



**USWORTH COLLIERY**  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

# Attendance Policy

2024

Designated members of staff: Alison Forster & Gina Sagers

Chair of Governors: Alison Logan

## **Introduction**

Regular and punctual attendance is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. Pupils will be encouraged to aspire to achieve 100% attendance, although we understand that some absences may be unavoidable. In such cases, Parents/Carers should contact the school promptly on the first day of absence to explain the reason and provide an estimate of how long the absence is likely to last. If the absence continues over a weekend, Parents/Carers should again contact the school on Monday morning to advise that the absence is continuing.

## **Organisation and Procedures**

Lessons start at **8.55 am**, and it is important that all pupils enter the school building between **8.45 am** and **8.55 am** when the doors are open. If a child misses the doors, they must enter via the School Office. If this occurs between 8.55 am and 9.00 am, the office staff will send them to their classrooms without a late slip. If a child is late and misses registration at 9.00 am, they will be marked late in the register. The office staff will input a late mark in the Pupil Asset system, including the number of minutes late and the reason provided for lateness. If they arrive after 9.30 am, the lateness will be recorded as an **unauthorised absence** unless there has been prior arrangement or communication with the office staff (e.g., in the event of a medical appointment).

All messages regarding school absences should be left on the allocated absence voicemail listed in the telephone options when calling the main school office (0191 417 8888). Alternatively, parents can inform the office of a school absence via the dedicated absence email inbox at [absence@usworthcolliery.co.uk](mailto:absence@usworthcolliery.co.uk)

When leaving a message, please ensure that the following information is clearly stated:

1. The full name of the child/ren that will be absent and their class (e.g., Joseph Daniels, 5EP)
2. Your relationship with that child (e.g., Joseph's mum)
3. The reason for their absence (e.g., unwell with sickness)
4. When you expect the child to return to school (e.g., will be absent for 48 hours and return on Thursday)

This information will then be electronically recorded on your child's attendance record and will be useful for future reference in communications and updates on your child's attendance.

## **Parental Responsibility**

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day of absence, providing the reason for the absence and an estimate of how long the child will be away from school. If no contact is made regarding a child's absence, the school will follow these steps to safeguard children and their families:

- If contact is not made by the Parent/Carer when a pupil does not attend school, they will be contacted by the school office through text message and/or email.
- If there is no response to this message, the office staff will call to investigate the reason for the absence.

- If no response is received explaining the absence, Gina Saggars (Family Liaison Officer) may conduct a home visit as part of the school's safeguarding protocols.
- If there is still no contact following these actions and there has been no communication regarding the child within 48 hours, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. The school may then consider additional action to ensure the well-being of the child, which may include contacting the police or children's services.

For absences longer than one day, parents must contact the school office every morning during the ongoing absence to inform them that the child's absence is continuing and that the child should not be expected at school that day. Absences will be followed up in the manner described above each day, even if the school has already received a message or spoken with a parent about the absence the previous day. This is in line with robust safeguarding protocols. The school cannot assume that a child is still unwell without confirmation from a parent. Dental and medical appointments should be made outside the school day whenever possible. If it is unavoidable for a child to have an appointment during school hours, the school office should be notified and provided with written evidence of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected/returned to school. Appointments made urgently by telephone should be supported by an appointment card on the pupil's return to school.

The school finishes at 3:15 pm. Early collections without supporting evidence of the need or without prior arrangements being agreed upon are viewed as absences in the same way as lateness.

### **Term-Time Holidays**

Due to Government Legislation, the school may no longer authorise family holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that validate why the holiday should be taken during this period. If the Parent/Carer believes they have exceptional circumstances, they must provide these reasons in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then decide whether to authorise the absence, and the Parent/Carer will be informed in writing of the decision.

The Headteacher will consider the following:

- **Extenuating circumstances:** For example, one day leave for the wedding day of the parent/carer.
- **Pupil's record of attendance.**
- **Length of leave requested.**
- **Timing of the leave:** Leave should never be taken and will not be authorised during periods of assessment, such as the SATs.

In the case of unauthorised term-time leave, the letter sent by the Headteacher refusing the leave application will be regarded as a formal warning to the Parent/Carer. If the Parent/Carer decides to remove their child from school for the holiday despite the notification of the leave being unauthorised, the school will request the Local Authority to consider issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice in accordance with Sunderland City Council's Code of Conduct.

Please note, penalty notices are issued to each parent for each child. Each case is judged on its own merit based on the school's attendance policy.

### **Our Practice**

Regular attendance is encouraged by the school providing a caring and welcoming learning environment, which motivates and supports pupils and helps them feel safe. Our Family

Liaison Officer works with families to promote early intervention for attendance issues and collaborates closely with a range of external agencies and providers to ensure comprehensive support for children and their families.

Senior Management holds regular pastoral meetings to discuss any children where attendance is an ongoing concern and where this may directly impact progress and achievement. To encourage good attendance, the class with the highest attendance each week is celebrated in assemblies and receives the attendance trophy to display in their classroom. This achievement is also highlighted in weekly newsletters. House Points can be awarded to classes for excellent attendance at the end of each term and year. Additionally, classes with the highest attendance for a half-term are rewarded with a non-uniform day.

We are continuously considering incorporating other motivational rewards for outstanding and improved attendance. At the end of the year, children who achieve 97% or higher attendance receive a special award, such as a trip or prize, while those with 100% attendance receive an additional special award or certificate.

If a pupil's attendance or punctuality raises a cause for concern, the Parents/Carers will be informed of this in writing, and the child's attendance will be monitored closely.

If necessary, support meetings will be requested where there are ongoing concerns. Relevant support will be provided and individual incentives will be established. Should there be no improvement in the pupil's attendance, the case will progress, and Parents/Carers will be invited to an attendance review meeting to discuss the reasons for absence and to agree targets for improvement. This will involve the Headteacher, Family Liaison Officer, and any other relevant member of staff or governor.

During this meeting, the underlying reasons for continued poor attendance will be explored and appropriate support will be discussed, planned, and implemented. Parents/carers will also be required during this meeting to agree and sign an attendance contract which will outline the targets/expectations for future attendance.

Failure to improve attendance from this point will result in the concern moving to the Local Authority stage three level and being taken out of the school's hands by the LA Attendance Team Manager. Persistent absence may result in the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices and court prosecution. Please refer to Appendix A (Flowchart of Attendance Procedures & Stages) in this policy which demonstrates these stages. (Appendix there now)

### **Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)**

#### **Updated Information on Fixed Penalty Notices for School Attendance**

From 1 September 2014 the Sunderland Local Authority has been implementing the use of fixed penalty notice (FPNs) for unauthorised absences from schools where such absences meet specific criteria. These criteria are detailed in the Sunderland Local Code of Conduct, which is available on the school's website.

## **What is the Penalty Notice?**

Under existing legislation, parents or Carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are unauthorised. A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution, enabling parents to discharge potential liabilities for conviction without appearing in court. The payment of the notice secures an improvement in the child's attendance.

## **Costs and Payment:**

Payment within 21 days: **£60 (increasing to £80 from August 2024)**

Payment within 28 days: **£120 (increasing to £160 from August 2024)**

If the penalty notice is not paid in full within 28 days, the Local Authority will commence proceedings in the magistrates' court for the original offence of poor attendance. Conviction can attract fines up to £1,000, or in severe cases, up to £2,500, and/or a term of imprisonment.

## **When are Penalty Notices Issued?**

**Penalty notices may be issued in the following situations.**

- **As an alternative to court prosecution.**
- **When the parent is judged to be capable of securing their child's regular attendance, but is unwilling to do so.**
- **At an earlier stage than court prosecution, to prevent entrenched attendance problems.**

Parents will receive a written warning before a penalty notice is issued, detailing the extent of the child's absence and allowing 15 school days to improve attendance. During this **period**, the child must have no unauthorised absences.

## **Appeals:**

There is no statutory right to appeal once a penalty notice is issued. However, parents can make representations upon receiving warnings.

## **New Rules Effective August 2024**

From August 2024, the government is introducing new regulations to improve school attendance, including sharing daily attendance registers across the education sector to help identify and support children at risk of persistent absence. The cost of fines will also increase to £80 if paid within 21 days, and £160 if paid within 28 days. A maximum of two fines per parent within a three-year period will be enforced, after which further actions such as a parenting order or prosecution may be considered (**GOV.UK**)

## **Importance of Regular Attendance**

Research has shown a clear link between regular school attendance and academic achievement. Frequent absences can hinder a child's ability to keep up with the curriculum and negatively impact long-term educational outcomes.

## **Support Available**

Parents are encouraged to contact ***Mrs. Sagers (Family Liaison Officer) or the Headteacher*** at the earliest stage to address any attendance issues. The school, along with other relevant agencies, can provide specialist support to resolve attendance problems and avoid penalty notices.

For further information and support regarding school attendance, please visit the Sunderland City Council Attendance page - <https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/12820/School-Attendance> or contact the Attendance team at 0191 561 5601. You can also refer to the UK Government's guidance on school attendance - <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence> .

By working together, we can ensure the best possible outcomes for your child, address issues and barriers to maintaining regular attendance, and avoid enforcement actions such as fixed penalty notices.

## **Attendance**

### **School Actions Following Non-Attendance**

#### **1. First-day response:**

- Automated texts, emails, or phone calls will be sent or made. Home visits may be conducted as a safeguarding measure if no contact is made before the end of the school day.

#### **2. Written Communication:**

- Parents will be advised in writing about the level of non-attendance and their legal responsibility under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- Letters should be addressed to each individual parent, include the parents' home addresses, be signed and dated by the headteacher, and include an offer of support or an Early Help Referral.

#### **3. Telephone Contact:**

- Record the date and time of contact along with any agreed actions or outcomes.

#### **4. Meetings with Parents:**

- Discuss and seek help for any difficulties, such as curriculum issues, performance, progress, and behaviour.
- Investigate and record any school-based issues claimed by the pupil (e.g., bullying).
- Record discussions and action points agreed by all parties with a review date. Prepare a parental contract setting out the expectations of the school, family, and pupil, including realistic expectations for improvement and time-limited targets.
- Confirm decisions in writing to parents and review actions and outcomes on the agreed date.

#### **5. Additional Needs Assessment:**

- Determine if the child or parents have any additional needs and if an assessment has been undertaken through the Early Help Assessment Framework.
6. **Contact Supporting Agencies:**
- Engage with supporting agencies/services involving the family.
7. **Efforts to Make Contact:**
- If the parent fails to respond to texts or calls, the school should attempt to contact the emergency contacts provided by the parents. The school should also write to the parents to confirm that contact details are correct.
8. **Reporting Children Missing from Education (CME):**
- If the pupil has not been seen in school despite attempts to make contact and the family is known to be living at the address, the pupil should not be reported as CME. The school can consider a request for the Northumbrian Police to make welfare visits. If there are safeguarding concerns, the school should follow its safeguarding procedures.
9. **Referral to Attendance Team:**
- Before referring to the attendance team, the school must have:
    - Fully investigated the reasons for absence.
    - Met with parents through home visits or meetings at school.
    - Implemented strategies to improve attendance, including a parenting contract.
    - Considered or completed an Early Help referral.
    - Informed parents in writing that a referral is being made to the Local Authority for formal legal action, which may lead to a Penalty Notice fine or prosecution in the Magistrate Court.

Author: G. Siggers

Agreed Date: June 2024

Implementation Date: June 2024

Review Date: Annually

Name: Alison Forster  
Head Teacher

Signed: *AForster*

Date: June 24

Name: Alison Logan...  
Chair of Governors

Signed: *ALogan*

Date: June 24

# APPENDIX \_A

## Procedural Flow Chart.

