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Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Owner:

SLT

- Policy required by ISI (inspection use)
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- Internal decision to publish on website
- Internal only
- Required reading for all staff

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1 Introduction

Sunninghill Prep School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational potential a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance. Being absent can have a serious effect on both a child's academic and social progress and development and on their welfare. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education. The following guidance has been taken into consideration when developing this policy:

- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#);
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#);
- DfE Guidance (from 19 August 2024, this is statutory guidance): [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#);

This policy aims to:

- Support pupils and their parents/carers to have the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer.
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Build a culture of good school attendance.

In building a culture of good school attendance we recognise:

- The importance of good attendance, alongside good behaviour, as a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- The interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions and / or disabilities, mental health issues, safeguarding and wellbeing.
- The importance of setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicating these regularly and effectively to pupils and parents;
- That attendance is never "solved" and is a continuous process requiring

revision and updating of messages, processes and strategies.

- Children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation. The school has a safeguarding duty of care to all its pupils. We take the role of ensuring a pupil's good attendance as part of our safeguarding duties.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

Attendance is the responsibility of all members of the school community. However, we have allocated specific roles and responsibilities to named individuals to ensure that we are meeting statutory requirements.

2.1 Governors (ILG Board)

Those responsible for governance at the school will:

- Ensure that the school fulfils statutory attendance requirements.
- Work with leaders to establish policies, protocols and expectations relating to attendance.
- Reinforce the importance of attendance in documentation and communications as appropriate.
- Ensure that key staff receive relevant training relating to attendance.
- Review and analyse attendance data and support leaders to address any issues that become apparent.
- Offer appropriate challenge regarding attendance data.
- Keep up to date with changes in guidance and legislation and ensure that leaders are aware of any changes.
- Hold the Head to account for the effective implementation of this policy.

2.2 Head

The Head will:

- Take responsibility for the implementation of this policy.
- Monitor school-level attendance and absence data and communicate key information and data to those responsible for governance.
- Monitor the impact of any attendance strategies and systems that are in place, identifying new approaches where relevant.
- Ensure that there are systems in place so that when a pupil

has a social worker, they are informed about any unexplained absences.

- Decide whether requests for leave should be granted in exceptional circumstances.

2.3 Designated attendance champion (Samantha Gough)

It is expected that schools will have a designated senior leader for attendance. At Sunninghill this person is the Assistant Head (Pastoral).

The attendance champion will:

- Oversee attendance across the school.
- Retain an oversight of attendance data across the school.
- Foster a clear vision and expectations throughout the school community.
- Identify and/or devise systems and interventions to improve attendance.
- Arrange meetings with parents/carers to address attendance issues.

2.4 Form Tutors

Form Tutors will:

- Complete attendance registers at the times specified by the school using the school's agreed systems.

2.5 Office staff

Office or school administration staff will:

- Answer and record attendance-related phone calls from parents/carers.
- Email a list of children who are absent each day.
- Ensure that any safeguarding concerns are reported using the school's agreed safeguarding systems and protocols.

2.6 Parents and Carers

Parents and carers will:

- Ensure that their child is in school each day, except for when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school of their child's absence as soon as possible using the school's agreed systems.
- Ensure that leave of absence is only requested in exceptional circumstances and, where possible, advance notice is given.
- Book any non-emergency medical and dental appointments outside of the school day, where possible.
- Engage with any support offered to address any barriers to their child's attendance.

2.7 Pupils

Pupils will:

- Attend school punctually every day.
- Attend all lessons on time.
- Engage with any support offered by the school to help them overcome any barriers to attendance.

3 PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

We will ensure that our pupils are made aware of the importance of good attendance and how this will benefit them.

The policy is not exhaustive and recognises that attendance can be a very complex and diverse issue and that each individual's circumstances are different.

We will follow Dorset's steps for improving school attendance:



Expect

- We aim to build respectful relationships with staff, children, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement.
- We will communicate expectations for attendance and punctuality.
- We aspire to high standards of attendance from all children and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance.
- We will deliver clear messages about the benefits of regular attendance on educational and well-being outcomes.
- We will ensure the school attendance policy is up-to-date and clear to all children, parents and staff. This policy is based on the expectation set out in 'Working together to improve school attendance' (DfE, August 2024).

Monitor

- We will use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance and

work together to resolve issues before they become entrenched.

- We will discuss attendance at the weekly Pastoral meeting.

Listen and Understand

- When a pattern is spotted, discuss with children and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them and to find out why they are not attending well enough.
- Ensure appropriate support which considers individual needs is put in place for children who are experiencing difficulties attending school.
- Call parents and send Attendance Letter, recording any contact with parents.

Facilitate support

- Remove barriers in school and help children and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school.
- Carefully manage the return of a child, particularly if they have been absent for a long period of time, provide good catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and support is not working or not being engaged with school, parents and if necessary outside agencies should work together to ensure support is in place to enable families to engage with school.

4 ADMISSION AND ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

The law requires the school to have an admission register and an attendance register. All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on both registers.

4.1 Admission Register

The admission register must contain the personal details of every pupil in the school, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school last attended. For further information on Admissions refer to the Admissions Policy.

4.2 Expected First Day of Attendance

Pupils must be entered on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year.

If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

The local authority must be informed within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register using the form provided. This does not apply to pupils who are added to the admission register at the start of Reception.

5 REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

The attendance register must be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether every child is:

- Present
- Present but attending an approved educational activity
- Absent

There is a special code for every circumstance. When you are in the electronic registration program on iSAMS, codes are listed for you to choose from. The codes can also be seen in the Appendix 1.

The school should follow up any unplanned absences to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register which is used to download data to the school census.

5.1 Morning Registration

Is taken during tutor period from 8.20am. The procedure is as follows:

1. Register all children present using the electronic register on iSAMS.
2. Any child not present by 8.20am (with circumstances unknown) is to be marked with an N.
3. At 8.20am the registration details should be saved on iSAMS and registration closed. Those children who have an early morning lesson (music or loft etc) from 8-8.30am should make sure their tutor knows where they are. This information can also be found on the music timetables.
4. Children arriving once registration is closed are to report to the School Receptionist on arrival to sign in. A late mark will be given using the code L. The number of minutes late should also be noted.

5. The registers will be checked by the School Receptionist from 8.30am then printed off. For any children marked N whose parents have not contacted the school to confirm their absence there must be an attempt to contact them by phone by 9am wherever possible. The reason for their absence must then be added to the register as appropriate. If the parents cannot be contacted by phone an email should be sent.
6. If the School Receptionist is regularly unsuccessful in ascertaining why a particular child has been absent from school, the Assistant Head (Pastoral) will contact home to ask for support in notifying the school.

5.2 Afternoon registration

1. Tutors (or designated persons) are to complete the register after lunch for example, 1.20pm for Form 3 and 4 children or 2.10pm for Form 5-8. The period of time allowed for afternoon registration is 5 minutes. After this period of time has elapsed, a late mark should be added. Information should be saved and registration closed.
2. Any children absent without authorisation are to be marked with N and the School Receptionist contacted to ascertain the location of the child. There are a number of reasons why a child may be missing from the class including, medical room, music lesson, left school for an appointment. If there are still concerns for an absence then the Missing Child protocol should be followed.
3. The registers will then be checked and then printed off by the School Receptionist.

Details of days absent from school will be written on the twice yearly reports.

Educational visits, Sports Fixtures and other off-site activities

Staff who take pupils away on a sporting fixture, an off-site visit or activity including residential either before or after a registration period (am or pm) must ensure that they take a face-to-face roll of the pupils travelling to the event and leave a copy of the 'Out of school Trips list' with reception and if necessary it can be recorded on iSAMS at the next registration period.

6 ABSENCE

6.1 Children leaving during the school day

Pupils are not allowed to leave the school premises without prior arrangements and permission being agreed between parents and school.

Parents are requested to inform school of any planned absence with the reason and times of the absence during the day. Where possible dental appointments etc. should be made outside of the school day.

Any pupil leaving school during the day will need to sign out at the school reception.

6.2 First Day Absence

Parents must contact the school before 9am if their child is going to be absent. If we do not receive a call and the child is marked N on the register, the receptionist will contact the parents to ascertain the whereabouts of the child. The receptionist will add the appropriate reason to the register.

6.3 Absence notes

Reason for absence will be added to the notes section of iSAMS register.

6.4 Attendance levels

- 95-90% - Internal monitoring.
- 90-85% - Phone call and written communication to raise concerns about a pupil's attendance.
- Below 85% - Meeting arranged in school to discuss attendance concerns and to offer support.

6.5 Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence all children are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the child is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other children.

6.6 Leave of absence in term time

Leave of absence during term time will be discouraged. Parents will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement. The Head will consider any application for leave of absence and will only agree to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances; parents must apply in advance for permission for their child to have leave of absence.

6.7 Children Missing in Education

If a pupil fails to attend school for 10 consecutive days, without explanation, and the school does not know where the pupil is, the school will refer the pupil to the Local Authority as a Child Missing in Education. During this period, school will continue to try and contact you and will liaise with any other services that the child is open to.

7 Information sharing, record keeping and confidentiality

Personal information on attendance will only be shared in line with legal obligations and having regard to government guidance on attendance, safeguarding and children missing education.

The School, local authorities and other local partners should work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to a pupil (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or social workers involved).

The information created in connection with this Attendance Policy may contain personal data. The School's use of this personal data will be in accordance with data protection law and the Data Protection policy. The School has a published Data Privacy Notice on its website which explain how the School will use personal data.

Appendix 1

Attendance Codes

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Schools is responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore, by using code B, schools is certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. School should ensure that arrangements are in place whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

School should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended.

This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. School should authorise absences due to illness unless there is genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, parents can be requested to provide medical evidence to support illness.

The absence can still be unauthorised if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt but should advise parents. Schools are generally advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. However, we encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

The application must be made in advance. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head's discretion.

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the Head.

If the Head Teacher does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

Code R: Religious observance

We must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code C2: Temporary reduced timetable

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training.

Code Y2 Widespread travel disruption

Code Y4: Session cancelled – school closed

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. The pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school should be recorded only. School should ensure all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

Code J1: At an interview with another educational establishment

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with another educational establishment.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code S: Study leave

Code W: Work Experience

Code J: Interview

Code Z: Pupil not on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.