

School Attendance Policy



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**Requires approval
by Governing Body:** Yes

Southgate School: School Attendance Policy

Overview

Southgate School regards regular attendance as very important to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all pupils. Most of our pupils benefit from strong, established routines and are unsettled by disruption to those routines. There is a clear link between good attendance and high standards.

This policy is shared and signed by all the staff at Southgate School and shared on the school's website for all parents and carers to view. If you have any questions in relation to this policy, please email office@southgateschool.co.uk

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils or staff with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF INTENT

Southgate School regards regular attendance as very important to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all pupils. Most of our pupils benefit from strong, established routines and are unsettled by disruption to those routines. There is a clear link between good attendance and high standards. For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and every pupil should be at school on time, every day the setting is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The school's ethos encourages pupils to feel that their presence is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late.

We are committed to meeting our legal obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending school.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Promoting regular attendance and punctuality is everybody's responsibility – parents, carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

2.1 The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Safeguarding Governors oversee attendance within the remit of safeguarding. These roles are allocated yearly and are published within the minutes of the Governing Body.

2.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

2.3 The Pastoral and Intervention Manager

The school Pastoral and Intervention Manager:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to Senior Leaders
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed penalty notices

2.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3. ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Pupils must arrive in school by **9.15 am** on each school day, unless otherwise agreed with the Pastoral and Intervention Manager and SLT.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.15 am and will be kept open until 9:30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.30 pm and will be kept open until 1.00pm.

If a pupil is absent, parents/carers MUST contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence via

- **Email: office@southgateschool.co.uk**
- **Telephone: 01484 504544**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by calling, texting, emailing or contacting parent/carer through any other appropriate method
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, following First Day calling procedures. If no contact has been made to discuss the absence by 11:00am or if we are concerned, we may follow up with a home visit to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the family if we are concerned. We can also request the police to do a 'safe and well visit'
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

4. RECORDING ATTENDANCE

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made.
- The name of the person who made the amendment.

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance> for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by **9.00 am** or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

If a pupil is absent, parents/carers MUST contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence via

- **Email: office@southgateschool.co.uk**
- **Telephone: 01484 504544**

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school **in advance** of the appointment.

If a parent/carer needs to request a planned absence they parents/carers must contact school as soon as possible via

- **Email: office@southgateschool.co.uk**
- **Telephone: 01484 504544**

If the authenticity of the appointment is in doubt, the school may request that copies of letter, text or email are provided as a form of evidence.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

Poor punctuality also disrupts routines. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they not only miss work but also miss out on vital information and news for the day. Pupils that arrive late can also disrupt lessons and disrupt the learning of others.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed, will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed, will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Consideration will be given for pupils who travel to school via Kirklees School Transport and who are late for a reason due to school transport.

4.5 Reporting attendance to parents

We will report pupils' attendance to their parent/carer at parents' evenings, at the Annual EHCP Review and in the School Report. We will contact parents/carers immediately if we have concerns throughout the year.

5. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

5.1 Requesting approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Taking a pupil out of school except in agreed and authorised circumstances, will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may attract more formal interventions such as a penalty notice.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance days – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. 3 days are permitted within a 12-month period where a religion other than Christianity is practiced and those days are specifically set by the religious body and the day falls on a usual school day. (Please note, pilgrimage or performing Umrah are not 'religious observance' days and are not considered reasonable cause for a child to miss school).
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling

for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- There may be other 'exceptional circumstances' where the headteacher may grant term-time leave of absence
- Reduced-Time Timetable requests, where these are agreed to best meet the pupil's complex needs and with a clear aim of increasing attendance at school over time (see Section 6)

Exceptional Circumstances ARE NOT:

- Availability of cheap flights and holidays
- Parent/ Carer work commitments
- Dates overlapping with the beginning and end of a half term.
- Poor weather experienced during the school holidays
- Circumstances where children can be looked after by close family members.

Exceptional Circumstances Leave Request form must be completed if parents/carers need to take their child out of school. The Head Teacher will then consider whether leave will or will not be authorised.

The form can be requested by contacting the School Office:

- **Email: office@southgateschool.co.uk**
- **Telephone: 01484 504544**

Or, download and print from the school website:

<https://www.southgateschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Pupil-Absence-Request-Form.pdf>

Penalty Notices may be issued if an Exceptional Circumstances Leave Request form is not completed or if the request is not authorised but occurs anyway (See section 5.3)

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

We aim to work collaboratively with pupils, parents and carers to resolve any difficulties with attendance or punctuality at the earliest stage possible. Parents/carers are expected to work with the staff in resolving any attendance problems. The school, pupil, parent or carer may refer the pupil to the Attendance and Pupil Support Service for further support if needed or if they become a 'persistent absentee'.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the year. We understand there are exceptional circumstances. We will always see this as an interim arrangement where school and home, work to resolve the increase attendance over time. Any pupil that is seen to have reached the persistent absenteeism mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and parents/carers will be informed.

Persistent absenteeism pupils are closely tracked and monitored. The parents of pupils whose persistent absence is causing concern will be subject to an Action Plan and this will offer support and set clear targets and expectations. All persistent absenteeism pupils are automatically made known to the Local Authority Attendance and Pupil Support Service.

Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any pupil's educational prospects and we ask for parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

5.3 Legal sanctions

A penalty notice may be issued if the parents/carers have not sought permission from the school before taking their child out of school for a leave of absence in term-time or have continued to take their child out of school when the absences has been unauthorised.

The first penalty notice will be issued to the parent/carer who has allowed the absence. This is for £80 if it is paid within the first 21 days, increasing to £160 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

A second penalty notice issued to the same parent/carer 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.

There must be a minimum absence of 10 school sessions (this can be split over weekends or school holidays) before a penalty notice request is triggered.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as leave of absence taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the local authority commencing legal proceedings against parents/carers for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular school attendance. If found guilty, parents/carers may be fined up to £1,000.

Repeated offences of leave of absence may result in the matter being directly prosecuted in Kirklees Magistrates' court.

6. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

We take a positive approach to improving attendance. We will work in collaboration with pupils, parents and carers to understand the barriers to attendance and then put in place support to improve this.

Our approach is pupil-centred, and we understand in very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable and a range of other strategies to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example, some pupils come to us

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following a period of disengagement from schooling and need their resilience to be built up over time with a reduced-time timetable; some experience medical, health or mental health conditions and need their timetable to adjusted accordingly as part of a reintegration package. Each of these cases is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any support programme linked to attendance or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with different provision.

7. ATTENDANCE MONITORING

The Pastoral and Intervention Manager and Senior Leadership Team at our school monitor pupil absences on a weekly basis. The Headteacher regularly reports on attendance to the Governing Body.

Should attendance start to decline, we will work collaboratively and persistently with parents/carers to support them. We work hard to recognise small improvements that are made.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the Governing Body.

Southgate School collects and stores attendance data, which may be used for internal purposes. For example, to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those pupils identified as being in need of intervention and support

8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by a Senior Leader. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full Governing Board.