

Attendance Policy



Policy was reviewed: November 2021
Signed Governors: J. Anderson
Signed Headteacher: M.Battersby
Next Review Date: Sept 22

Loving God and each other
We work together to be the best we can be

Overview

Children are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have and we will endeavour to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support regular attendance. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

There is a relationship between attendance of pupils and their development, attainment and progress.

St Silas Primary Academy is committed to promoting good attendance as part of its dedication to ensure quality educational provision to give its pupils the best possible start in life.

The Education Act 1996 states that:

S.576:

“Meaning of “parent”.

In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, “parent”, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person -

- (a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or
- (b) who has care of him.”

S.7:

“Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

S.444:

“Offence: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupils. If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.”

Responsibilities

The responsibility for giving strategic direction to attendance is led by the **governing body**. This will include monitoring, reporting, reviewing and planning for attendance, developing a policy, promoting an ethos of good attendance and setting any targets.

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team will ensure that the governing body’s objectives are met by the effective management of attendance and report to the governing body in relation to this. Managing attendance will include: evaluating whole school data, surfacing trends, and attendance of defined groups, to enable

planning of possible interventions; and considering individual cases of concern, to determine any appropriate interventions.

School staff are responsible to ensure they promote the school's ethos, set an example of attendance and punctuality, and enable the school to keep accurate records of attendance for individual students.

Parents/Carers have responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.

Pupils have the responsibility to be on time for lessons and ready to learn.

The Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to inform all members of our school communities of the following:

- How the school encourages and enables good attendance
- How the school monitors and reviews attendance
- How the school monitors punctuality and lateness
- Authorised and unauthorised absences
- Leave of absence in term time
- Why attendance and punctuality matter

Encouraging and Enabling Good Attendance

The most vital part of encouraging good attendance is to ensure that the school is a place to which the children want to come: that the school is a place where the children are treated with respect and feel valued; a place where their needs are recognised and are being addressed; a place where all children can experience success within a rich, relevant and diversified curriculum.

It is clear that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. From the outset, parents are encouraged to take an active interest in the work of the School and to build and support their children's enthusiasm for attending St Silas Primary School.

All staff make children aware of the importance of good attendance and ensure children are praised for it.

Each child's attendance record is shared with the parents as part of annual written reports and during parent consultations. Individual records of attendance are kept and are passed onto subsequent schools.

Monitoring and Reviewing Attendance

The school will consider annually, in accordance with its support needs in relation to attendance, whether it wishes to purchase a Service Level Agreement from Blackburn with Darwen's Inclusion Officer. When needed, the school seeks advice

from the Inclusion Officer on attendance matters.

The school will log conversations with parents about attendance to assist in the monitoring of attendance and the offering of support.

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil. The school will ensure that its staff receive appropriate training and support to appropriately use attendance codes in line with DfE guidance and best practice.

To enable the appropriate coding of attendance or the authorisation of absence, the school may request additional information or evidence, eg. in relation to medical appointments or illness. (Medical evidence may include: an appointment letter, a GP appointment card signed / stamped by a receptionist, a prescription, prescribed medication.)

Regular checks on attendance are carried out by all class teachers. The Attendance Registers are completed twice each day, at the start of the morning session and again in the afternoon. Registers are checked by Administrative Staff.

All absences and persistent lateness are investigated. When the register closes the Administrative Staff check the messages and operate 'first day calling' for those pupils absent with no reason given. If there is no answer from the primary contact's number, the second contact's number will be tried for safeguarding purposes.

Attendance data is held electronically on the Progresso Management Information System and is accessible by the Head teacher, Senior Leadership Team and Administrative Staff who are able to interrogate data on individual children and provide comprehensive attendance records.

The Headteacher monitors the attendance of pupils each half term. They receive regular attendance briefings, each half term, from the Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance. The flow diagram and letters appended, outline the school's approach for monitoring and enabling attendance.

Returns of school data are made termly to the Department for Education (DfE) and benchmark data exists to compare our school within local and national contexts.

From September 2022, the school will set attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and Governors at the first Full Board meeting of the school year. Targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years.

Safeguarding and Vulnerable Children

The school believes that every child has the right to attend school regularly. Sometimes parents need support to enable their children to attend regularly. The school will support parents with this in a positive way. The school identifies vulnerable children and monitors their attendance daily. Ensuring children are in school is a major part of our safeguarding culture.

Punctuality and Lateness

The Headteacher monitors lateness of pupils as being punctual for school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time, where they are welcomed at the main school entrance by The Headteacher and/ or Senior Leaders. The school opens at 8:30a.m. and children go straight to class where they are greeted by their teacher. School begins at 8:40a.m.

In the morning, registration is called at 8.40a.m. and again at the start of the afternoon session for all classes. Registers will close at ten minutes after registration times. Any pupil that arrives after 8:50a.m. will be marked as 'late' unless the school has previously acknowledged the reason for their late arrival into school.

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the St Silas Primary School Pupil and Family Wellbeing Co-ordinator will make contact with parents/carers in the first instance. If the concerns persist, the Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance will write to the parents/carers using the appended letter about punctuality, stating the total minutes lost learning time over a determined period.

If there is still no improvement, the Headteacher will arrange a meeting with the parent/ carer. Should the child's attendance fail to improve, fixed penalty notices may be issued.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

The DfE recognises the importance of regular attendance and it is a requirement for the Headteacher to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised. The final decision is made by the Headteacher.

Wherever possible parents are expected to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time.

If a child is absent from school for any reason the parent/ carer must inform the school in person, in writing, or by telephone as soon as possible of the absence and the reason for it. Such calls are always logged and the class teacher informed.

Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school received no reason/explanation, or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

The Headteacher **will not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.

Parents **do not** have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time.

The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.

Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice if the child is absent from school during that period for more than five days.

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Inclusion Officer at Blackburn with Darwen Local Authority.

Blackburn with Darwen Local Authority have the right to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with Blackburn with Darwen’s Non School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

<https://www.blackburn.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-attendance/schools-discretionary-leave-absence-during-term-time>

It is important to note, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 per child if paid within 21 days).

Why Attendance and Punctuality Actual Matters

Across one school year:

- Less than 5 days absence = 97.3% attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 92.6% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 89.4% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 84.2% attendance

If a child achieves 80% attendance, this means that they have missed approximately 39 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

Children Missing In Education (CMIE)

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to the Inclusion Officer at Blackburn with Darwen Local Authority.

Reasonable steps to be taken by school staff include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts (parents are asked to provide a minimum of two emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and also for other emergency purposes).

- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- Possible home visits
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts
- Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the pupil/family

All contacts and outcomes to be recorded on the pupil's file.

In Conclusion

It is our belief that good attendance and punctuality is at the heart of a child's progress and is, therefore, fundamental to our school's success.

St Silas Primary School greatly appreciates parental support to reduce the total amount of days lost due to holidays. The School is committed to working in partnership with parents to enable all children to reach their academic potential and to support their social development and for this to happen individual attendance needs to be as high as possible and we all need to play our part.

Appendix 1

I'm writing to express my concern at recent high levels of absence from school.

[His/her] current attendance has fallen to [percentage]. Falling below 95% attendance will likely have an impact on [his/her] academic achievement.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help [him/her] to address gaps in learning due to absence.

Please contact the school office on 01254 698447 as soon as you can so you can arrange to discuss this matter with the pupil wellbeing officer.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Attendance Lead

Appendix 2

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] continued high levels of absence from school. The school has contacted you on several occasions expressing its concern about [name's] high levels of non-attendance.

[His/her] current attendance has fallen to [percentage] and is impacting on [his/her] academic achievement.

Whilst we acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different, we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child and this requires regular attendance in school. The national average for attendance is 96%.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help [him/her] to address gaps in learning due to absence. In order to do this we will be undertaking regular home visits if your child is absent.

We would now like you to attend a meeting with [attendance lead] on [date and time] to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Attendance Lead

Appendix 3

I'm writing to express my deep concern at [name's] continued high levels of absence from school. St Silas school has contacted you on several occasions through phones and letters expressing its concern about [name's] very high levels of non-attendance, but this has failed to improve.

[His/her] current attendance has now fallen to [percentage] and is greatly impacting on [his/her] academic achievement and social and personal development.

Whilst we acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different, we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child and this requires regular attendance in school. The national average for attendance is 96%, the percentage figure considered to be persistent absence in school is 90%.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the whole year is essential for their success and fulfilment. Good attendance at school is a child's right and the expectation is that parents ensure that this right is upheld. We therefore have to take appropriate action. In addition, the school has the authority to issue fixed penalty notices in collaboration with the local authority.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help [him/her] to address gaps in learning due to absence.

We would now like you to attend a meeting with [Headteacher] on [date and time] to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

Appendix 4

I'm writing to you because [name] has been late to school [number] times in [timeframe].

[He/she] arrived at school after the register had closed on the following dates:

[date]

[date]

[date]

[He/she] also arrived at school late (but before the register had closed) on the following dates:

[date]

[date]

[date]

The school day begins promptly at 8:40am and registration closes at 8:50am. Arriving promptly makes sure that your child doesn't miss work, and that disruption to the teacher and other pupils is minimised. Persistent lateness can lead to a significant loss in learning time.

Persistent lateness can result in a penalty notice. The school can request that the local authority issues a penalty notice related to lateness.

We're committed to working with families to make sure every pupil gets the support they need. We would therefore like to arrange a meeting to discuss how we can work with you to help improve [name's] punctuality.

Please contact the school office on [number] to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Attendance Lead

Appendix 5

Procedures for non-attendance in school

Step 1 – Letter 1

For those pupils who have been identified for the first time with attendance falling below 95%, a copy of Letter 1 (Appendix 1) is sent to the parents/carers and copied to the School Office for Inclusion in the Child's File

Should the pupil's attendance improve, but the improvement fails to be sustained, a further copy of Letter 1 may be sent at a later date.

Step 2 – Telephone call to parents/carers

If attendance does not improve and falls below 93%, parents/carers will be contacted by phone by the Pupil and Family Wellbeing Co-ordinator (PFWC) to advise them of this and to see if there are any issues that the school can help them with. They will also be reminded about the importance of regular school attendance and any immediate issues will be discussed. (An internal CAF may be set up at this stage.) Should attendance not improve parents/carers will be contacted again and if necessary a monitoring system will be put in place. The child is placed on our vulnerable children's register (for attendance) which is then monitored daily.

Step 3 – Second Telephone call to parents/carers

If attendance does not improve and falls below 90%, parents/carers will be contacted by phone by the PFWC to inform them of this. They will be reminded about the importance of regular school attendance and any immediate issues will be discussed.

The PFWC will discuss barriers to the pupils' regular school attendance and identify any possible solutions e.g. CAF. Medical evidence will be required for any further absences to be recorded using the 'I' code. This call will be documented and parents will receive an email documenting what interventions have been agreed.

Any child whose attendance is below 90% will have a home visit on the first day they are absent, this will be repeated as necessary.

Step 4 - Letter 2 From Attendance Lead setting up a formal meeting

Following the sending of Letter 1 and the telephone call, should the pupil's attendance fail to improve within a two week period, or should it fall to a lower level, parents/carers will be sent Letter 2 (Appendix 3). The parents/carers will be reminded that it is their, "legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually.

Step 5 - A Formal Parent Contract Meeting with the SLT member with responsibility for attendance.

They will be invited to attend a Formal Parent Contract Meeting with the SLT member with responsibility for attendance to discuss issues that may be affecting the pupil's attendance and identify how the school can help address this. This meeting will be formally documented (Appendix 4) and parents/carers will again be reminded that it is their, "legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually."

During the meeting, an improvement over a four week monitoring period will be expected. The SLT member with responsibility for attendance will sign this formal agreement and all parents/carers present at the meeting will be asked to sign that they understand and agree to this.

This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the attendance letters folder on the school network/child' file.

Step 6 - A Formal Parent Contract Meeting with the Headteacher

They will be invited to attend a Formal Parent Contract Meeting with the Headteacher to discuss issues that may be affecting the pupil's attendance and identify how the school can help address this. This meeting will be formally documented (Appendix 4) and parents/carers will yet again be reminded that it is their, "legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually." During the meeting, the Headteacher will indicate that should their child's attendance not improve over a eight week period then the Local Authority have the right to enforce fixed penalty notices for attendance and the school will be recommending that this is issued.

All parents/carers present at the meeting will be asked to sign that they understand and agree to this.

This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the attendance letters folder on the school network/child' file.

Step 7 – Request for Second Parent Contract Meeting or Penalty Notice

Following the formal Parent Contract meeting, should the pupil's attendance fail to improve within the agreed eight week monitoring period, or should it fall to a lower level and no satisfactory explanation for the absences has been provided, then the school may request:

- a. A further Parent Contract Meeting to discuss extending the monitoring period
- b. A penalty notice for non-attendance form will be completed and sent to Blackburn with Darwen's Legal Panel for discussion.

Blackburn with Darwen's Inclusion Officer will be informed and may write to parents/carers requesting their attendance at a Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) meeting.