

SOUTH STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL



Attendance & Punctuality

January 2018

POLICY DOCUMENTATION

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

At South Street Community Primary School we recognise that regular school attendance is crucial if children are to achieve their full potential. Our school target is in line with National expectations.

At South Street we work with children and their families to ensure each child attends school regularly and punctually. Attendance is given a high priority throughout school. Children all know our target and are encouraged to work hard as a class team to achieve this. Classes are rewarded every Friday in our celebration assemblies with certificates in addition to encourage good attendance termly awards are also given.

At South Street we have established an effective and efficient system that we feel supports communication with children, parents/carers and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice and guidance.

Aims of our Policy

1. To improve the overall percentage attendance and punctuality of children at school so that children have maximum opportunities to reach their learning and social potential.
2. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers.
3. To provide a systematic approach to using attendance data to identify children and families who need support.
4. To promote positive attendance and punctuality through our system of rewards.
5. To clearly communicate parents roles of responsibilities regarding attendance and the consequences.
6. To ensure external agencies such as the Legal Intervention Team are involved when necessary.

Parents/Carers' Responsibilities

Section 7 of the Education Act states that: ***'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered child at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence'*** (Please see admissions policy for guidance).

- Parents/carers (or the person with parental responsibility) are primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school.
- Parents/carers should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, correctly dressed and ready to learn.
- In cases of illness, the school should be notified by telephone as soon as possible. If an absence is not confirmed by parents/carers it is assumed that the absence was unauthorised and it is recorded as such. If there are any doubts whether a child is genuinely ill or not parents are encouraged to send their children to school in the first instance and school will contact them if concerns continue.
- Parents/carers should avoid, if possible, making non-emergency medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours. If this is unavoidable parents/carers must provide evidence otherwise the absence will be unauthorised.
- Authorised absences include: illness, emergency treatment during school hours. Unauthorised absences include: looking after siblings, birthdays, shopping, general trips and extreme number of absences that are not supported with medical evidence.

The fact that a parent has submitted a note in relation to a particular absence does not mean that the school must accept the explanation as a valid reason for absence. Absence without a valid reason, or where no explanation is offered at all is recorded as unauthorised absence. Parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time unless it is an exceptional circumstance. Applications for a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances can be collected from the main office.

At South Street School we have a small proportion of children who originate from other countries. The school will be sensitive to the needs of families returning to their homeland, a letter may be submitted to the governors requesting an extension to their planned break. All such requests will be assessed on their own merit.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve or authorise absence; parents/carers have no authority to sanction their child's absence

Staff Responsibilities

Our Staff ensure that registration is completed accurately and that they follow school attendance procedures. All staff encourage, promote and reward good attendance and punctuality. We are pro-active in providing a positive ethos which places a high value on attendance and punctuality.

School regularly monitors attendance and uses the following strategies to help improve a child's attendance:

- Telephoning parents/carers and writing to parents/carers;
- Arranging meetings between school and parent;
- Liaising with Social Services and other agencies;
- Referral to the Legal Intervention Team.

The Legal Intervention Team

The Legal Intervention Team is responsible for discharging the Local Authority's legal duty to ensure that all registered children of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually. If a child fails to attend regularly, and attempts by the school have failed to ensure a return to regular attendance, then the Legal Intervention Officer can take legal action which could lead to a penalty notice or prosecution being issued under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

Non Attendance Procedures

Absence and punctuality are monitored regularly. Attendance figures for all children are analysed by our Attendance Team. Children whose attendance falls significantly below the target will generate:

- An initial letter of concern.
- If no improvement after 3 weeks an appointment to meet with our Family Support Worker will be made.
- If there is still no improvement a referral to LIT is made.

From this point on LIT decide the best possible cause of action in liaison with school which could include:

1. PACE interview (the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984)
2. Penalty notice issued
3. Prosecution

The above three steps could happen in a 6 week period.

Investigating Reasons for Non-Attendance

A. Social Relationships

This can often be a cause of children being unwilling to come to school. Parents are encouraged to contact the school as soon as difficulties are suspected. We regard this as an important issue and treat the matter seriously. Children and parents need to be aware that we will always investigate any concerns very carefully.

B. Curriculum

Difficulties with school work can often be a cause of anxiety. Every effort is made to ensure that the work is at an appropriate level for each individual child. However, if patterns of absence indicate that a child is staying off regularly at the same time of day or week we will investigate and come up with solutions by working with you.

C. Home Circumstances

We recognise that sometimes there may be difficulties at home that affect children's attendance. We will work in partnership with parents and other agencies to offer support to families.

Reporting Absence by Parents/carers

Regular and punctual attendance of children at school is expected. It is both a legal requirement and essential in order for children to maximise their learning. In cases of illness the school should be notified by telephone as soon as possible. If an absence is not confirmed by a parent/carer, the absence is unauthorised.

Registration

Registration begins at 8:45am for nursery and 8:55am for main school. The class teacher will take registration, recording a 'mark' for each child present. Any child who arrives after this time will have to sign in and will be marked as late. In the afternoon the register will be taken at 1:00pm for main school and 12:30pm for nursery. Admin staff implement first day response to establish reasons for absence and offer support.

Categorising Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

Reasons for Absence

Illness

If a child is absent as a result of illness the absence is usually authorised; this needs to be confirmed by a parent/carer via telephone or in writing. If there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, the school and LIO can consult with the School Health Service or the child's General Practitioner to confirm the condition.

Medical and Dental Appointments

As far as possible, appointments should be made out of school hours. If a medical or dental appointment has to be made during the school day, the school must be informed beforehand bringing proof of appointment, stating the time of the appointment in order that the absence can be authorised. Appointments should be made to miss as little of school time as possible. All children must be signed out when they leave school to attend the appointment and signed back in on their return.

Family Bereavements

The school recognises that the death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event and the school has the discretion to authorise such absences.

Days of Religious Observance

Absence due to participation in days set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong is authorised by the school. Advance notice is appreciated.

Minding the House/Looking after Siblings/Looking after Parents/Carers

Cases of such absences will constitute unauthorised absence.

Exceptional Circumstances

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Team to determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not. Each application would be considered separately. Absences for social occasions such as birthdays and family outings are unauthorised by the school.

Date this policy was formally reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body of South Street Community Primary School:	
Approved by the Governing Body on:	To be ratified on 27 February 2018
Reviewed by Head Teacher	Julie McGrow
Date:	January 2018
Date of next review:	January 2019