

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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History of review:

- March 2017: Combination replacement for Attendance Policy rev 4, Attendance and Lateness Policy rev2, Lateness Policy rev 4
- January 2018 (ML): Clarification of acceptable lateness and absence percentages after review and research by ML for SMT, changed title to “Attendance and Punctuality”, changed Welfare Group to Safeguarding Team, updated references

Summary of Key Attendance and Punctuality Levels

Attendance and punctuality is analysed every half-term.

Attendance per half-term	Punctuality per half-term
100%: outstanding	100%: outstanding
95%: school’s expectation	99% (3 days): school’s expectation
90%: if attendance below 95% school monitors attendance.	98% (6 days): active monitoring.
85%: if attendance below 90% school to actively support family and may consult EWO.	<97%: letter to parents.
<85%: considered ‘persistent absence’ by DfE. School to actively support family in consultation with EWO. School to report to LEA.	<96%: meeting with parents to resolve issue, consider referral to LEA.
<85% with Parental Acceptance: Level 3 Safeguarding Concern. School to make MASH referral.	
2 unauthorised absences (without explanation, i.e. no holiday application or notification): letter will be sent to parents. If absent without authorisation again, second letter plus meeting.	
2 consecutive unauthorised absences without the school being able to establish	

whereabouts of child and that child is safe: Safeguarding Team must consider a MASH referral.	
Regular absence, irregular attendance, or 10 consecutive school days or more without permission: the school must regularly inform the local authority	
Unexplained absences: school has safeguarding duty to investigate	

Policy Statement

- Regular and punctual attendance at school is important. It contributes to receiving a comprehensive education and is good preparation for further education and/or work.
- Pupils need to have regular attendance at school to ensure they have access to education and learn the relevant skills for socialisation for the maximum number of days and hours.
- Missing school can leave gaps in knowledge and understanding and place the pupil at a disadvantage in both their educational and social development.
- This policy states South Devon Steiner School's aims and expectations regarding attendance and lateness as well as how we will support the child and their family who are not meeting the expected levels of attendance.
- It applies to all registered children at the school and is available to all parent/s and/or career/s on our school website.

School Attendance: The Law

The *1996 Education Act (s7)* places a legal responsibility upon parents/carers to ensure that their child fully attends the school at which they are registered. This means that your child must attend school every day and on time (unless as parents/carers you can prove that the absence was with the authorisation of the school or that it was unavoidable).

All schools, including independent schools, must maintain admissions registers and all schools except boarding schools must have an attendance register. *The Registration (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006* require a school to put the child's name on the admissions register on the first day that the child is expected to attend school. If the pupil does not attend they will be recorded as absent: this can be authorised or unauthorised.

The school will authorise or treat as authorised an absence if:

- The child is too ill to attend or ill with an infectious disease. The school will generally accept the parents' assessment of this without further questioning. However, if the child is off for longer periods (more than 5 consecutive school days or off sick repeatedly) the school will consider asking for proof from the family's GP.
- The parent has got the advance permission of the school e.g. for compassionate reasons such as grievances, religious observation.
- The child has been excluded.
- The child has a medical or dental appointment.
- The child is on study leave.
- The child is being educated off-site.

Schools must regularly inform the local authority of any pupils who are persistently absent (attendance <85%) from school, have irregular attendance, or have missed 10 consecutive school days or more without the school's permission (see *Children Missing from Education, Sep 2016, page 8, point 17*).

Schools are also under a safeguarding duty, under *section 175 of the Education Act 2002*, to investigate any unexplained absences.

Aims of this policy

This school generally has a short academic year of around 176 days and short days for children up until Class 4. This gives children plenty of time away from school. This is a compelling reason to have high expectations on attendance and punctuality during term time.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement through high attendance.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance whilst allowing for those who may require additional time off school for compelling reasons, e.g. chronic health and other special needs.
- Create a culture of good attendance and punctuality as the norm within our school as a sign of respect for the school's aims and ethos and the teachers' 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.
- Work with parents and carers to help pupils to realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a safe and secure mood within the school, where the pupils feel welcome and encouraged to take ownership of their responsibility.
- Monitor and record attendance and lateness data to help recognise positive and negative patterns of attendance and lateness.

- Recognise the important role of staff, but especially class teachers and sponsors, in promoting good attendance.

We will achieve these aims by:

- Communicating attendance levels in the annual school reports.
- Classing attendance as good when it is at 95% or above.
- Classing attendance as “requires improvement” when it is between 90% and 95%.
- Classing attendance as poor if it is below 90% unless there are compelling reasons such as chronic illness or other conditions and situations which can be documented and monitored.
- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality within our community through articles in the school newsletter, parent conversations, the Parents Handbook (or Kindergarten Information pack) and parent evenings.
- Making sure that parents understand the responsibility placed on them to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time through the same means described above.
- Supporting the children to attend school regularly either through their class teacher or sponsor, or through the Safeguarding Team.
- Communicating with parents when the school recognises an issue with their child’s attendance or punctuality.
- Developing and implementing effective procedures to monitor, record and review cases when a child has poor attendance or punctuality.
- Supporting families to improve persistent absence (<85%), including but not limited to consulting with an Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
- Sharing attendance data with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) when attendance falls below 85% and there is a concern about the child’s attendance.

Registration process

The registration procedure is as follows:

- All school doors will be open from 8:20am. This gives the children 10 minutes to arrive and settle into their classrooms.
- The register will be taken at 8:30am (8:40am in Kindergarten). Any child arriving between 8:30am and 8:45am (or after 8:40am in Kindergarten) will be marked as ‘L’ i.e. “late arrival before the register is closed”. Children arriving after 8:45am will be marked in as ‘U’ “unauthorised absence/late”, unless we have been informed otherwise before 8:45am.
- As the school takes registers by hand in the classroom and transfers the data into the school management software later in the day (see below), the Receptionist has the duty to confirm the final status for each child to avoid confusion between teaching staff and office staff.

- Each Kindergarten, Class teacher and Class sponsor hold the responsibility for keeping accurate records of attendance for their classes.
- The register will be sent to the office shortly after 8:30am (just before 9am for Kindergarten).
- All children arriving at school late need to collect a 'Late Note' from reception and hand it to their teacher.

Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

Processes and procedures:

- Parent/Carer(s) are asked to notify the school before 8am, either by telephone or via email, if a pupil is to be absent on that day.
- If a pupil is absent and the school has not been contacted, reception will contact the parent/s or career/s to find out why they are absent and to record it in the daily register (please see Appendix E for absence reporting coding).
- If the child's absence falls below 95% the school will monitor the attendance.
- Parents will be informed that there is a concern about their child's school attendance if attendance falls below 90%. At this point, the school will seek to support the family to improve attendance. The family will also be informed that the school may consult with an Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
- If attendance falls below 85%, the school will actively support the family to improve attendance, in consultation with the EWO. The school may also refer the issue to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- Attendance and punctuality figures will be assessed at the beginning of each half term, with the exception of the half term commencing each September. Attendance and punctuality for the latter half of the summer term of each academic year, will be summarised at the end of that term and included in each child's annual school report.
- The school will take an *assessment* approach to attendance and punctuality, compiling school and class wide reports each half term, obtaining feedback from class teachers and sponsors in relation to pupils' whose attendance falls below 95%, followed by an assessment by the DSL to determine next steps and completing the next steps as found to be appropriate by the DSL.
- If a child has 3 unauthorised absences in a half-term a letter will be sent out to the parents, (please see Appendix A for an example of this letter).
- If the child is absent without authorisation again, a second letter will be sent out requesting a meeting with the parent, Class teacher, a member of the Safeguarding Team and the child if felt appropriate (please see Appendix B for an example of this letter).
- If a child has two consecutive unauthorised absences without the school being able to establish whereabouts of child and that the child is safe, the Safeguarding Team will consider a MASH referral.

As well as following this procedure, the school will:

- Communicate this policy to parents, carers and staff, and where appropriate, the older students.
- Show consistency in how we record attendance and punctuality data.
- Use an information management system to ensure accurate records are kept which can generate reports quickly and easily.
- Strongly discourage holidays during term time by marking them as unauthorised unless there is a compelling compassionate reason for the absence.
- Work with individual parents to help promote good attendance and punctuality.
- Engage with any external agency when required or when it is felt there is a concern which needs to be shared.
- Share attendance and lateness data with the School Inspection Service (SIS) and other regulatory body, if requested.
- Ensure all staff are aware that they must raise attendance and punctuality concerns with the Safeguarding Team.

Responsibilities

All staff share a responsibility for identifying concerns about attendance and punctuality but some are better placed to record and report these concerns. The following specifies who holds responsibilities over above the general level.

Class Teacher and Sponsor

- Keep an overview of attendance within their specific class community, looking for patterns in poor attendance either in blocks or on particular days, and being mindful of unusual explanations or reasons for poor attendance and or punctuality.
- Inform the Safeguarding Team when there is a concern.
- Inform the Safeguarding Team when a child's attendance falls below 95%.
- Provide information to the Safeguarding Team if making a referral to MASH.
- Meet with the parents, and possibly the child, if attendance or punctuality is poor.
- Share with the Class the importance of good attendance and punctuality at parents' meetings and parents' evenings.
- Engage with the parent community about whole Class attendance and or punctuality.

Safeguarding Team

- Receive concerns from Class teachers and sponsors and adding these to the children's confidential safeguarding files.
- To help support the child, their family and the Class teacher or sponsor to improve attendance and punctuality.
- To report any concerns to the relevant body if and when they arise (i.e LA / MASH).
- To provide reports and background information to any relevant body.
- To record these interactions.
- To report any attendance and punctuality issues or trends to the school Council in the annual report meeting.

Administration Staff

- To input attendance and punctuality data onto the school information management system (PASS).
- To report trends of attendance and punctuality data to the Kindergarten Teacher, Class Teacher, Class Sponsor and the department Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) when:
 - Attendance falls below 95%
 - Punctuality falls below 95%
- To receive messages from parents about why their child is not at school or will be late.
- 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.
- To send out standard letters to parents when attendance and / or punctuality drops below the thresholds outlined above.

As well as the responsibilities held by school staff, parents and carers are also in a position of responsibility.

Parents and Carers

- To ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually unless their child is unable to do so for medical reasons.
- To contact the school office to inform the school as to why their child is not in attendance.
- To inform the school, in writing, in advance of any medical appointments leading to absence from school. To record the absence as medical, we need to have a written note or appointment card from the doctor or dentist.
- To minimise the amount of time their child is absent from school by keeping non-school activities to the holiday times.

- To talk to the school as soon as possible to help support their child if they are showing reluctance to attend school.

Lateness

The lateness procedure is as follows:

- If a child arrives to their classroom after 8:30am (or 8:40am in Kindergarten) they will be marked as late by the Kindergarten teacher, Class teacher or Class sponsor if they still hold the register.
- If the register has already been sent back to the office, the child, or parent of the child if Class Two or younger, will need to get a late note from the office.
- Lateness data will be kept by the office and may be passed to the relevant teacher or safeguarding person if lateness exceeds 1% (three times in a 6-week half term).
- If a child is late due to a medical appointment, they will need to bring a written note or appointment card from the medical professional they were meeting with. Without this note, the school is unable to mark the absence as authorised. However, school staff may exercise limited discretion as there may be known and obvious issues which have been communicated in advance etc. The point is that we need to monitor patterns of concern.
- If a child is late more than 2% (six times in a 6-week half term), a standard letter will be sent to the parents of the child raising the school's concern and giving the parent(s) an opportunity to seek advice and support in resolving the issue (please see Appendix A for an example of this letter).

Absences

If a child is absent, the following should be considered:

- Parents and carers should contact the school by telephone to inform us of the child's absence, providing a detailed reason why i.e. '*child has sore throat and fever*', not '*child is ill*'. Parents and carers should use the main switchboard number: 01803 897377, selecting Option 1 to report the absence.
- This contact must generally be in person or on the phone, not by email, although the school will accept an email in exceptional circumstances only where, e.g. other means of contact are not possible.
- All absence must be reported every day, even if it is long term illness, unless there is a written agreement with the Kindergarten teacher, Class teacher or Class sponsor.

- All absences are reported as either authorised or unauthorised. It is important that we receive accurate information from the parents, as this will determine whether the absence is authorised or not.
- When the school office has not received reasons for the child's absence, the absence is recorded as unauthorised.

First day contact process

- Where a child is absent from school, but we have not been contacted by the parent or carer, we will initiate the first day contact process.
- Office staff check the registers between 8:30am and 9:30am on a daily basis. If a child is absent, and we have not been contacted by the parent, we will contact them to find out the reasons for the child's absence.
- If we cannot contact the parent, we may contact the emergency contact from the annual consent forms, or initiate a 'missing child protocol'.
- Absences which are not notified will be marked as 'unauthorised'.

Illness

- If a pupil is absent due to illness for more than 5 days, the school may ask the parent/s or career/s to provide a medical note, appointment card or a copy of a prescription.
- When children have a long term illness which prevents them from attending school, the school will do all it can to send work home, so that they can keep up with their school work. See the school's "Supporting Long Term Absences Policy".
- If the child has missed large amounts of school due to illness, the parents may be contacted for further medical notes explaining why the child has not been in attendance and the likely impact of the illness for the child's ability to attend in the future. In times of flu epidemics such as seen in the second half of the autumn term 2017, the school will accept the general situation and not pursue individual cases unless there are other compounding concerns.

Academic progress

- If a child has attendance of lower than 85% for an academic year, the Kindergarten teacher, Class teacher or Class sponsor may request a meeting with the child and or their parents to discuss whether or not the child would benefit from retaking the year.
- If it is felt this would serve the child well, there will be a proposal made from the department to the parents. The parents and the teachers will work together, with the child if they are in Class 6 or above, to make this transition as smooth as possible.

Absence for holiday

- The school will allow holidays during term time if they have special importance or significance to the child, or if for personal family reasons that can be described as compassionate to include weddings and funerals.
- This must not be a habitual occurrence.
- In order for this to be granted, the parent must apply to the Kindergarten teacher, Class teacher or Class sponsor, **6 weeks in advance**, completing the form available from the school office or our website ('Absence Request form').
- If it is felt that the absence will be detrimental for a child, the teacher may bring the issue to their department meeting, asking for the advice of the wider circle of teachers.
- The following will be considered:
 - The child's progress so far during that academic year.
 - The importance of being in school at that time of year.
 - The child's attendance so far during that academic year.
- If the child's attendance is already below 95%, the absence will not be authorised.

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 absent for.
- The letter must be presented to the school office. The pupil must be signed out at reception using a 'Permission to leave slip' and is subsequently entered into the 'Pupil on/off site book at reception.
- Under no circumstances are parents to collect their children from the classrooms.
- If the Kindergarten teacher, Class teacher or Class sponsor feel that the circumstances under which the child is being removed is concerning, inform a Designated Safeguarding Person - DSP.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

- The school expects attendance of at least 95%.
- It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their time at school. It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Team to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.
- We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and, therefore, where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns.
- Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance.

- Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school may report that the child is missing education.
- When this happens, the Child Missing Education Officer will work with the school and the parents, to support the child returning to school and improving their attendance.
- The Kindergarten Teacher, Class Teacher or Class Sponsor will engage with and support the family and Child Missing Education as fully as possible.

General

- All classes are to maintain daily pupil registers for morning and afternoon sessions.
- Coding given by the DfE - see '*School attendance, Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, November 2016*' must be used to minimise error.
- All registers to be checked by the receptionist and any unexplained absence investigated as per lateness and missing child policy.
- Concerns about attendance are firstly discussed with the parents, then, if deemed necessary with MASH.
- Attendance issues relative to health are dealt with supportively and clearly, with special measures being provided for these children.
- Attendance registers will be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

School Leavers/Children at Risk of Missing Education

Our admissions officer will inform Devon County Council of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education.
- No longer live within reasonable distance of the school
- Have a certified medical condition and are not in a fit state to go to school
- Are in custody for more than 4 months
- Have been permanently excluded

Information/advice/guidance:

- <http://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/school-attendance-and-absence/>

Compliance:

11/15

- Independent School Standards
- School attendance, Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent school and local authorities, November 2016
- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- *The 1996 Education Act (s7)*
- 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

Guidance:

- KCSIE
- Absence and Attendance codes; Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities (DfES August 2006)

Linked Policies:

- Safeguarding

Appendices:

- Appendix A - Sample Late letter – First letter
- Appendix B - Sample Late letter – Follow up letter
- Appendix C - Sample Attendance Information Request Letter
- Appendix D - Sample Attendance Low Attendance Letter
- Appendix E - Register coding
- Safeguarding Policy
- Children missing from Education, statutory guidance September 2016

Appendix A – Sample Late letter – First letter

Dear Parent,

We are concerned about your child's punctuality. In the current half term, *Child's name* has now been late on X occasions without any written explanation of an unavoidable reason.

In our view the good habit of arriving on time for lessons is something that fosters a sense of responsibility, and avoids any disruption to the class. As you will be aware from our school handbook, children should arrive in the classroom to start the morning at 8.20 a.m. and be ready for the register at 8.30 a.m. If they arrive after 8.30 a.m. they are late.

We are aware that circumstances beyond your control can, on occasion contribute to lateness - for example roadworks or extreme weather conditions, exceptional personal circumstances, and

allowance is made for these eventualities.

If there is some ongoing difficulty with arriving punctually, please let us know how we might help you.

Should your child continue to arrive late to school on a further 3 or more occasions then you will be required to attend an interview with your child's teacher and a member of the Safeguarding Team.

Appendix B – Sample Late letter – Follow up letter

Dear *Parent's name*,

We have previously sent you a letter regarding your child's punctuality. I have observed that your child is still continuing to come into school late. In accordance with our Attendance and Punctuality Policy I would like to invite you to make an appointment so that we can talk further to remedying this.

Please call Reception and book in one of the following times:

In our view, the good habit of arriving on time for lessons is something that fosters a sense of responsibility, and avoids any disruption to the class. As you will be aware from our School Handbook, children should arrive in the classroom to start the morning at 8:20a.m. and be ready for the register at 8:30 a.m. If they arrive after 8.30 a.m. they are late.

We are aware that circumstances beyond your control can, on occasion, contribute to lateness - for example roadworks, extreme weather conditions or exceptional personal circumstances - and of course allowance is made for these eventualities.

If there is some ongoing difficulty with arriving punctually, please let us know how we might help you.

Appendix C – Sample Attendance Information Request Letter

Dear Parent's Name,

Your child, NAME, was absent from school on DATE. Please can you write to us to explain the reason for NAME's absence?

If it was due to a medical appointment, please bring in written confirmation of this from the medical professional, or an appointment card. Without this, we are unable to authorise the absence.

Appendix D – Sample Attendance Low Attendance Letter

Dear Parent's name,

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

We promote good attendance at our school so that NAME has as much opportunity to learn as possible, serving them best both now and in the future. If NAME's attendance falls below 90% then we may invite you in for a meeting to discuss with your child's teacher and a member of the Safeguarding Team.

Signed by Class Teacher and CC'd Safeguarding Team member

Appendix E – Register coding

Below is a list of the codes used within our attendance register.

ABSENCE AND ATTENDANCE CODES TO BE USED IN REGISTERS

Source: *Absence and Attendance codes*; Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities (DfES August 2006)

		N	No reason yet given for absence.
C	Authorised absence not covered elsewhere – C ompassionate (funeral, family crisis) or participating in a public performance, etc.	O	Unauthorised absence; either no reason or inadequate reason given.
E	E xcluded with no alternative provision made.	R	R eligious observance
F	Extended F amily holiday, authorised (over 2 weeks)		
G	Family holiday, unauthorised (G one away!)		
H	Family H oliday, authorised (2 weeks or less)	U	Late without reason – after close of registration (9.30 am or 2 pm)
I	Illness (not medical appointments)		
J	Interview for employment or further education		
L	Late without reason – before close of registration (9.30 am or 2 pm)	Y	Forced school closure (bad weather, no power, etc)
M	M edical or dental appointment	#	School closed to pupils (e.g. Inset day)