

Attendance, Punctuality and Absence Policy

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Signed by:

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Date: 25.03.2022

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Statement of Intent

Sharrow School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Good attendance and punctuality are vital if pupils are to achieve their maximum potential. Sharrow School is committed to working with parents / carers and pupils to ensure that each pupil benefits from the academic, personal and social opportunities available to them during their years with us.

The young child, however, is dependent upon the adults in his / her life to get them to school regularly and on time. The focus in both Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is to establish good habits and work with parent/ carers to improve attendance. In Key Stage 2 we continue to work with parent/ carers and start to develop 'self' responsibility in the children.

We are committed to:

- A whole school approach to attendance and a partnership relationship with parent / carers.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.

It is important for parents to understand that failure to ensure regular attendance at school of a registered pupil is an offence punishable by law. The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that parents fulfil their legal responsibility.

1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2021) 'Keeping children safe in education 2021'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2021) 'Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- The Sheffield Safeguarding Board Children Missing Education Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education and acting as early as possible to address patterns of absence.
- Reporting any children who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for more than 10 days without explanation to the Local Authority.
- Providing advice and support to school staff regarding attendance and punctuality issues.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Accurately marking registers in line with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.

- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The Attendance Officer / Admin Staff are responsible for:

- Maintaining accurate class registers in line with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended).
- Receiving phone calls and messages from parents/carers reporting pupil absences.
- Updating the registers with the appropriate codes for absence or lateness.
- Compiling daily lists of absentees and completing calls / sending text messages to parents who have not provided reasons for a child's absence.
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:
 - Registered at another school
 - Subject to a school attendance order that has been changed or revoked
 - Taken out of school for home education.
 - Moved too far away to travel to school
 - Had more than 20 days unauthorised absence or not returned following agreed leave of absence, and neither the school or the LA can locate them
 - Been permanently excluded.
 - Have health problems that prevent their attendance before ceasing to be of compulsory school age or they have died.
 - Have a custodial sentence of over 4 months

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending regularly, on time and ready to learn
- Ensuring they are prepared for the day with appropriate equipment e.g. PE kit
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.
- Reporting to the school office if they arrive after registration so they can be added to the register.
- Telling a member of staff if there is a problem which may prevent them attending school.

Parents are responsible for:

- Fulfilling their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly, on time and prepared for their day.
- Contacting the school on the first day their child is absent with details of the reasons for the absence.
- Arranging medical and dental appointments out of school times wherever possible
- Arranging holidays out of school time.
- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Speaking to relevant members of staff if they know of any problem which may prevent their child from attending school.

What parents / carers and pupils can expect from the school:

- A broad, balanced education that is dependent on regular attendance at school.
- Promotion of good attendance and punctuality at school, and regular encouragement.
- Efficient and accurate recording and monitoring of attendance.
- First day contact with parents / carers when absence is unexplained.
- Prompt action when a problem has been identified.

- Liaison with the local Multi Agency Support Team (MAST) to assist and support families where needed.
- Regular communication with parents / carers.
- Home visits if a pupil has been absent from school without contact for a period of time, or where there are concerns about a child's attendance and well-being.

3. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Persistent absenteeism:

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

4. Absence Procedures

Registers are a legal document. Great care must be taken to ensure registers are marked accurately. Attendance of all pupils is monitored and evaluated regularly using the following procedures.

Registration

Teachers / designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day at 8.50am and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present (/)
- Absent (N)

The Attendance Officer / Admin Staff will add any reasons provided for absence by parents / carers to the attendance register.

Parents are required to contact the school office via telephone as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence. Alternatively, parents may call into school and report to the school office where arrangements will be made to speak to a member of staff.

If a child is absent with no reason a member of staff (Attendance Office / Admin Staff / Learning Mentors) will contact the family on the day to enquire why the child is not at school by phone or via text message. The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

5. Authorising Absence

Even when a parent / carer provides an explanation of absence the school have to decide whether to accept the explanation and authorise the absence.

Absence may be authorised if:

- The pupil is too ill to attend.
- The pupil is prevented from attending by an unavoidable, exceptional cause.
- The pupil is absent on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent / carer belongs.
- There is a close family bereavement.
- The pupil has a local authority licence to take part in a public performance and the school has granted leave of absence.

Absence cannot be authorised if:

- No explanation is offered by the parent / carer.
- The school is not satisfied with an explanation offered.
- The pupil is staying home to look after parents, siblings or the home.
- The pupil is absent on special occasions e.g. birthday.
- The pupil is absent on a family holiday.
- The pupil is absent unnecessarily e.g. taken shopping, for a hair-cut.
- The pupil is absent for longer than agreed by the Headteacher.

A child has been absent from school previously due to a holiday abroad unless they have medical evidence of illness.

6. Responding to Concerns about Attendance and Punctuality

Sharrow school has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:-

1. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided.
2. If the Attendance Officer / Admin Staff have not been able to establish the reason for absence through texts and phone calls, details are given to SLT to follow up with parents in the playground. If a reason cannot be established for absence after 1 week then the absence will be categorised as unauthorised.
3. A monitoring group report is sent weekly to SLT of all pupils falling below 95% attendance.
4. A daily monitoring alert is sent to SLT for any pupils who are absent and have under 90% attendance. SLT will review any absences for pupils in this group and will advise the Attendance Officer whether the absence will be authorised or unauthorised.
5. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are passed immediately to the SLT as a record of concern.
6. If a pupil's attendance falls below 95 percent, a letter is sent home raising concerns that their attendance has fallen below the school's expected standard. The letter also has an attached leaflet outlining how parents can work with the school and their child to improve attendance.
7. The pupil's attendance is monitored for two weeks and, if attendance does not improve after this time, parents are required to attend a meeting in school with the classroom teacher and set targets for their child. If parents are unwilling to cooperate, or are genuinely unable to attend, a referral may be required to the local education attendance officer (EWO), who may then conduct a home visit.
8. After the two-week monitoring period, and if targets are met, a letter is sent home from the SLT to congratulate the pupil and their parents on improving attendance. Monitoring and communication with the parents continues until attendance stabilises to 95 percent.

The Headteacher, Attendance Officer, Access & Inclusion Manager and Learning Mentors will meet half termly to review and analyse attendance data, taking account any concerns raised by classroom teachers. The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups, including:

1. Children in need
2. LAC
3. Pupils who are eligible for FSM
4. Pupils with EAL
5. Pupils with SEND

The Attendance Officer will prepare a spreadsheet for this meeting detailing weekly and annual attendance to date, with details of the current upward or downward attendance and punctuality trends. Where there are concerns about particular patterns of absence and broken weeks, or where a pupil is showing attendance of below 90% for the half term, a range of next steps / interventions will be agreed to try to address the attendance issues. These may include:-

- Sending a letter home explaining that the pupil's attendance is now being monitored, inviting parents to come into school to discuss the concerns and asking if there is any support that the school can provide.
- Making contact with the family to discuss any issues or problems to ascertain how the school can support the family in order to improve attendance.
- Meeting with the pupil to discuss any problems they may be having, reviewing any barriers to attendance and setting targets for attendance and punctuality.
- Undertaking home visits if the pupil is absent
- Making a referral to the LA Attendance Team

Where a child's attendance or patterns of absence are still causing concern and the home / school contact and in school interventions have not prompted an improvement in attendance, alternate strategies will be considered which may include a referral to the Sheffield Multi Agency Support Team (MAST).

If attendance continues to cause concern and there is no improvement the school will advise the Local Authority so they can issue a Fixed Penalty Notice. This can lead to a fine or court action.

7. Pupils at risk of Persistent absence (PA)

The school will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary. Where pupils attendance is at risk of dropping below 90%, the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team will: -

- Establish a range of evidence-based needs led interventions on a case by case basis to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
 - Undertaking home visits.
 - Sending letters to parents.
 - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
 - Using fixed penalty notices.
 - Creating attendance clinics.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care.

Where a pupil becomes at risk of PA, the school will:

- Welcome pupils back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meet with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Lead weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- Make regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The DSL will be involved where there is a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

8. Lateness Procedures

The school will regard punctuality as of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated. The school day starts at 8:50am. Pupils should be in their classroom at this time.

- Pupils arriving in school after 8.50am will be deemed to be late. They will receive a mark to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark.
- The register closes at 9:30am. Pupils will receive a "U" mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.

Pupils arriving late must report to the school office where their N mark is amended to L and their name and reason for lateness recorded in the Late Book. All pupils reporting late at the office will be given a red card which must be shown to the class teacher as evidence that they have signed into school.

Text messages will be sent to parents/ carers of children who are late so they are aware that their child is missing morning registration. Parents / carers will be contacted by school for follow up discussions if their child is persistently late.

Registers will be taken again at the beginning of the afternoon session. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.

9. Term-Time Leave

Research has shown that poor attendance impacts negatively on children's attainment. Children have to attend school for 190 days per year. This leaves 175 days (including weekends) free for families to take holidays. Parents are expected to take their holidays when schools are closed.

Action may be taken by Sheffield Local Authority against parents/carers who fail to ensure that their child is properly educated. The action may result in a fine, or an appearance at court. Parents /carers who regularly take their child out of school in term-time may be prosecuted via the Magistrates Court.

The LA require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed; therefore, the Headteacher will be unable to authorise holidays during term-time. Parents / carers are legally required to notify school of their intention to take leave in term time from the school. The Headteacher is only allowed to grant a leave of absence in **exceptional circumstances**.

Requests for leave must be made at least 20 days in advance of any arrangement being made. The request should be made in writing by the parent / carer using the **Request for Leave in Term-Time** form. One form per family should be completed. Parents who are intending to travel abroad with their children during term-time should not book travel prior to securing approval from the school.

Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis, taking the current legislation and LA guidance into account, along with the pupil's previous attendance record. In the event that the Headteacher is able to agree Exceptional Circumstance Leave, a confirmation letter will be issued advising the amount of days which can be authorised and any conditions attached.

Please note: requests for leave will **not** be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If parents take their child on holiday in term-time without Exceptional Leave authorisation, they risk being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice, being prosecuted and/or the children may lose their place at school..

For further information, please see the Sheffield City Council's "Exceptional Leave during Term-Time Policy and the Sheffield City Council "Holidays in Term-Time, Information about Fixed Penalty Notices" leaflet.

10. Leave during Lunch Times

Parents may be permitted to take their child away from the school premises during lunch times with permission from the headteacher – it is at the headteacher's discretion as to whether a pupil will be allowed to leave the premises.

Parents will submit a written request, outlining the reasons for their child to leave the premises during lunch time – this request will be submitted to the Headteacher. The Headteacher reserves the right to grant or refuse a request and will inform the parent in writing of their decision within one week of the request.

Where permission has been granted, the Admin Team will ensure an Absence Pass is provided and will include the pupil's name on the off-site register. The Headteacher reserves the right to withdraw their permission at any time – this may occur, for example, where there are attendance concerns. Any decision to withdraw permission will be in writing, explaining the reasons for the Headteacher's decision. If permission is withdrawn, parents will not be entitled to appeal the decision. Parents will be able to withdraw their request at any time – the request will be submitted in writing to the headteacher.

11. Missing Children

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day without a parent/carer or approved adult. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the headteacher immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.

- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the headteacher.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
 - All classrooms
 - All toilets
 - All halls
 - All buildings including the Performing Arts building and bungalow
 - The school grounds and car park
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The missing pupil's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

The Headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

The Headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

12. Religious Observances

Schools can treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. For this to apply, the day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.

A maximum of 3 days per year can be granted, with a maximum of 2 days per absence. Where the religious holiday takes place over the weekend or during a school holiday, no additional leave can be granted. The school will take advice from local religious leaders as to whether they have set the day apart when confirming whether leave of absence will be authorised.

13. Appointments

As far as possible, parents should book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, the appointment card / letter needs sent / shown to the school office.

If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out at the school office by a parent. Pupils will be expected to attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

14. Modelling, Sport and Acting Performances/Activities

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances/activities (whether they, or another person, receives payment or not), which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school's absence(s).

Additional arrangements will be made by the school for pupils engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education – this may involve private teaching. These arrangements will be approved by the LA who will ensure that the arrangements are suitable for the pupil.

The pupil will receive education that, when taken together over the term of the licence, amounts to a minimum of three hours per day that the pupil would be required to attend a school maintained by the LA issuing the licence. This requirement will be met by ensuring a pupil receives an education:

- For not less than six hours a week; and
- During each complete period of four weeks (or if there is a period of less than four weeks, then during that period), for periods of time not less than three hours a day; and
- On days where the pupil would be required to attend school if they were attending a school maintained by the LA; and
- For not more than five hours on any such day.

Where a licence has been granted by the LA and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the school. Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the LA, it is at the discretion of the headteacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day. The Headteacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a pupil's attendance would fall below 95 percent. Where a licence has not been obtained, the headteacher will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

15. Young Carers

The school understands the difficulties that face young carers, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as through their time at the school. A caring and flexible approach will be taken to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

The school, in conjunction with relevant authorities, will implement support for pupils who are young carers, to encourage their sustained and regular attendance at school in line with the school's expectations.

16. Rewarding Good Attendance

The school will acknowledge outstanding attendance and punctuality through certificates, stickers and termly attendance rewards. The school will develop strategies for ensuring that pupils with health needs or home circumstances that result in additional absences are not unfairly excluded from attendance rewards, e.g. by setting individualised targets. Where pupils have had an approved absence for religious observance, this will be taken into consideration.

School trips and events will be considered a privilege. Where attendance drops below 90 percent, these privileges may be taken away.

17. Monitoring and Review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is 96 percent. Details of the school's absence levels will be included in school newsletters.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Safeguarding Committee. The next scheduled review date for this policy is March 2024.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

