



**Shaw  
Education  
Trust**

## **Seabridge Primary School**

### **Attendance Policy**



**Seabridge  
Primary School**

**Procedure Originator: S Sanders**

**Approved by: Academy Council**

**Date Approved:**

**Review Interval: Annually**

**Last review date: September 2024**

## Introduction

At Seabridge Primary School, we are committed to working together to ensure all children receive the best education possible and to enable them to make progress and do as well as they can. For this to happen children clearly need to be in school. This policy aims to make clear what is expected of parents and children and to assure parents of our willingness to work positively with them if problems arise.

## Responsibilities

The Headteacher, Ms S Sanders, has overall responsibility for attendance at the school. Mrs Purcell and Miss Hissey work alongside the Headteacher to take responsibility for the day to day running of the school's attendance system.

We are legally required to complete attendance registers accurately and on time, and class teachers ensure this is the case.

## Principles

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The school will promote the importance of positive behaviour and good attendance through the curriculum and personal/social opportunities. Good attendance and behaviour by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. We will ensure that parents are aware of attendance matters as they relate to their child and work with them to ensure good attendance and punctuality.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

The attendance policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils.

Seabridge Primary School employ VIP Education. They are an independent education welfare company who work with the school to raise attendance and deal with welfare matters. They will communicate with you if there is an issue they can support us with. Pupils' attendance will be monitored and this along with contact details may be shared with VIP Education if it becomes a cause for concern. VIP are GDPR compliant and will not share personal data with a third party. Their privacy notice is available via our office.

## Registration

Schools are required by law to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**.

Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

90% attendance might sound impressive, but actually ...

- If a child has 90% attendance over a school year, this means that 4 whole weeks' (20 days) worth of lessons have been missed
- If 90% attendance is maintained over 5 years, half a school year will have been missed overall.

90% attendance is not impressive, we use this Attendance Ladder in school to make sure children realise that in Attendance terms, 90% represents a significant, persistent problem that needs to be avoided. The DfE identifies 90% as persistent absence, and therefore the school uses this percentage to trigger documentation linked to persistent absence. If your child's attendance falls to 90% or below, medical evidence will be required to authorise the absence.



**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical appointments or other unavoidable cause.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off from school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive to school after the close of the register;
- school refusal;
- holidays taken during term time that have not been authorised by the Headteacher;
- when your child's attendance is 90% or below, medical evidence is required in order to authorise any absences.

When completing the register, school follow the DfE school attendance guidance to determine which relevant code to use;

The register will be taken twice a day, at the start of the morning and the afternoon.

### **Morning registration**

The morning register is taken at 8.45am for KS2, 8.45am for Reception and KS1 and 9.00am for Nursery. Children arriving after the register has been taken but before 9.15am are recorded as late – L.

Registration closes 30 minutes after registration opens. Children arriving at school after this time are 'late - after registration closes' and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable reason for the lateness – U.

If a child has 10 U and O codes within a 10-week period, school will be required to report to the Local Authority for statutory action.

### **Afternoon registration**

The afternoon register is taken at 1.00pm for KS1 and 1.15 pm for KS2.

If lateness is a cause for concern, the following procedures will be applied:

1. Parents will receive a letter informing of the concern.
2. The Education Welfare Office (EWO) from VIP Education will contact parents to further discuss and offer support and advice to improve punctuality.
3. Parents will be invited to a meeting with the EWO. The discussion held will be documented by the EWO and an action plan to improve punctuality will be devised with parents and the pupil during the meeting and a review date set if needed
4. If no improvement is evidenced, the school will follow Staffordshire County Councils Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for persistent lateness.

More information can be found at: [School attendance - Staffordshire County Council](#)

### **Absence**

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties at school should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful.

Alternatively, parents or pupils may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent to the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office.

If a child is absent from school, we ask parents to:

- Contact the school office by 9am on the first morning of absence and leave a message
- Reply promptly to any request or inquiry concerning an absence

If parents do not contact the school on the morning of the first day of absence, a member of the administration staff will try to contact them to find out the reason for absence. This ensures that the parent is aware their child is not in school enabling the parent, where necessary, to establish that their child is safe.

If a reason for absence is not known by 10:00am the school will request the EWO to establish contact by either telephone, text message or a home visit may be completed.

A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason and after a two-week period, will mark the absence as unauthorised if no suitable reason is provided.

### **Children Missing in Education**

Schools have a duty by law to refer any absence of 20 days or more to Staffordshire County Council's Children Missing in Education department where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence. In line with our safeguarding policy, which is based on the Staffordshire Safeguarding policy, we will do this following a continuous absence of 10 days or more.

In order to avoid any referrals, parents are requested to inform the school if they are moving house/area or country and to provide a forwarding address, contact number and the name of the new school if known.

### **Medical Absence**

Schools have the responsibility to decide whether an absence can be authorised on medical grounds. If your child's attendance falls to 90% or below, parents will be asked to provide evidence that their child is too unwell to attend school by providing a note from a medical professional. If the school has concerns about the level of medical absence that a pupil has incurred, they will contact the parents/carers to discuss it further and to find out whether their GP or other health professional has been contacted. Please speak to the school if you want advice regarding what is accepted as medical evidence.

If attendance does not improve, the school may request parents seek a note of explanation from the relevant health professional or may involve the school nurse. If despite the request for the note of explanation, no note is forthcoming, school may not be able to authorise absences unless satisfactory medical evidence is provided to support the pupil's inability to attend school.

### **Long term medical absence**

The school follows the procedures set out by Staffordshire County Council "Children who are missing Education due to Health/Medical Needs"

More information can be found at:

[Staffordshire Connects | Children who are Missing Education due to Health/Medical Needs - Protocol and Good Practice Guidance](#)

### **Medical and Dental Appointments**

We expect parents to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the school holidays whenever possible. If this is not possible then confirmation of the appointment will be required prior to authorising the absence. Children are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents expected to return their children to the school following the appointment whenever possible.

## **Requests for leave of absence**

Leave of absence requests, including holiday leave requests, may only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

If a parent wishes to request leave for their child for any reason they must apply in advance and in writing using the leave of absence request form which can be found in the main entrance or on request from the office. Where a child does not reside with both parents, it is the responsibility of the parent making the request to inform the other parent. The school will send a reply to both parents.

If a request for leave has not been received and we have reason to believe a pupil is on holiday, it is likely that our EWO will visit the home address in this circumstance and a letter will be sent to parents requesting medical evidence. If no medical evidence can be provided the absence may be coded as unauthorised and a penalty notice request sent to the Local Authority. Parents will also be requested to attend a meeting with the EWO.

Any request made because of exceptional circumstances can only be judged on a case-by-case basis, taking into account individual circumstances. Requests should be made in writing at least 28 days before the period of requested absence, otherwise they will be automatically unauthorised. Only the Headteacher can overrule this, in discussion with the Academy Council, and only in exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional circumstances are applied to those parents who work in the police / armed forces and fire service (limited to one holiday per academic year), religious reasons (limited to 1 day per absence), births, deaths and marriages of immediate family members only (parents and siblings, limited to a maximum of 3 days per absence).

### **Even with the exceptional circumstances, we will still consider the following on a case-by-case basis before permission can be granted:**

- Current level of school attendance including punctuality. Where attendance is below 90% the absence may not be authorised, even in the case of exceptional circumstances;
- The current progress being made towards individual pupils' academic targets;
- The time and length of the requested exceptional absence;
- The amount of exceptional absence that has been authorised previously.

If an unauthorised leave of absence is taken, the school follows Staffordshire County Council's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for unauthorised leave of absence. More information can be found at;

[Penalty-Notice-Code-of-Conduct-July-24-FINAL.pdf \(staffordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

## **Rewarding good school attendance**

All children who have 100% attendance in any term will receive an excellence 100% sticker in their home school link books.

On a weekly basis, the class(es) with the highest attendance in the school (N-Y6) are announced in assembly and class certificates awarded.

On a weekly basis, the children are reminded of our whole school target of 97%, and our whole school % for the week is shared, with encouragement to raise the percentage the following week.

Over the year, pupils' attendance which has improved will also receive recognition and a certificate.

### **Monitoring attendance and lateness**

The school aims to achieve at least 97% attendance each year. To help with this, we monitor attendance regularly. The school has established a system for monitoring attendance and lateness, the purpose and aims of which are as follows:

- To improve the overall percentage of attendance and improve pupils' punctuality at school.
- To make attendance and punctuality a high priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, staff and Academy Councillors.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance and punctuality related data.
- To develop and implement an effective system of communication between school and home.
- To reward good attendance and punctuality.
- To work effectively with the Local Authority and other agencies that support attendance and punctuality.

Our independent EWO from VIP Education regularly monitors pupils' attendance that falls below the school's annual attendance target. Where there appears to be a particular problem with attendance, the following procedures are applied:

- A letter is sent to parents informing them of a decline in school attendance and the need for this to improve due to the impact on the pupil's education.
- If school attendance continues to decline, a further concern letter is sent to parents.
- If still no improvement is seen, parents and pupils will be invited into a meeting with the EWO to discuss the concerns and to offer support around any possible barriers or problems at home or at school which may be contributing to poor school attendance. The discussion held will be documented by the EWO and an action plan to improve school attendance will be devised with parents and pupil during the meeting and a review date set if needed.
- If school attendance does not improve, the school may follow Staffordshire County Councils Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for persistent absence.

### **Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued**

Please also refer to Staffs County Council [Penalty-Notice-Code-of-Conduct-July-24-FINAL.pdf \(staffordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Parents/carers have the legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time, properly dressed, with the correct equipment and ready to learn. Parents may be prosecuted if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually. This will be done under

the 1996 Education Act, Section 444. It aims to ensure that parents carry out their duty to secure suitable education for their children. If a child is in the care of foster carers or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, education welfare services and social services where such a child's attendance is irregular.

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if one of the following criteria is met:

- There is unauthorised absence of least 10 sessions (each school day contains two sessions) this may comprise of any unauthorised absence or late arrival at school or alternative provision over a rolling period of 10 school weeks, excluding school holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
- If in an individual case the LA believes a penalty notice is appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue a penalty notice before the 10-session threshold is met. In such instances there must be at least 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in term time not authorised by the head teacher over a period of 10 rolling school weeks or any period of leave more than the period authorised by the head teacher.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An "excluded child" is one who has been excluded/suspended from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in the care of the Local Authority with whom other interventions will be used.

A session is equivalent to half a day in school.

Other conditions.

- Only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate as detailed below.
- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In this case where the criteria to issue a penalty notice is met for a third time within 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

- In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child.



- All Penalty Notices are entered onto a database maintained by the Local Authority to ensure that no duplicate Penalty Notices are issued.

Please note:

Where the Penalty Notice is requested from a school in response to a leave of absence (holiday) related unauthorised absence or is in relation to an offence under section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the formal warning letter and 20-day improvement period will not apply.

All Penalty Notices are entered onto a database maintained by Families First to ensure that no duplicate Penalty Notices are issued.

Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised persistent absence / lateness will be restricted to one notice/ warning per parent of a pupil per academic year.

### **Payment of Penalty Notices**

For a **First** offence the Penalty Notice fine would be: -

- £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £160 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.

For a **Second** offence within 3-years of the first penalty notice being issued, the penalty notice fine would be:

- £160 per parent, per child if paid between 28 days.

Following the second offence **every new offence within the 3-year period, will be prosecuted** under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996. I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is **£1,000 per parent, per child**. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

### **Non-payment of Penalty Notices**

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the Penalty Notice and will trigger the fast-track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

### **Elective Home Education**

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child then we will inform the Local Authority of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register. Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record. Prior to making a decision to Elective Home Educate, Parents are requested to contact Staffordshire County Councils Elective Home Education department.

### **Summary**

It is vital to a child's progress that they attend school as often as possible and that they are on time. There are strong and proven links between pupil attendance and educational

achievement. Attendance of less than 95% (equivalent to 9.5 days or more absence in a school year) has been shown to compromise pupil attainment. An attendance of 90% is equivalent to missing 19 days or nearly 4 weeks from school in a year. Whilst we are a primary school, statistics show that only 10% of pupils who are persistently absent from school achieve 5 A\*-C grades at GCSE/the equivalent on the 1-9 scale grades.

**Impact of absence:**

- 90% attendance = 19 days off school
- 85% attendance = 29 days off school (a whole half term!)
- 80% attendance = 38 days off school
- 70% attendance = 57 days off school (a whole term!)

**Impact of lateness:**

Over a school year –

- 5 minutes late every day = 3 days absent
- 15 minutes every day = 10 days absent
- 30 minutes late every day = 19 days absent

If parents have any concerns relating to attendance or lateness that they wish to discuss, they should contact Mrs Purcell OR Miss Hissey in the first instance. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as a high level of attendance as possible. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

175 NON SCHOOL DAYS A YEAR					
175 days to spend on visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments					
190 school days in a year	10 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence = Half a term missed	38 days absence	47 days absence
190 days of school	180 days of school	171 days of school	152 days of school	152 days of school	143 days of school
100%	96%	90%	85%	80%	70%
GOOD Best chance of success		WORRYING Less chance of success. Harder to make progress		SERIOUS CONCERNS Not fair on your child. Possible Court action.	



APPENDIX 1  
TEMPLATE LETTER (leave in term time)

Dear (Both parents should receive individually named letters)

**CHILDS NAME / DOB**

Thank you for your leave of absence request informing us that **CHILD** will be absent from school from **ABSENCE DATES**.

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore, students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

I have considered your application very carefully. Although I understand the reason for your request, I am unable to approve leave of absence in this instance, as I believe the circumstances are not exceptional or in line with school policy. **Therefore, your child's absence from school during this period has been recorded as Unauthorised Absence and will be recorded in the attendance register with the "G" code.**

As a school we are obliged to inform you that you may be subject to a Penalty Notice if your child's absence from school is unauthorised. This is in line with Staffordshire County Councils Code of Conduct and the "Working Together to Improve School attendance" statutory guidance (effective 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024). The penalties for unauthorised leave of absence in term time will be:

For a **First** offence the Penalty Notice fine would be: -

- £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £160 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.

For a **Second** offence within 3-years of the first penalty notice being issued, the penalty notice fine would be:

- £160 per parent, per child if paid between 28 days.

Following the second offence **every new offence within the 3-year period, will be prosecuted** under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996. I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is **£1,000 per parent, per child**. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Our key priority is to ensure that your child is as successful as possible and can achieve their full potential.

I would hope that upon reflection you are able to support this decision in line with the Local Authority and Government policy, that leave should be planned for the 13 weeks school holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher



APPENDIX 2  
TEMPLATE LETTER (suspected leave in term time)

Parents address

Dear (both parents should receive an individual copy)

**CHILDS NAME / DOB**

We have reason to believe that **CHILDS NAME** absences during **DATES** were due to unrequested leave. The reason for this is because: (select which is appropriate or enter your own)

- School CALLED & RECEIVED A FOREIGN DIAL TONE,
- School CALLED YOU & YOU INFORMED US YOU WERE ON HOLIDAY,
- CHILD TOLD TEACHER,
- HOME VISITS COMPLETED NO ANSWER

As a school we want to make every effort to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. Where no reason for absence is provided within 5 school

days or the school is not satisfied that the reason given is legitimate the school is required to amend the pupil's attendance to be recorded as unauthorised.

We understand that you may wish to offer an alternative explanation for your child's absence. We will, therefore, allow you 5 school days from the date of this letter to provide evidence to us that supports a legitimate reason for the absence. **If we do not receive appropriate evidence, by this time, then we will continue to code your child's absence as an unauthorised.**

As a school we are obliged to inform you that you may be subject to a Penalty Notice if your child's absence from school is unauthorised. This is in line with Staffordshire County Councils Code of Conduct and the "Working Together to Improve School attendance" statutory guidance (effective 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024). The penalties for unauthorised leave of absence in term time will be:

For a **First** offence the Penalty Notice fine would be:-

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Following the second offence **every new offence within the 3-year period, will be prosecuted** under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996. I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is **£1,000 per parent, per child**. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Our key priority is to ensure that your child is as successful as possible and can achieve his full potential.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

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