

Attendance and Punctuality Policy v2

Written by: Julie Thomas
Endorsed by: College of Management
Senior Leadership Team
Council of Trustees

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Review history: **Reviewed with no changes, August 2021.** Significant review during August 2020 to take into account the feedback from Babcock Quality Assurance team and the changes made to the Drop off and Collection Policy in relation to COVID-19 precautionary measures.

Reviewed by: Kaycee Fordham
Date for next review: August 2022

1. Aims

South Devon Steiner School (SDSS) is committed to providing a full and effective educational experience for all students. We believe that if students are to benefit from education, good attendance is essential. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and can lead to educational and social disadvantage. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and we will work with students and families to address these as quickly as possible.

Attendance is a vital factor to a productive and successful school experience. SDSS will actively promote and encourage 100 percent attendance for all our students. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need for strong home school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

Objectives

- To encourage full attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure that parents are aware of any attendance or punctuality concerns.
- To work with appropriate agencies to support good attendance and punctuality.
- To record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies.
- To ensure a consistent approach throughout the school.
- To improve attainment and achievement of students through improved levels of attendance.

Statutory Duty of Schools and Parents

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their children receive effective, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools and Colleges are responsible for recording student attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

Principles Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that their children attend school. This extends to ensuring that students arrive at School on time, properly attired, with correct equipment and in a condition to learn. The School will make every effort to promote good attendance, giving advice and support where needed.

Statutory Attendance Responsibilities

There is a legal responsibility to have a morning and afternoon registration.

The school will:

- Record and monitor attendance and absence.
- Record and monitor punctuality of all students and, where necessary, inform parents/carers of persistent lateness and apply appropriate consequences.
- Only authorise a student's absence in exceptional circumstances.
- Follow up daily absences, when the reason for absence is unknown.
- Maintain strong home school liaison to inform and support families with their child's attendance.
- Work closely with other agencies where there are concerns about attendance
- Support children and their families to identify and resolve any issues which may prevent full attendance at SDSS.
- Promote the importance of attendance through the weekly newsletter, school notice boards, in parent evenings and within individual classes.

Parents/carers should:

- Ensure their children arrive on time to school
- Be aware that any person who has the care of a child or who has parental responsibility is responsible for ensuring good attendance.
- Report any known absences
- Ensure they are fully aware of school procedures.

Reporting Absences

Up to 3 days

- It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform the school of a student's absence before 9am on each day of absence.
- Absences that are not communicated to the school will not be authorised.
- The school will operate a calling system and the parents of every absent student will be contacted by a school official, where no reason for absence has been given.
- Where contact cannot be made with a parent/carer or emergency contact, the school will inform the local authority after 3 consecutive days where no other safeguarding concerns are recorded.
- For vulnerable students including those with an EHCP, the number of day's consecutive absence will be reduced to 2, before reporting the absence to the Local Authority.

Absence of 3 or more days

- It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform the school of a student's absence before 9am on each day of absence.
- In the case of long term absence due to illness, mental health issues or the need to shield i.e. due to Covid-19, the school should be notified so that teachers can set work and appropriate support can be offered.
- A designated staff member may conduct a Home visit. Please see addendum in appendix E of this policy.

Methods of Reporting Absences

In any case of absence parents/carers should contact the school by one of the following methods:

- By phone to the main switch board, using option 1, clearly stating the student's name, class and the specific reason for absence.

- Via email to enquiries@sdsteiner.org

Authorised Absence – Reasons for absence

Please note that absence from school will only be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Genuine illness
- Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement or marriage of immediate family (authorised at discretion of the School)
- Offsite education including study leave, educational visits and where a pupil is dual registered.
- Medical appointment where proof of appointment has been given (Signed compliment slip/GP appointment card/Dental appointment card etc.)
- When children go on the road with their parents (travellers).
- Days of religious observance
- Temporary exclusion

NB: Where the School has cause for concern over student absence, medical evidence may be requested.

Holidays/Leave of absence during Term Time

Holidays will not be approved during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances, i.e. those that are rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

- Where a family wishes to remove a child for a holiday or leave of absence during term time, they must request a meeting in advance with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to discuss their proposal. The DSL will consider the request, taking into account the student's current attendance record and will inform the parents of his/her decision in writing.
- Where the request is refused and the student is still removed, the School will consider legal action.

Taking your child out of school in an emergency

- If you need to take your child out of school in an emergency, this must be done in writing explaining why you need to remove your child and how long you expect them to be absent for.
- The letter must be presented to the school office. The pupil must be signed out at the School Office and is subsequently entered into the Pupil on/off site book.
- Under no circumstances are parents to collect their children from the classrooms or enter the school site beyond the Office.
- If the Kindergarten teacher, Class teacher or Class Sponsor feel that the circumstances under which the child is being removed is concerning, they must inform the DSL or deputies.

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. Please provide evidence of the appointment such as an appointment card/letter. 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.

Parents should notify the school in advance, in writing to enquiries@sdsteiner.org providing evidence of their appointments.

Monitoring of students attendance when it causes concerns

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.

- The school will set targets to encourage good attendance and to address any concerns.
- Contact will be made to parents/carers to advise them of poor attendance.
- Students may be placed on an attendance action plan for lateness or poor attendance.
- Parents/carers may be asked to come into School to discuss their child's attendance and work with the School to improve this.
- Parents/carers may be requested to provide medical evidence if there are high numbers of absences due to illness. Similarly, medical evidence may also be requested where a child is shielding i.e. due to COVID-19.
- A referral will be made to the Local Authority where persistent absence is ongoing and measures to address it are not successful.

The School collects attendance data via the school registers, and this is used for internal purposes for example, to track the attendance of individual pupils, identify where absence patterns may give cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

Children Missing from Education

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. 'Children missing education' are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education, and the school follows local safeguarding procedures, including the notification of Children Missing Education (CM1 form) and Services to Home Educators (EHE form) when pupils leave the school, and the School will notify the attendance and entitlement team if it is suspected that a child is at risk of missing education. The school may conduct a 'Home visit'. Please also refer to 'Addendum - Home Visit Procedure' on our website.

Truancy

It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child receives a full and efficient education and therefore attends all lessons. Parents/carers will be informed by the School if their child has been identified as truanting from the School. Persistent cases may be referred to the Local Authority where measures to address the issue are not successful.

Punctuality

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child attends full time education and arrives at school on time. Punctuality is monitored by the School and parents will be contacted if their child is not arriving on time.

Due to new COVID-19 precautionary measures, the School has a timetable of staggered start and finish times. These will be published to the parents ahead of the start of each term. This policy works closely with the Drop off and Collection policy.

All students are expected to be in School by their allocated start time, ready for lessons to begin. Any student who is late to School must sign in at the School Office, to ensure that we know of their late arrival. It is our expectation that the parent/carer will support and work with the School to improve punctuality. Persistent lateness will result in the School making contact with the parents to discuss the issues causing the lateness and to offer support and strategies to improve punctuality. If a child is late 20% (six times in a 6-week half term), this is considered persistent lateness and the School will take action to address this.

Reporting to parents

The School will communicate attendance levels in the annual school report, or at such times as a student's attendance and/or punctuality falls below the required levels.

>95% Good 90-94% requires improvement <89% poor.

Step 1:

The Attendance Team will work closely with class teachers to monitor attendance and punctuality. If a child's attendance levels fall below 95%, the school will send out *Form letter 1*. If the child has a more serious long-term medical condition or cannot attend school i.e. due to shielding from COVID-19, the school will ask for medical documents to confirm the reason for absence. Parents may also apply for Flexi School agreements (follow Policy).

Step 2:

If after 2 x '*Form letter 1*' reminders, the pupil's attendance has not improved, the attendance team will send out '*Form letter 2*' and invite parents and/or pupil for a conversation to discuss the need of an attendance plan. If any safeguarding issues are identified in that meeting, the attendance team will consult with the safeguarding team and Early Help options might be considered.

Step 3:

If the attendance plan (minimum of 4 weeks and a maximum of 1 term is not successful, parents will be asked to attend another meeting with the Education Manager to agree a Parent Contract Attendance Plan, if this is not successful parents will be asked to attend a meeting with the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer, the cost of which will be billed to the parents/carers.

Strategies for promoting attendance

South Devon Steiner School aims to:

- create a culture of good attendance and punctuality as the norm, as a sign of respect for the school's aims and ethos, and the teacher's work inside and out of the classroom.
- raise awareness of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and regular punctuality at every stage of the child's education
- promote a safe and secure mood within the school, where pupils feel welcome and encouraged to take ownership of their responsibility.
- monitor attendance and lateness data to help recognise positive and negative patterns, for early intervention in any problems.
- Recognise the important role of staff, especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

Roles and responsibilities

The trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on a termly basis. It also holds the SLT to account for the implementation of this policy.

School Leadership Team

The SLT is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to trustees.

Attendance Team

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the SLT
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

Class teachers and sponsors

Class teachers/sponsors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

Office staff

Office staff are expected to daily monitor the message system for messages from parents about absence, and record it on the school system.

To contact parents, who have not informed the school, to ascertain why their children are not in school. To record information about when children leave school early.

Safeguarding Team

- Receive concerns from Class teachers and add these to the child's confidential safeguarding files.
- Help and support the child, their family and the Class teacher to improve attendance and punctuality. To report concerns to the relevant body if and when they arise (i.e. LA/MASH)
- To provide reports and background information to any relevant body, and to record these interactions.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Attendance Team. At every review, the policy will be shared with the SLT and Trustees.

Links with other policies

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Flexi-Schooling Policy
- Drop off and Collection Policy
- Addendum - Home Visit Procedure

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:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education DfE, most recent
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, and subsequent amendments 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- Children missing in education, September 2016
- School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities September 2018
- The Education Act 1996 Part 1 states: The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable- (a) To his age, ability and aptitude and (b) To any special needs he may have. Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
Part VI Section 444 contains details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

A child is of 'compulsory school age' on the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th Birthday. Children becoming 5 years old between 1st January and 31st March are of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term after 1st April.

In England, school-leaving age depends on when you were born. You can leave school on the last Friday in June as long as you will be 16 by the end of that year's summer holidays. You must stay in some form of education or training until your 18th birthday if you were born on or after 1 September 1997.

Appendix A

Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend; Covid-19 see addendum
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix B

South Devon Steiner School Attendance Plan

Pupil Name:	Class:
% Attendance Year to Date: % Attendance in the last 6 weeks:	Best/Worst day(s)
Parents reason for Absence	Pupil reason for absence:
What will parents do to support improved attendance?	What will the pupil do to support improved attendance?
What can the School do to support improved attendance?	
Target for the nextweeks is 95%	
Start Date:	End Date:
Signature of Parent Date:	
Signature of School Representative: Date: Date for Review:	

Appendix C

South Devon Steiner School Parent Contract – Attendance

Pupil Name: Class:	Date of Birth:
Attendance YTD:	Attendance this term:
Parent/Carer Name:	Parent/Carer Name:
Member of Staff Name:	Position:
Overview of Issues:	
Agreed actions by parents:	Agreed actions by South Devon Steiner School:
Agreed Actions by Pupil:	
Review Meeting date/time	
Signed:	Parent/Carer
Signed:	Parent/Carer
Signed:	Staff
Signed:	Staff

Appendix D - Letter templates to parents

1. Standard Attendance letters '1' to parent

First letter about Absence/Attendance

Dear

Your child, **NAME**, has a school attendance level below **95%, 90%, 85%**. As such, we are writing to remind you of how important it is for your child to attend school to make the most of the education we offer.

We promote good attendance at South Devon Steiner School so that your child has as much opportunity to learn as possible, serving them best both now and in the future.

We are aware that children do become unwell and need time to recover. If there is, however, something that you would like to discuss further about your child's absence, please contact us.

Kind regards,

SDSS Attendance team

2. Standard letter '2' to parents:

Attendance not improved

Dear

Further to our reminder letter last half/term, we note that your child's attendance has not yet significantly improved.

It is our expectation that all pupils should attend school full time, and certainly no less than 95% of the time, to make the most of the learning experience we offer.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we would like to work with you to support good attendance for your child and help address any gaps in learning due to absence.

I therefore request that you contact a member of the attendance team as soon as you can to discuss this.

Your sincerely,

SDSS Attendance Team

3. Letter - After an unauthorised holiday

Holiday absence

I'm writing about your action in taking [name(s)] out of school for a family holiday between [date] and [date].

We're treating this as an unauthorised holiday because [explain the evidence you have].

Our school works with parents to provide the best education for each child and believes that regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

We expect you to consult the school before booking holidays that mean your child will be absent, or before making any plans that will involve your child's absence from lessons or other commitments.

Absences like these could have a detrimental effect on [name(s)] education.

We would like to arrange a meeting so that we can discuss this further. Please contact the school office urgently on [phone number].

Yours sincerely,

SDSS Attendance Team

4. Letter - Concern about punctuality

Punctuality

I'm writing to you because [name] has been late to school [number] times in [timeframe].

The school day begins promptly at [time] and registration closes at [time]. Afternoon registration takes place between [time slot].

Arriving promptly ensures that your child doesn't miss work, and that disruption to the teacher and other pupils is minimised. Persistent lateness can lead to a significant loss in learning time.

We are committed to working with families to make sure every pupil gets the support they need. We may contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss how we can work with you to help improve [name's] punctuality.

Yours sincerely,

SDSS Attendance Team