



Attendance Policy

2025

Designated members of staff: Alison Forster & Lauren Thubron

Co-Chair of Governors: Jonathan Chicken & Rosey Walker

Approved by: Full Governing Body

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**Next review due
by:** October 2027

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 but we appreciate that some absence may be unavoidable. Where this is the case, 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. Contact with school should be made each morning the child is absent. If the absence continues over a weekend, Parents/Carers should again contact the school on the Monday morning to advise that the absence is continuing.

1) ORGANISATION AND PROCEDURES

Lessons start at **9.00am** and it is important that all pupils enter the school building between **8.45am and 9.00am** when the doors are open. If a child misses the doors, then they must enter via the School Office. If this is between 9.00am and 9.05am, the office staff will send them along to their classrooms without a late slip. **If a child is late so as to miss registration at 9.00am, they will be marked late in the register.** A late mark will be inputted in the register on the Pupil Asset system by the office staff which will include the number of minutes late and the reason provided for lateness. **If they arrive after 9.30am, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence** unless there has been a prior arrangement or communication with office staff (e.g. in the event of a medical appointment).

All messages pertaining to 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 - absence@usworthcolliery.co.uk. When leaving a message, Parents/Carers should ensure the information below is clearly stated in the contact:

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

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

2) PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to contact the school on the first day of absence, providing school with the reason for the absence and an estimation of how long the child will be away from school.

In the event of no contact being made relating to child absence, the school will follow these steps to safeguard the 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 by text message and / or email.
- If there is no response to this message, a call will be made by office staff investigating the reason for absence, they may also attempt to contact the emergency contacts listed.
- If no response is received giving reasons for absence, then Lauren Thubron (Family Liaison Officer and Deputy Safeguarding Lead) will conduct a home visit as a part of the schools 'Safeguarding protocol.
- Where there is no contact following these actions and there is no contact in relation to the child within 48 hours, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and the school may consider additional action to ensure the wellbeing of the child. This may include contact with the police or children services.

For absences longer than one day, parents must contact the school office every subsequent morning of the ongoing absence to advise that their child's absence is continuing and that the child should not be expected at school that day. Absences will be followed up in the above manner each day, even if parents/carers have been spoken to or if a message from a parent/carer has been received the previous day. This is in line with our robust safeguarding purposes. We cannot assume that a child is still unwell without having this confirmed by a parent.

Dental and medical appointments should, whenever possible, be made outside of the school day. If an appointment during school hours is unavoidable, the school office should be notified and provided with written evidence of the date and time of appointment and when the child will be collected/returned to school. Appointments that are made urgently by telephone should be supported by an appointment card upon the pupil's return to school.

School finishes at 15.15pm, early collections without supporting evidence of the need or arrangements being agreed are also viewed as absence the same way lateness is.

3) TERM-TIME HOLIDAYS

Due to Government Legislation, the school will no longer authorise family holidays during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances validating the holiday being taken during this time. If the parent/carer feels that they can give an exceptional circumstance, then they must provide their reasons in writing to the Headteacher. The extenuating circumstances include, for example, one days leave for the wedding day of parent/carer.

The Headteacher will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence and the parent/carer will be informed in writing of the decision.

The HeadTeacher will take into consideration:

- The pupil's record of attendance.
- The length of the leave requested.
- The 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 that is sent by the Headteacher refusing a term- time leave application will be regarded as formal notification that the leave has been refused. If the parent/carer then takes the decision 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 will be judged under its own merit based upon our school's attendance policy.*

4) OUR PRACTICE

Regular attendance is encouraged by the school, providing a caring and welcoming learning environment, which motivates and supports pupils, and helps them to feel safe. Our Family Liaison Officer works with families to promote early intervention for attendance issues and works closely with a range of external agencies and providers to ensure a depth of support for children and their families.

The Pastoral Team have regular meetings and highlight for discussion any children for whom attendance is an ongoing concern and where this may be directly impacting upon progress and achievement.

Maintaining good attendance is promoted weekly in assemblies, through displays, in the newsletter and on Facebook. Certificates are issued for good attendance at the end of each term and at the end of the year. Stickers and a trophy are awarded in assembly to the class with the highest attendance each week.

If a child's attendance drops below 90%, they are added to the 'requires medical evidence' list which is updated monthly. Whilst on this list, parents must provide medical evidence for

each day their child is absent due to illness. The Family Liaison Officer informs parents when their child is added to the list and advises on how their children can be removed.

To encourage children and families achieve 100% attendance each week, any child who attends school for the full week is entered into a draw. Each week one lucky winner and their family is awarded with a £10 Just Eat Voucher. Children with 100% attendance each term can work towards their Bronze, Silver and Gold attendance certificates

If a pupil's attendance or punctuality raises 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. The relevant support will be implemented and individual incentives established. Should there be no improvement in the pupil's attendance, the case will be progressed and parents/carers 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 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.

5) FIXED PENALTY NOTICES (FPNs)

From 1st September 2014, Sunderland Local Authority will be using **Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)** for unauthorised absences from school where such absence meets the criteria. The criteria for issuing FPNs are contained in the Sunderland Local Code of Conduct, a copy of which can be found on the school website. A frequently asked questions response sheet has been prepared to assist parents in understanding how the scheme works, and this is also available on the school website.

There is much research that demonstrates the links between regular attendance at school and academic achievement – the more a pupil attends the more they can achieve. If a child has two weeks off or a number of odd one day absences from school over time, those days cannot be recovered, the learning is missed and the child is in danger of falling behind and not achieving their full potential.

Concerned parents should contact **Mrs. Thubron (Family Liaison Officer)** or the Headteacher at an early stage so that school can work together with families to resolve any attendance problems. There may be times when other agencies (e.g., Foundation of Light, CAMHS, Healthy Child Team) are able to offer specialist support. It is vital that parents/carers contact school at the earliest opportunity if their child appears unhappy about school. Our goal is a shared one in that we are working towards the best possible outcomes for each child and we take our safeguarding and attendance responsibilities very seriously. Working together we can ensure that we address issues and barriers that arise to avoid poor attendance and the enforcement of Fixed Penalty Notices.

Admissions

All requests for admissions into Reception are dealt with by the Schools Admissions Department at Sunderland City Council.

Admissions are made online via

<https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/schools-admissions-infant-junior-primary>

If parents / carers wish to transfer their child to another school during the school year they need to complete a 'School Transfer Application Form' for each child. This can be found online via

https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/media/19184/Primary-school-transfer-application-form-Sept-2021/pdf/Primary_School_Transfer_Form_-_from_Sept_2021.pdf?m=637660846715030000

Parent or Carers must complete section A, the current school must complete section B and then the new school completes section C.

If Usworth Colliery is the new school and the School Transfer Application Form has been handed to us, the prospective parent/carer must complete an admissions pack obtainable from the school office. The children and parents/carers will then be invited to look around the school and meet their prospective teachers.

For all admissions, Office staff must be shown, in person, an original **Full Birth Certificate** for each child. Staff will record the Birth Certificate Reference number (the reference number is located in the upper right-hand edge of the birth certificate) and the names of those with parental responsibility. If the child's certificate does not originate in the United Kingdom, office staff will ask to see the passport or alternative identification of the parent/carer and record both reference numbers.

Once the admissions forms have been returned to the office staff and the identifying information recorded then a start date can be agreed between school and parent / carer.

ATTENDANCE

School Actions following non-attendance will include:

1. First Day response to absence via automated texts, emails or phone calls. Home visits may be conducted as a safeguarding measure if contact is not made before end of school day.
2. Written Communication to the parent(s) to advise on the level of non-attendance and their legal responsibility in accordance with S7 of the Education Act 1996.
 - Letters should be:
 - addressed to each individual parent
 - include the parents' home address.
 - signed and dated by the Head teacher/Principal.
 - Include an offer of support or an Early Help Referral
3. Telephone contact – date and time of contact should be recorded along with any agreed actions or outcomes (general discussion).
4. Meeting with parent(s) to discuss and seek:
 - Personal perception of any difficulties, e.g., curriculum, performance, progress, behaviour (this list is not exhaustive).
 - Where the pupil claims their problems are school based (e.g., bullying or a relationship problem with a member of staff) it is important this is investigated, and the result of the investigation recorded on the pupil file.
 - Record of discussion and action points agreed by all parties and agreed review date. Prepare a parental contract between school/ /parents/pupil. The contract should set out the expectations placed on the school, family, and pupil. It should include realistic expectations with regards to improvement and the family/pupil's individual circumstances should be addressed within the contract. Time limited targets should have been set to illustrate ability to improve.
 - Confirm the decisions made in writing to the parent(s).
 - Review the actions and outcomes on the agreed date and respond to any issues that remain outstanding setting another review date if necessary.
5. Ascertain if the child or parents have any additional needs and if so an assessment of those needs have been undertaken through the Early Help Assessment Framework
6. Contact with supporting agencies/services involved with the family.
7. Where a parent fails to respond to text messages or phone calls it is imperative the school attempts to make contact. The school can contact the named emergency contacts (as detailed in Keeping Children Safe in Education) provided by the parent

to clarify the situation and/or correct contact details. School may also formally write to the parent to confirm the contact details held are correct.

8. If the pupil has not been seen in school, despite attempts by the school to make contact and the family are known to be living at the address; the pupil should not be reported as a Child Missing from Education (CME). The school can, following their own attempts to make a welfare visit, consider a request to Northumbrian Police. If school has safeguarding concerns, we will follow our safeguarding procedures.
9. Prior to referral to Attendance there is a mandatory requirement that the school will have, as a minimum, completed the following and this must be evidenced when completing the referral form:
 - Fully investigated the reasons for absence.
 - Met with parent(s) – by home visit and/or in a meeting at school.
 - Implemented strategies to improve attendance, including the offer of a parenting contract. Provide evidence of the support strategies offered.
 - Considered and/or completed an Early Help referral.
 - Informed parents in writing that a referral is being made to the Local Authority requesting formal legal action, and that ultimately this may lead to the issue of a Penalty Notice fine or prosecution in Magistrates Court.

Author: L.Thubron

Agreed Date: September 2025

Implementation Date:

Review Date: Annually

Name: Signed: Date:

Head Teacher

Name:Jonathan Chicken... Signed: Date:

Chair of Governors

Name:Rosie Walker... Signed: Date:

Chair of Governors