annual family holiday and genuine illness.

Whilst truancy and children missing from education is an extremely rare matter at this school, we will always endeavour to track those children who may meet the criteria of most need and support.

Annual Attendance targets are communicated to parents every year in the *School Brochure* and we welcome their support in ensuring good attendance is observed whilst their children are with us.