



# Southridge First School

# Attendance Policy

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee on 17.12.2025

Review Date Spring 2027

Southridge First School

## **Policy for Attendance**

At Southridge First School we aim to work closely with parents/carers to achieve and maintain high standards of attendance.

Ofsted would expect that all children at Southridge achieve at least 96% attendance. Our whole school attendance target is 96.5%.

The Department for Education state that:

“ The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 ... have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.”

*(Working Together to Improve School Attendance: Feb '24 DfE)*

In order to achieve these aims, the school will:

- Promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere in school, where children feel safe and that their presence is valued
- Promote parents support of this policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education
- Create attitudes towards high standards of attendance and punctuality, which pupils should retain throughout life
- Ensure that attendance is maintained effectively and absences and lateness are followed up promptly
- Meet legal requirements, with particular reference to identifying unauthorised absence
- Keep accurate registration documents identifying authorised/unauthorised absences and check registers regularly, to note unexplained absences and identify patterns of absence and lateness if they are occurring
- Raise parental awareness of the importance of attendance and punctuality through a variety of strategies
- Seek support of other agencies within the Local Authority when difficulties arise

- Ensure all staff are aware of School policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality
- Ensure good liaison when a change of school occurs

### **Lateness Procedure**

- All children are expected to arrive at their classroom by 8.50am. Any child arriving after 8.50am should enter via the main door and must be accompanied by a parent who should sign them in. Arrival after 8.55am will be marked late. An accompanying adult should sign in children arriving at reception after these times. Lateness is monitored by the Headteacher and office staff at least half-termly. The Headteacher will speak to a parent if they are late more than 3 times in a half-term. A letter will be sent home at the end of the half-term for those who are persistently late.

### **Absence**

- Parents should notify the school before 9.30am if a child is going to be absent
- If a child is absent and a message has not been received by 9.30am office staff will telephone parents to find out why the pupil is absent
- A child arriving after 9.30am will be marked absent (this absence will be recorded as unauthorised if no reason is given).
- If the absence is known in advance, a written note is required
- If a child has any unexplained absences a letter asking for an explanation of the absence is sent to parents. The attendance system used in school automatically records any unexplained absences as unauthorised absence
- A list of children with less than 90% attendance is produced at the end of each term and parents are contacted as the child will be below the expected threshold and is therefore a 'persistent absentee'

### **Medical and Dental Appointments**

- Routine appointments must be made outside school hours
- If an appointment is made in school time an explanatory note should be sent to school on the day before the appointment
- Parents should sign children out and back in again when attending appointments during the school day
- Where there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, school and education welfare officers can refer the matter to a school doctor or GP. If a pupil is absent for a prolonged period or the school notices a pattern of school absence emerging, early contact should be made with the School Health Service.

### **Leave of Absence during Term Time**

**In very exceptional circumstances** the Headteacher may consider an application for leave of absence during term time. Examples of leave of this type might include attendance at a music/dance examination; parent wedding, family funeral etc.

## Applying for leave of absence

- Parents must notify the school well in advance of any planned absence from school during term time. **A leave of absence form** must be completed by parents. This will then be considered by the Headteacher for authorisation.

## Holidays in Term Time

- Family holidays should not be taken in term time. Parents do not have a right or entitlement to expect term-time leave for holidays to be granted. From 2011, the Governing Body no longer authorised absence during term time for holidays. New government guidelines introduced in September 2013 ensure that leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. If families still choose to take their children out of school during term time, absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

## Unauthorised Absence (including lateness)

Her Majesty's inspectors define unauthorised absence as:

"Absence from school for any period as a result of a premeditated or spontaneous act by the pupil or parent or both. This includes parentally condoned absence."

Examples of parentally condoned absences include absences when:

- A parent is ill
- A parent is using the pupil as a child minder
- A pupil is supporting other members of the family
- A parent wants company
- A parent gives in to a pupil who wants to stay at home
- It is a pupil's birthday
- A parent has taken the pupil shopping/for haircut etc.
- A parent cannot control the pupil
- Family holidays/celebrations

The DfE note that:

" Generally, the DfE **does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.**"

All unauthorised absence will be noted on the child's school record and Annual Report to Parents and reported to the Local Authority as well as included in Government Data.

Where unauthorised absence meets a threshold of ten sessions (5days) in a rolling period of 10 school weeks , the Head teacher will refer the matter to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued against parents/carers. Under the new National Framework for Penalty Notices issued by the DfE, the following changes will come into force for School Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19th August 2024:

First offence: The first penalty notice issued for unauthorised absence is a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £160 if the notice is paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

Second Offence: If a second penalty notice is issued within a 3-year period for unauthorised absence, then the fine is a flat rate of £160 paid within 28 days.

Third Offence: The third time an offence is committed a penalty notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court.

Prosecution can result in Criminal record and fines of up to £2,500.

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period, the Local Authority will prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies.

Where there is more than one child, each parent may be issued with a Penalty Notice in respect of each child.

As the Penalty Notice are fixed the legislation does not allow part-payment to be made or payments by instalments.

### **Strategies to promote and maintain high standards of Attendance and Punctuality**

- Children at this school are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.
- Registers will be checked for regular attendance by the designated admin staff.
- Teaching staff should also be aware and report any concerns to the Headteacher.
- The register is a legal document and may be used as evidence in a Court of Law.
- The Headteacher will consult/discuss with the Local Authority when:
  - a) Attendance is less than 90%
  - b) Contacts with home have not brought about any improvement in attendance
  - c) Poor communication with home regarding explanations for absence/lateness
  - d) 2 weeks (10 school days) continuous absence
  - e) regular lateness