



Attendance Policy

February, 2021

Date Agreed by Governors: 09/02/2021

Review Date: Spring 2022

Signed: _____ (Chair of Governors)

Signed: _____ (Headteacher)

Introduction

This document is designed to foster a spirit of teamwork, ensuring that everyone works together for the benefit of the children in our care. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that parents ensure that their child attends regularly, and that school takes all reasonable measures to ensure equality of access for pupils; and this policy sets out how, together, we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so Important

Learning: Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning; our own school data shows that consistently high attendance has a significant impact upon pupils achieving the expected level of development at the end of each Key Stage. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring children's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility.

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis may be considered as a safeguarding matter and referrals to the Local Authority Safeguarding team could occur.

Regular Attendance

As with all aspects of a child's life, it is parents and carers who play the pivotal role in ensuring that their children's best interests are taken into consideration at all times. The law in relation to the regular attendance of a child at school is strict in the application of this responsibility. We always seek to support our parents and carers in carrying out their legal responsibility.

A child's learning journey starts at the very beginning of their Early Years education, and this is an important time for parents and carers to embed good habits of attendance and punctuality with their child/ren, which will follow them through school life and the wider world beyond school.

Parents and carers are expected to have good routines in place to ensure their child/ren are prepared for school each day and are ready to learn by attending regularly and being in school on time. Once established, these routines help greatly in supporting children to become independent learners with fewer anxieties about expectations and the overall structure of the school day.

We also recognise that at times difficulties or changes may arise within a family or home life which can impact upon a child's learning and school attendance. In such cases it is very important for a child, parent or carer to speak to us so that we can listen and discuss the best possible way forward. Ensuring that a child's education is not interrupted or impacted by these situations is very important, and regular school attendance should always be seen as a positive and stable part of what can sometimes be a more disrupted home life (which can be for multiple reasons, of varying time scales.)

Please call or contact school and speak to Mrs C Eccleston, our Attendance Officer if you have any queries or concerns, or speak to your child's class teacher who will usually direct you to this named professional in school.

The Law Relating to Attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable :-*

(a) To age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) To any special educational needs he/she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

The Law Relating to Safeguarding

The September 2021 document entitled 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' refers all schools to Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 which places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Attendance Registers

The law requires all schools to have an attendance register. All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on the register. The attendance register is taken twice daily and on each occasion a record is made as to whether a pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity (such as a planned school visit)
- Absent due to illness or another verified and previously known reason (such as a pre-arranged medical appointment)
- Not in school without a reason supplied

School will follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for absence if the reason has not been previously supplied
- Ensure correct safeguarding procedures are followed if necessary
- Identify, and if necessary amend codes used on the official register based on new or previously inaccurate information
- Ensure the most accurate information is recorded so that the School Census and other reports based on attendance data are as accurate as possible

Understanding Types of Absence

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

Authorised Absence: When a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer which fits this description. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent/carers has used the online APP facility to inform the school, OR, a request has been made for an absence in exceptional circumstances which has been agreed by the Headteacher

Unauthorised absence: When a child is away from school without a valid reason, even if the parent supports the absence. Absence without a valid reason or explanation is recorded as Unauthorised. For example, a holiday taken in school time, OR keeping a sibling away from school due to one child being ill, OR repeated absences for illness which are not supported by evidence of medical treatment being sought.

Repeated unauthorised absences will result in notification from school – by telephone and/or mail – in order to make parents and carers aware of the concerns regarding irregular attendance. They may also result in home visits to ascertain the safety of a child, and may be a factor in involving other agencies or social care in a family where school have not been able to engage and successfully support the family.

Close of Registers

Registers close at a set time in order to maintain the required level of curriculum provision for children, and also to establish a suitable point for monitoring each day. The standard close of registers is 9.10am for all age groups.

At the time of reviewing this policy we are in the second lockdown linked to COVID 19 and made adjustments to the registers accordingly – please see the attached **COVID 19 APPENDIX**

Repeated lateness is not acceptable and causes disruption to the curriculum and learning of children, as well as negatively impacting upon children's mental well-being and feelings of anxiety. Children who arrive late for school miss the important opportunity to 'catch up' with friends, may miss important information about the plan for the day and are often not in the best frame of mind for learning. This often manifests itself in children feeling left out, confused, anxious and eventually not wanting to come to school.

Arrival of pupils after the official closure will result in an unauthorised 'U' code being applied, which can impact negatively on children where we are monitoring and seeking to improve attendance.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. Please note, our school data shows that absence affects attainment in ALL year groups. Our specific school information shows that those pupils with better attendance attain better results. Pupils and families who are at the PA level and whose attendance does not appear to improve despite school support may be referred to other services for support – which could include a referral to social care or to the Education Welfare Service.

Absence Procedures

Parents, If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence. This should be done using the school APP Absence form which means the information can instantly be added onto the registers and often means further contact is not required.
- This can also be done via a phone call to school 01744 678683; (please **DO NOT** use Class Dojo to do this as it is not always possible to check this prior to other follow up measures)
- Make contact with school every day either by APP form, telephone/text or in person to keep us updated
- Alternatively, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.
- THIS IS ONE OF OUR WHOLE SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING PRODECURES – TO ENSURE THAT ALL CHILDREN ARE SAFE

If your child is absent, we will:

- Update our register with the information you have provided for us, and if necessary follow up to ascertain further details so that we use the accurate coding
- Review and monitor returns to school, including amending any codes on the register – for example authorizing an absence for illness if a child returns with antibiotics, or unauthorising an absence if we have reason to believe that a holiday has been taken in term time without seeking the relevant permission.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Attendance Officer if attendance continues to fall
- Make a referral to the Education Welfare Service or social care if we believe this is in the best interests of the child/ren, and if all previous attempts to engage and improve attendance have failed.

Telephone Numbers and Contact

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have contact numbers at all times. Parents must ensure the school always has an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. It is VITAL that one member of the household has access to the school online APP facility as this is the main, and most secure method of communication between home and school.

The School Attendance Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the School Attendance Officer. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the School Attendance Officer themselves to ask for help or information.

Our School Attendance Officer is Mrs C Eccleston. They can be contacted via the main school office on 01744 678683.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they will miss work as lessons start promptly each day. Children who are late also do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day, and they disrupt lessons for others; this can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage further absence.

How we manage lateness: At the time of reviewing this policy we are in the second lockdown linked to COVID 19. Please therefore refer to the **COVID 19 APPENDIX** for relevant changes these times and procedures, in line with the national guidance on staggering the start and end of the school day.

The standard school day starts at **8.50am** for Juniors (KS2) and **8.55am** for Infant (EYFS and KS1) and we expect your child to be in class at that time. **If they are later than this they will need to come into school via the main entrance.**

Teaching staff will arrive on the playgrounds 5 minutes before this time each day so that parents and carers can quickly inform staff of any important information; for example if a child has had a troubled sleep due to asthma etc. Longer discussions can be scheduled at this time with staff in order to discuss lengthier or private issues which might have an effect on a child's behaviour or health and wellbeing but which CANNOT impact upon the swift start to daily learning and completion of the morning registers.

Registers are marked by **8:50am** for KS2 children and **8.55am** for EYFS and KS1 children and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in class by that time.

At **9.10am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a child has a persistent late record, parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem. Parents can approach the school at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time and we will endeavour to support where we can.

Absence in Term Time, including Holiday Requests

Taking holidays in term time will affect children's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember, that any savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the school, please note that you will need to **complete a 'Request for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances During Term Time'** form, which is available as an editable document on the school APP, or a paper version is available at the main office, **BEFORE departing when possible**. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

It is EXTREMELY RARE for a request for the purpose of a family holiday to be authorised.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. A 2-week holiday, which adds up to 20 sessions of absence will most likely result in a Penalty Notice being issued. Please contact school prior to booking such events in order for us to best advise you and supply up to date and accurate school holiday patterns – we often have these available for your guidance before they are published and may help you in planning significantly far ahead.

School Attendance Targets

The school has targets to improve attendance and each child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Good attendance in Sherdley is classed as above 96%, Outstanding attendance is classed as above 98%. We will regularly monitor and inform you if your child's attendance pattern is a concern, or their overall attendance is dropping, or unacceptable (below or approaching 90%)

Through the school year, we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made and also to reward children for consistent, positive attendance. When possible to involve children in decisions made regarding attendance rewards – for example the 100% attendance badges were selected by pupils who had previously been awarded prizes.

Children Missing from Education

A pupil who is absent from school for 10 consecutive days is regarded as a 'child missing from education'. In such cases a referral may be required to the local authority. Before making any such referral the school will have made all necessary enquiries to trace the pupil which could be using additionally supplied contact numbers, visiting the home, speaking to neighbours or contacting other service providers who may offer insight (for example a PVI nursery provider or foster care team). School follow the required procedures before adding or removing children from the school roll in order to ensure that children are not 'lost' from the education system. This links directly to overall safeguarding.

Responsibilities for Attendance

All class teachers have responsibility for monitoring the attendance of pupils in their class, linked to their attainment and also as a part of basic Safeguarding principles. Staff are expected to monitor attendance and record concerns on the CPOMS system, using the appropriate Attendance category. These concerns will be monitored and actioned by one of the following:

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Mr A McCoy | Head Teacher and Designated Deputy Safeguarding Lead |
| Mrs C Robertson | Deputy Headteacher & Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| Mrs Katie Bennett | Assistant Headteacher, SENDCo and Designated Deputy Safeguarding Lead |
| Mrs Cath Eccleston | Attendance Officer |
| Mrs Ann Marie Lakey | Children and Families Community Support Officer |

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Equality Statement

At Sherdley Primary, we aim to ensure that no member of the school community experiences harassment, less favourable treatment or discrimination within the learning environment because of their age; any disability they may have; their ethnicity, colour or national origin; their gender; their religion or beliefs. We value the diversity of individuals within our school and do not discriminate against anyone because of 'differences'. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when devising and implementing school policies and procedures.

Links to Other Policies and School Documents

Safeguarding Policy

Pupil Handbook

Date of Policy & Reviews

Policy established: March 2012

Reviewed: September 2014 and updated May 2015, November 2015, September 2016, Sept 2018 and Feb 2021

To be reviewed: January 2022

COVID 19 APPENDIX

March 2020

The first National lockdown linked to COVID 19 took place which resulted in significant changes to school provision and expectations for attendance.

A review was made, complete with an additional statement linked to Attendance. The main changes to this policy at that time involved the change to the close of register time for all pupils. The Governing Body supported school in the rationale of making the register end time 9.30am for all pupil in order to allow us to work flexibly in creating a staggered start of the day in order to minimise the possible number of people in site at any one time.

All pupils in the initial lockdown, from March 2020 until latter part of the summer term in July 2020 were subject to remaining at home on the basis of government guidance unless they met specific categories. School offered a 'childcare' provision for these children for this period. Registers were codes in line with the government guidance, and the use of the 'X' code replaced the initial use of a 'Y – exceptional circumstances' code.

School made weekly contact with families identified as Vulnerable – using the government provided criteria, and also our own Sherdley consideration of families. Contact was recorded on CPOMS and visits were made to the homes of some families in order to support and ensure safeguarding concerns were addressed.

September 2020

Children returned to school with significant COVID 19 restrictions in place. The staggered start to the day continued and therefore, to assist parents in using a newly imposed one way system of our school gates as well as maintain the policy of keeping numbers on school site at a time to a minimum, the Governing Body agreed to keep in place the official close of registers at 9.30am.

All children were expected to return to full time provision. A small number of families elected not to and were challenged, leading to a full return within a week. A very small number of families decided to permanently home educate their children and were removed from the register roll after the appropriate period of notification had expired.

Children and families were expected to adhere to national guidelines relating to instances of COVID like symptoms, and also whilst waiting for the results of COVID 19 swab tests. The 'X' code was used in accordance with the national guidelines to record children on the register who were not attending linked to a COVID 19 related event. Work packs were created and delivered to families who needed to isolate based on either a personal/family member COVID result, or when a year group bubble at school became compromised by a positive case.

January 2021

The second national lockdown was announced with slightly different criteria and expectations that the first. Provision in Sherdley was made EDUCATIONAL rather than childcare based, and provision was initially full time in order to put in place provision quickly. Key Worker parent children plus specific Vulnerable children were offered and encouraged to accept places in school. A register of those children attending was made, and a spreadsheet identifying Vulnerable children NOT attending the setting completed in line with national requirements. Children not attending the setting have a requirement to access the Remote Learning provision offered by Sherdley.

Non engagement in remote learning is monitored daily. Persistent non-engagement is challenged initially by class teacher, then by the Attendance Officer, and if we still have concerns, by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Engagement and contact with Vulnerable pupils is monitored daily – figures are shared with DfE. Contact with families has resulted in a number of support packages offered which include:

- Allocation of a school provision place based on our perceived benefit for the child/ren
- Allocation of a suitable technological device (laptop, iPad, dongle of data)
- Establishment of a full time HUB provision – aimed more at supporting behaviour needs of some pupils who have SEND and are struggling to interact with the remote learning, despite differentiation (these are children who benefit from additional LSA support in class to create highly practical activities etc)
- Sharing of CGP workbooks and other paper based work activities for some pupils who are struggling with the online nature and prefer a physical 'hard copy' of learning activities

- LSA 1-1 TEAMS meetings to check on the welfare of pupils and engage them in talk activities and/or use BSL to ensure well-being is positive.

Registers are being marked using the appropriate new codes devised by the government, which includes the use of the 'X' codes for those pupils remaining away from the school site due to COVID 19 restrictions or events/outbreaks, but also a 'C' code for those vulnerable pupils who have been offered provision but who are not taking up the place provided. This is resulting in some children having very low attendance figures, and also impacts upon the overall school attendance which is not the case for the 'X' code. The Attendance Officer is working closely with the Safeguarding Lead to ensure that the registers reflect as accurate information as we have available to us.

More recent guidance and 3 year group bubbles being impacted by positive COVID 19 cases meant we amended provision for only the days needed by key worker families; in order to further minimise the number of people accessing the school site. The registers are therefore populated based on the days requested by Key Worker parents – non-attendance remains followed up with a phone call, and attendance on a 'none requested day' is accepted as we are aware some shift patterns change at the last minute. Vulnerable children are being encouraged to attend daily.

The most recent guidance we are adhering to was released February 2021 – 'Restricting attendance during the national lockdown : schools' and is the most current reference guide we have in relation to attendance concerns.