



Simonside Primary School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Introduction

At Simonside Primary School, we recognise that regular and punctual attendance at school is vital if children are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and to achieve all they are capable of.

Simonside Primary School expects the highest standards in attendance and punctuality from all children, at all times. We support children and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and sets out the responsibilities of our school and all those associated with school in respect of attendance and punctuality. This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to advice from the Local Authority and should be read in conjunction with the following school policies: Medicines in school; Supporting children with Medical Conditions in School; Safeguarding and Child Protection.

Aims

- To improve children's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, with the exception of those with chronic health issues
- Create an ethos in which excellent attendance and punctuality are seen as the norm and valued by all members of the school community
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and children of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of education
- Work in partnership with parents, carers, staff, governors, the Local Authority Attendance Service and other service providers to ensure that all children realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence
- Establish consistent, rigorous attendance monitoring procedures to ensure the early identification of attendance/punctuality issues and implement appropriate support to address the causes of these
- To work with appropriate external agencies (where necessary) in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them

Legal Responsibilities

It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually. This is in accordance with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Should a child fail to attend school regularly, the school must refer individual cases to the Local Authority (LA) and legal action may be taken. The LA will make enquiries prior to making the decision regarding prosecution of the parent under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, for failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school or an alternative provision. There are two separate offences:

- a. Section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure his/her child's regular attendance; and



b. Section 444(1A) where the parent knowingly fails to cause his/her child to attend school regularly. This latter offence is an aggravated offence and if found guilty can lead to a maximum fine of £2,500 or up to three months in prison.

Education Law defines a parent as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child on a daily basis.

It is important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the child, that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

School Procedures

Our School Attendance Team consists of the Deputy Head Teacher and Attendance & Inclusion Coordinators, who work in conjunction with the School Administrator and Head Teacher. The Head Teacher is responsible for the overall implementation and management of this policy and reports information on attendance figures to the governing body on a termly basis.

As part of our commitment to improving the attainment of our children, the School Attendance Team monitor pupil attendance on a regular basis. At Simonside Primary School, our attendance procedures are as follows:

- Attendance is monitored every 2 weeks to identify concerns with the attendance/punctuality of individuals
- Parents/Carers of children whose attendance falls below 96% are alerted by an initial concern letter (Stage 1)
- Children at Stage 1 will be monitored over a 2-week period and progress to Stage 2 if concerns remain about attendance
- Parents/Carers of children whose attendance fails to improve after an initial letter of concern are contacted by a member of the School Attendance Team for a telephone meeting (Stage 2)
- Should individual attendance fail to improve during the following 2-week period, Parents/Carers will be invited to attend a meeting with the School Attendance Team to identify available support/ seek to find ways in which attendance can be improved (Stage 3). Proof of illness may be sought at this stage.
- Referrals to the Local Authority or alternative service providers (including the School Nurse) may be made where this is deemed necessary (Stage 4)
- Improvements in attendance for those children identified as having an attendance concern, will be encouraged/acknowledged regularly by the Attendance Team
- No absences will be authorised for those children with less than 92% attendance, unless proof of illness is provided (with the exception of those with serious medical conditions that have been discussed with school)
- Class attendance is monitored weekly
- Parents/Carers will be informed of their children's attendance each half term
- Holidays during term time will not be authorised unless in exceptional circumstances; this is in accordance with (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- Information & updates regarding attendance are shared on our school website, Weekly Bulletin and Twitter account



Leave of absence

Leave of Absence during term time will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Should Parents/Carers wish to apply for a Leave of Absence, they must complete a 'Request for Leave of Absence from School in Term Time' form, which can be obtained from the school office. Any Leave of Absence must be requested as far in advance as possible, and usually no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date. If Leave of Absence is granted during term time, it is entirely at the Head Teacher's discretion and it is not a parental right. Whether Leave of Absence is granted will depend upon the nature of the event, frequency, amount of advanced notice given and a child's overall attendance pattern. If unauthorised holidays are taken, parents may be referred to the Local Authority and a Penalty Notice may be issued. The Penalty Notice is £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days and £120 per parent, per child if paid after this date but within 28 days. Failure to pay within 28 days may result in prosecution.

Illness / Medical Appointments

Whilst we understand that illness is often unavoidable, Parents/Carers should aim to keep children at home only if they have a serious illness or injury. We appreciate that it can sometimes be difficult to decide if your child should be sent to school when they are suffering from certain illnesses, particularly as you may be concerned about passing the illness onto others. In these circumstances, Parents/Carers should seek recent advice from Public Health England regarding infection control in schools (which can be found on the 'Attendance Matters' section of our school website or by contacting the school office, where staff can advise).

If a child has a minor illness (e.g. a headache or a cold etc.), we ask that Parents/Carers bring them into school and inform staff that their child is feeling unwell. School will always contact Parents/Carers if a child's condition worsens or if they become ill during the school day; it is therefore vital that Parents/Carers ensure that school has up to date contact details and emergency phone numbers.

Wherever possible, routine medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours. Where this is unavoidable, Parents/Carers should bring any appointment letters into school so that a copy can be kept on file. To ensure that children miss as little time as possible, they should attend school prior to any appointments and be brought back to school afterwards, if at all possible.

First Day Response

- All Parents/Carers must contact the school office if their child is unable to attend for any reason (this should be done via telephone)
- It is expected that Parents/Carers will telephone school **before 9.30am** to explain the reason for their absence. Parents/Carers are required to contact school on every day of absence, unless there is a long-term reason and this has been discussed with school
- If school has not received notification from Parents/Carers by 9.30am, school will contact them via phone and text message in an attempt to ascertain a reason for absence
- If school is unable to make contact with Parents/Carers for 2 days, a home visit may be made
- Should no verbal reason for absence be received, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.



It is important to note that the Head Teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised; notification from parents does not automatically authorise an absence.

Lateness

Punctuality is incredibly important at Simonside Primary School. We recognise that lateness results in loss of learning and impacts upon progress. Doors open at 8.45am and morning sessions begin at 8.55am; it is expected that children will arrive in school before the doors are closed at this time. Any children arriving after 8.55am will be required to enter school via the main entrance. Children arriving via the main entrance will be marked as 'late'. Registers will close at 9.30am for the morning session and 1.30pm for the afternoon session. Arrival after the close of registration with no valid reason will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded "U" in the register. If children arrive late for school, they **MUST** be accompanied into school by an adult for safeguarding reasons, and a reason for lateness should be provided.

Parents/Carers of children who have patterns of lateness, even by a few minutes, will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, Parents/Carers will be invited to attend a meeting in school to discuss the problem. If the lateness continues, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Service and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued.

Attendance Rewards

At Simonside Primary School, we offer the following attendance rewards:

- Celebration assemblies are held each Friday, where weekly class attendance winners are announced
- A weekly class prize is awarded to classes with at least 96% attendance
- Weekly attendance updates in the school bulletin to celebrate class achievements
- The class with the most weeks at 96% + over the course of a term, receive a special treat (chosen by the individual class at the start of each term)
- Certificates and a prize for each child with 100% attendance each term are presented in a termly whole school celebration assembly
- Certificates and a special prize for each child with 100% attendance for the year are presented in a whole school celebration assembly at the end of each academic year (these are in addition to their termly prizes)
- With regards to those children with chronic health conditions, medical appointments related to these specific conditions will not affect their ability to achieve an individual attendance award

Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated in accordance to changes in legislation and/or school procedures.



Simonside Primary School – Stages of Response for Attendance

Our 'Attendance Pathway'

Stage 1 - Attendance falls below 96%

- Initial letter of concern issued to Parents/Carers
- Attendance is monitored for a 2-week period
- If the child has 100% attendance for the subsequent 2-week period, an improvement text is sent to Parents/Carers
- If no improvement, progress to Stage 2

Stage 2 – Progression from Stage 1 OR attendance falls below 94%

- Parents/Carers will be contacted for a telephone meeting by a member of the Attendance Team
- Attendance is monitored every 2 weeks
- If the child has 100% attendance for the subsequent 2-week period, an improvement text is sent to Parents/Carers
- If no improvement, progress to Stage 3

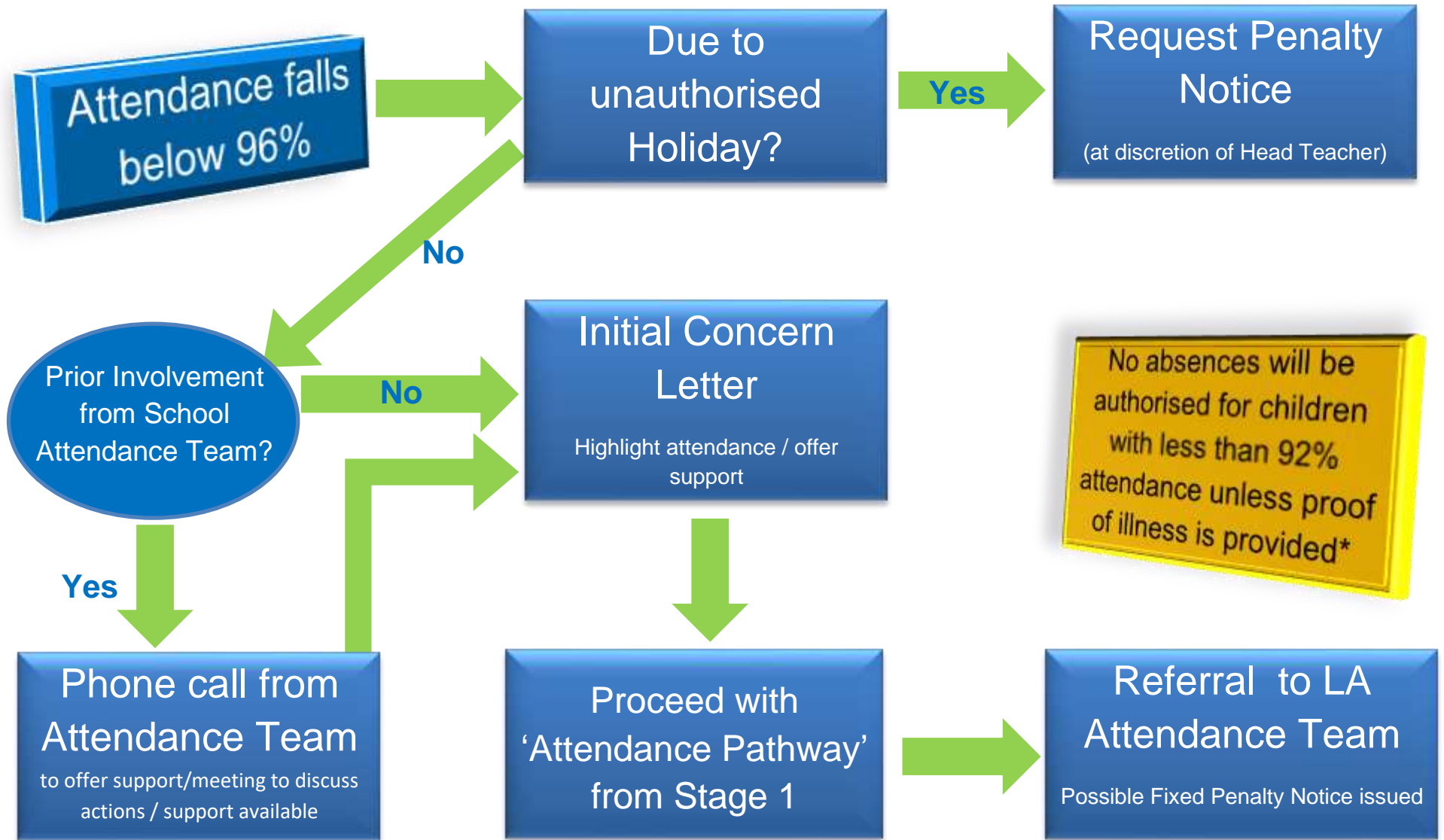
Stage 3 – Progression from Stage 2 OR Attendance falls below 92%

- A second letter of concern issued to Parents/Carers requesting proof of illness
- If no improvement within 2 weeks, an invitation to attend a meeting with the School Attendance Team will be issued
- Attendance is monitored for every 2 weeks
- If no improvement, progress to Stage 4

Stage 4 – Progression from Stage 3 OR Attendance falls below 90%

- Referral to the Local Authority Attendance Team
- A Fixed Penalty Notice / Prosecution may result

Simonside Primary School – Stages of Response for Attendance



Attendance is monitored every 2 weeks, depending upon stage in the 'Attendance Pathway' (if improvements are not seen within set time scale, individuals progress to the next stage)

** Unless in exceptional cases where serious medical conditions are known*

Simonside Primary School – Alterations to Policy in light of COVID-19 Pandemic

Updated March 2021

- The government has indicated that attendance at school from 8th March 2021 is mandatory and vital for academic/social development. Our Attendance Team will continue to work alongside families to support them in improving their child/children's attendance/punctuality where concerns are identified; if there are no subsequent improvements, the Attendance Team will continue to follow our Attendance Pathway and other procedures to address concerns as swiftly and effectively as possible
- In line with government guidelines (which can be read here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>), all Coronavirus-related absences will be recorded using the designated codes on the register; these absences will not affect a child's overall attendance figure for the year, nor will parents/carers be penalised for covid-related absences
- Any referrals made to the Local Authority Attendance Team will be with regard to attendance concerns that are NOT related to Covid-19, and are in line with existing attendance policy procedures
- Requested medical proof may be given in a range of alternative forms, in light of the pandemic and the changes to general GP procedures (e.g. labelled/named medication rather than appointment cards)
- Our attendance rewards system will be adapted due to restrictions / government guidance regarding the pandemic; we will continue to recognise improvements in attendance via Seesaw/telephone contact, issue individual 100% attendance certificates (termly) via Seesaw, and class attendance prizes will be issued for those classes with 96%+ attendance each week (in line with COVID-19 Risk Assessment)

Attendance is monitored every 2 weeks, depending upon stage in the 'Attendance Pathway' (if improvements are not seen within set time scale, individuals progress to the next stage)

** Unless in exceptional cases where serious medical conditions are known*