



# Attendance Policy

## Principles

As a school, we realise that for a pupil to reach their full educational potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. An ethos of high levels of attendance and punctuality is recognised and valued across our whole school community. We aim to work with parents/carers to ensure that all pupils registered at school attend every day and on time, unless the absence is unavoidable. We expect that all pupils will achieve 100% attendance but recognise that there may be exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence, or absences relating to persistent health issues. Our policy applies to all pupils of statutory school age, across the Key Stages to promote good attendance habits.

The following guidance has been taken into consideration when developing this policy: **Working Together to Improve School Attendance. August 2024.**

### Our attendance 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.

School education lays the vital foundations of a pupil's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Absence from school can place pupils at unnecessary risk and jeopardise their potential. As a school, we will encourage parents/carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and we will work together with parents to provide any support necessary.

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.

### **Expectations:**

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school prepared for the school day, punctually and in time for registration. Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as an unauthorised absence if they arrive after 8:55am.
- Inform school in advance of any medical appointments during school time. Parents may on occasion be asked to provide supporting information from the hospital, doctor or dentist, such as appointment details card/letter/text message in relation to the time requested. Where possible, medical appointments should be arranged outside of school hours.
- Ensure that they contact the school before 8:45am if their child is unable to attend school, citing the reason.
- Inform the school as soon as possible about a pupil's reluctance to come to school so that any problem can be quickly identified and support provided.
- Follow application procedures regarding a request for leave of absence during term time, which should only be taken if agreed by the Head Teacher.
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details, and ensure school has more than one name, address and telephone number as an emergency contact.
- Engage with early interventions designed to support the family and their child's attendance at school.
- Discuss attendance where necessary in person, virtually or on the telephone – conversations are preferable to messages or emails.

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that pupils of statutory school age (from the school term after they turn five years old until after until the last Friday in June when the pupil is in Year 11) attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting an absence from school without good reason is an offence.

### **We expect that school will:**

- Provide a safe learning environment.
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor individual pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- Contact parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers. Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case

of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, information from a GP or other relevant body may be requested to assist school in offering appropriate support.

- Promote and celebrate good attendance and punctuality, for example through assemblies, social media, displays and parent/carer communications.
- Meet, when necessary, with the Wandsworth Educational Welfare Officer to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality and discuss irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance.
- Provide intensive and bespoke support to pupils at risk of persistent absence. This will include reintegration plans for both short and long-term absentees as appropriate.
- Work alongside other services and teams to support pupils' attendance. E.g. other primary schools, the Local Authority, Early Help, Social Care, Senior Transition Advisers, Virtual School and the local community (including volunteers).
- Share attendance data with parents/carers and make it clear what good attendance and success looks like for their child.
- Communicate clearly and consistently with parents/carers and pupils regarding attendance.
- Consider an Individual Healthcare Plan for pupils with medical needs.

The Attendance Champion for our school is **Sarah Gillam**, the Headteacher and can be contacted on 02086733188.

All members of the school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness; with the Headteacher having overall responsibility for the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil. Where there are concerns, parents will always be informed by letter and/or telephone conversation and given an opportunity to come into school to meet with designated staff.

### **We expect that all pupils will:**

- Attend school every day.
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher any problems that may affect their school attendance.

### **We expect that the proprietors will:**

- Monitor attendance figures for the whole school regularly.
- Hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **We expect that the Local Authority will:**

- Provide support, information and guidance to school by having meetings, when requested, to discuss attendance.
- Act as a partner with school to advise in some cases of persistent absence.

## School Attendance Strategy

The school's Attendance Team includes the School Office Manager, SENCo, the Headteacher, and the Local Educational Welfare Officer.

Whilst Sarah Gllam is our Senior Attendance Champion, for day-to-day aspects of attendance, please contact Wandsworth's Education Welfare Officers on [WSAdmin@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:WSAdmin@wandsworth.gov.uk) or 020 8871 8306 with any further queries.

We are responsible for all pupils' attendance at school, and we partner with other agencies to help us do this. For pupils who might need extra support to maintain their attendance e.g. Young Carers, we signpost families to appropriate places to reduce the impact that their needs and personal circumstances have on their attendance at school. Safeguarding and attendance are closely linked, and we work together with Social Care to identify where pupils need extra support. We will work with families in many different ways to overcome barriers to attendance.

All staff have direct access to our trained Designated Safeguarding Lead, and this is important for this work.

School is responsible for monitoring whole school attendance data and using this to inform how we support pupils. We share this data within the school staff to ensure continuity of support and ensure class teachers discuss the importance of attending school in assemblies and PSHE lessons.

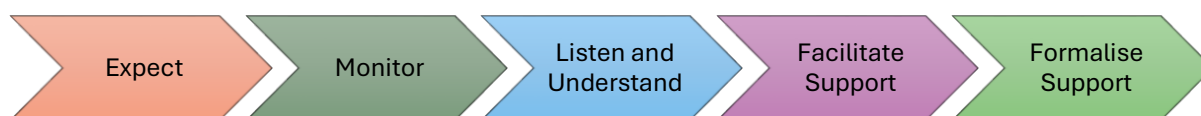
Attendance data is analysed regularly, and pupils whose attendance is falling or deemed to be a concern will be noted. This will be communicated with parents and carers. Support will then be put in place. Pupils whose attendance falls to 90% or under are deemed to be 'persistently absent'. Pupils whose attendance is 50% or under are 'severely persistently absent' and parents/carers will be expected to engage in substantial support.

We have a whole-school ethos of promoting and celebrating attendance. This means that we highlight the importance of attendance to every staff member, so they are aware of the importance of attendance and the pastoral structures in school. We train, remind and support all staff to follow this policy, and constantly refer to it. Good attendance is celebrated with pupils and families and reported to parents/carers at Parents Evenings and in formal written end-of-year reports.

Our whole-school strategy for attendance involves deciding how to allocate resources (both financial and staffing) to manage attendance. Our support and early interventions for attendance are reviewed by senior leaders to ensure they are having an impact and are worth the resources allocated to them.

## Supporting Attendance

As a school, we aim to work collaboratively with parents/carers to improve school attendance. This means that we will listen, empathise and support with attendance.



When required, support strategies with a monitoring period will be put in place to help improve the attendance or lateness of a pupil.

Lateness and attendance are monitored daily by the School Office Assistant Manager who will, in conjunction with the Headteacher:

- Scrutinise the registers daily, monitoring authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons provided for pupil absence and lateness.
- Monitor SIMs to ensure accuracy of record keeping by all staff completing registers.
- Alert class teachers when attendance concerns occur
- Raise concerns with parents/carers of identified patterns of lateness with an initial conversation or email, followed up by letter if deemed appropriate.
- Contact parents by telephone, email, or letter to establish a reason for a pupil's absence if the reason is unknown.
- Raise concerns with parents/carers once attendance has fallen below an acceptable level.
- Offer support or signpost to other areas of support within the community.
- Where necessary, liaise with other external organisations in relation to a pupil's attendance/lateness.
- Monitor pupil attendance within specific and identified groups.
- Monitor and respond to pupil absences for those with additional medical needs.
- Monitor pupils and follow procedures for pupils who are 'Pupils Missing in Education'.
- Follow reporting procedures for parents who have requested to home educate their child.
- Follow statutory procedures when deleting a pupil from roll.
- Monitor absences for illness and requests for leave to attend medical appointments.
- Report pupils to the Local Authority when they have 10 consecutive 'O' coded (unauthorised absence) sessions in school.
- Report pupils with 15 consecutive days of 'I' (illness) codes to the Local Authority.

## Registration

Children can arrive at school from 7:30am, through the main entrance on Balham High Road. Registers are open at 8:50 am and close at 9:10 am. Pupils who arrive at school after the register has been taken, but before it is closed, will be recorded as 'L' - late on the register.

Pupils who arrive at school after registers close at 9:10 am, without an unavoidable reason, will have their lateness recorded as 'U' - unauthorised late which then impacts on their overall attendance level.

Pupils must sign in and out if they arrive or leave school outside of the normal times using the attendance register at the main office.

It is a legal requirement that a register of attendance is taken during the morning and afternoon at school. Any unexplained absence must be coded as unauthorised until a reason is given by parents/carers. This must be no later than 5 days after the session. Only the Headteacher may authorise or unauthorise an absence. The register can only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are made, the register will show the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment. Registers are kept on SIMS (since 2018). Teachers are expected to ensure that the register is taken as promptly as possible to track punctuality.

## **Lateness**

When pupils arrive late at school, they disrupt routines, affect other pupils' learning, miss the teacher's instructions to the lesson and may also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late. They may also miss important intervention programmes and the opportunity to practice key learning skills. Where pupils show a persistent pattern of lateness, parents/carers will receive contact from the school advising them of the concern and offering support to resolve the issue. Should the lateness continue, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss their child's lateness.

## **Reporting a Pupil Absence**

Parents/carers must contact school on the first and every subsequent day of absence by 8:45 am.

For any pupil not present at the close of registration, and the reason is still unknown, a member of staff will attempt to make contact with the parent/carers once the registers have closed at 9:10 am.

The member of staff will ring every contact, starting with the priority contact, until a reason for absence is known. Messages will be left on voicemail requesting parents to contact school regarding their pupil's absence. Outcomes of any phone conversations will be logged on the pupil's electronic school record. Staff will complete the registers in accordance with the correct use of registration codes.

Any unexplained absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence if there is no response from a parent/carer to an enquiry regarding their pupil's absence from school.

For absences relating to a medical appointment, supporting information may be requested to authorise this absence. This can be a text message which clearly identifies who the appointment is for, or an appointment card. A period of absence will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment.

## **Illness**

Pupils who are unable to attend school due to diarrhoea or sickness can return 48 hours after the last episode.

Pupils with mild coughs, colds, sore throats, sneezes and runny noses who are otherwise well can continue to attend school. However, if they develop a high temperature they should stay at home until their temperature has reduced and they are well enough to return to school. A guide to whether your child is able to attend school with minor illnesses is here: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk). The information is backed up by the Department for Education (DfE). We expect pupils to attempt to come to school unless they are too unwell to complete basic tasks. We will contact you if they need to return home.

## **Medical Needs and SEND**

When pupils are prevented from accessing school due to physical or mental ill health, school will try to identify the barriers these pupils face and use a tiered approach to supporting medical needs. This starts with the universal offer of support for all pupils and leads to higher tiers of need where increasingly specialist support is required. We will consider reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements. We will liaise with appropriate services to ascertain support in the rare instances that a pupil is unable to access any education inside the school setting. Where a pupil's health needs mean they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, we may seek medical information to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision. This may take a variety of forms, which we will discuss with parents/carers on an individual basis.

Where pupils have an EHCP, we will liaise closely with the pupil's SEN Caseworker to work towards the best attendance outcomes for the pupil.

We are able to make adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments must be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with, the pupil and their parents/carers.

## **Definitions of Leave**

We expect attendance at school to be 100% unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

## Authorised leave:

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason such as:
- Illness or a medical appointment. There is an expectation that the pupil will be in school for registration or return to school after the appointment, depending on where the appointment falls within the school day and the health of the pupil.
- Religious Observance - only day(s) exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong to.
- The leave of absence has been authorised due to a short and exceptional, unavoidable circumstance.

## Unauthorised leave:

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without the permission of the school, even with the support of the parent/carer, such as:

- Shopping or hair appointments
- There has been no reason provided by the parent/carer to support an absence.
- Failure to follow school procedures or inform the school when taking a pupil out of school during term time.
- A leave of absence that has not been authorised due to not being considered an exceptional circumstance.

**Coding is always at the Headteacher's discretion.**

## Term-Time Leave

Parents do not have the right or entitlement to take their pupil out of school for a term-time holiday. Recent government guidelines have removed the discretion for headteachers agreeing to term-time leave. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted before the leave is taken. Parents must email the Headteacher and provide any supporting evidence, if applicable, with their request.

If the school suspect term-time leave has been taken but the parents/carers have not completed a Term-Time Leave Request Form, we will contact the parents/carers giving them an opportunity to clarify the reason for absence and provide supporting evidence. Failure to respond to or provide supporting evidence will result in the absence being unauthorised.

Exceptional circumstances (definition of exceptional: rare, unavoidable, short) will be considered on an individual basis. Examples of requests for leave of absence that do not meet the criteria of an exceptional circumstance and will not be authorised are:

Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad.



Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term.  
Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates.  
Visits to see family abroad.  
Relatives coming to visit.  
Extension of leave if a pupil has not returned to school after an agreed absence if it does not meet grounds for an exceptional circumstance.  
Leave taken due to potential travel disruption.

### **Absence Due to Sporting Activities**

Attendance at sporting events as a spectator or supporter will not be authorised. Training camps should be organised for during the school holidays. Absence to attend competitions will be assessed on an individual basis and information from the sport's national governing body may be requested to assist with the school's decision-making process.

### **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. After a further 10 days of absence with no explanation, your child is at risk of losing their school place with us. During this 20-day period, school will continue to try and contact you, and will liaise with any other services that your child is open to. The Local Authority will conduct investigations into the location and educational provision of the child.

Sarah Gillam  
September 2024