

Selwyn Primary School: Attendance Policy

Last updated: July 2024

Approved by: Executive Leader, Primaries and
Local Governing Body [changes in July to reflect
DfE guidance from September]

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1. Overview of the policy management process

1.1. Document history

Date	Document title	Version
January 2022	<p>Policy reviewed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safeguarding Lead - Head teachers - Attendance Targeted Support Officers - Executive Officer <p>DfE School Attendance Guidance (May 2022) has also been incorporated into the policy</p> <p>Changes include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updates to the registration requirements and timetables - Detailed notification of what is required of parents, in both sections 2.5 and 2.6.4 - Clarification regarding requesting medical evidence from parents - Detailed guidance in 2.6.4 and 2.6.5 regarding how attendance is managed at both schools - Data protection added in 2.6.14 - Alignment of registration and punctuality procedures and timings across both schools - 2.6.1 - Removal of Appendix with a copy of the form used for requesting term time absence (replaced with additional information now provided as part of Appendix 3). Also agreed that current process and paper/Word form is fit for purpose - <i>not</i> to be replaced with a Google Form. - Removal of Appendix with a copy of the form used for removing a child from the roll (replaced with more information in 2.6.13). Also agreed that current process and paper/Word form is fit for purpose - <i>not</i> to be replaced with a Google Form. - Removal of Appendix with guidance from NAHT regarding decision making process for term time absence requests 	v1.0
January 2024	Reviewed by the school Senior Leadership team and updated accordingly - as applicable to Selwyn Primary School	v2.0
July 2024	In anticipation of DfE attendance guidance applicable from August 2024, updates as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2.6.9 - Children Missing in Education Procedures - 2.6.10 - Non starters procedures 	v2.1

1.2. Review and approval

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the policy.

The Headteacher is responsible for the operation of the policy at Selwyn Primary School, as well as for the maintenance of a record of concerns raised in accordance with this policy and the outcomes.

This policy is reviewed in line with the school's policy review schedule.

2. The Policy

2.1. Introduction

At Newham Community Learning, we believe that the welfare of every child is of paramount importance. Selwyn Primary School will establish and maintain an ethos where pupils feel secure, are encouraged to talk, are listened to and are safe. Children at our school will be able to talk freely to any member of staff at our school if they are worried or concerned about something.

Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. We recognise that staff at our schools play a particularly important role as they are in a position to identify concerns early and provide help for children to prevent concerns from escalating. **All staff are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.** When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members must always act in the **best interests** of the child.

Our rigorous management of attendance at school is a key part of our commitment to the welfare of our children, and as such, is specifically referenced in our *Early Help, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*, which is published on our school websites. As stated in the 'Aims' of the *Early Help, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*, '...*The Attendance Lead will regularly liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to discuss all persistently absent pupils and those who go missing to identify the risk of abuse and neglect including sexual abuse or exploitation and to ensure that appropriate safeguarding responses have been put in place to reduce the risk of future harm.*'

In addition, there is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

Across Newham Community Learning, we are committed to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable, and which is achieved by many children. This Policy sets out the principles, procedures and practices that are adopted by Selwyn Primary School in order to support this objective. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and the benefits of, good attendance.

The policy is based on the following principles:

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development.

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- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.
- Without regular attendance, children cannot benefit as planned from their education.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation - all are detailed on page 5 of the document linked to in the paragraph below.

This policy is also reviewed in line with the most up to date DfE (Department for Education) (non-statutory) guidance; this was updated in February 2024 and is [available here](#).

2.2. Aims

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To ensure that Newham Community Learning discharges its duty to safeguard all children at Selwyn Primary School to the best of its ability.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff, governors and trustees understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of Newham's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

2.3. Objectives

- To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children.
- To reduce persistent absence.
- To reduce or eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence.
- To promote commitment to education and high academic achievement.
- To maximise the potential of every individual pupil.

2.4. Promoting good attendance

Newham Community Learning trustees, the Local Governing Body of Selwyn Primary School, the Headteacher, the Senior Leadership Team, and all staff will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance. Weekly newsletters are sent via Arbor, and copies are posted on the school websites. Good attendance is celebrated every week.

The Headteacher has the discretion to authorise leave of absence in term-time. However, at Selwyn Primary School, that discretion will only be exercised in the **most exceptional** circumstances.

At Newham Community Learning, we have adopted guidance from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) in terms of defining '*exceptional circumstances*' in order to ensure that we follow a consistent, transparent approach when considering such requests. Details of this advice are provided as Appendix 2 to this document. In all cases, it is the role of the Headteacher to interpret and apply this guidance to the individual situation which presents itself at school, using their professional knowledge and experience, knowledge of the particular child in question, and knowledge of his/her family circumstances.

Parents requesting term time leave for their children, for any reason, will be asked to comply with local arrangements in place at the time, and as communicated to parents and carers. Once the request has been received in writing, it will be considered by the Headteacher, or their nominated deputy.

2.5. Responsibilities of parents/carers

All schools are, by law, required to maintain an attendance register. As per the DfE's [School Attendance Guidance \(February 2024\)](#), '*Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.*' (p. 6).

At Newham Community Learning, we expect that parents comply with our local arrangements to ensure good attendance of all children on our school rolls. Section 2.6 below describes the procedures in place at Selwyn Primary School, and also includes our clear expectations of parents when their child is absent. Appendix 3 to this document provides detailed information about the importance of supporting their child's attendance to parents and carers.

2.5.1. Understanding types of absence coding

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as *authorised* or *unauthorised*. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time and emergencies.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which **will not be authorised under any circumstances** are:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy
- Children attending parents' medical or legal appointments

2.5.2. Reluctant attenders/school refusal

Parents and carers should do everything possible to encourage their child to attend school. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with learning, or bullying, please discuss this with your child's class teacher in the first instance. At Selwyn Primary School, we have a large number of trained staff and external specialists who are able to offer timely, targeted support should children be experiencing any difficulties. Our school also has an Anti-bullying and School Behaviour Policy which is published on the school website. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is unlikely to lead to improvements.

School refusal/school phobia is a psychological condition that usually has been medically diagnosed. Other arrangements may be put in place for a child with-diagnosed school phobia.

2.6. School attendance procedures

2.6.1. Registration and punctuality procedures

Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day and once during the afternoon session. Across our Trust, we use the attendance codings as prescribed by the current [DfE guidance](#).

Pupils arriving before the end of the registration period will be coded L (late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register. Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence.

Accurate registration information is an important safeguarding tool, and it is essential that registers are completed, and that the correct codes are used. Any concerns regarding patterns of lateness or absence should be discussed with a member of the leadership team.

Registration times for Selwyn are as follows:

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	Times
Registration (marked as present)	08:30 - 08:40
Late arrival (coded L)	08:41 - 09:10
Unauthorised (coded U)	Arrival after 09:10

The school day contains a morning break, and a lunch time break. An afternoon registration is taken at the first lesson after the lunch break (this takes place at staggered times at both schools due to the staggered lunch break times).

Only the Headteacher or designated member(s) of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as N (no reason provided), until a satisfactory reason is provided. Every effort will be made to ascertain a reason for the absence. If no reason is provided or the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absence). Evidence received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year, or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action.

All such personal data will be collected, including 'special category personal data' (into which category medical records fall), processed, stored and retained as per our Trust Data Protection Policy, available via the school website. If a pupil is persistently late, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or Family Support Worker and the School Attendance Officer will arrange to meet with the family as soon as the pattern is identified.

2.6.2. Medical or sickness absences

Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence for absences due to reported illness, in order to support the coding used in the attendance register. Medical evidence is requested at the discretion of the school's Attendance Officer/school leadership team and may be requested to support on-going absences relating to illness - especially for cases of poor attendance.

As per the [DfE School Attendance Guidance](#), we accept a variety of forms of medical evidence (ie. a doctor's note is not required). Examples include an appointment card/letter, prescription copy or labelled medicine. All such information will be filed securely in the Trust's digital filing system.

2.6.3. Medical or dental appointments

Parents are advised wherever possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where possible, pupils should attend school for part of the school day, before or after their appointment. Parents are advised to show appointment cards/letters to the office staff/attendance officer in advance of the appointments.

2.6.4. First day absence contact

Parents/carers are expected to notify their child's school as early as possible if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. If the school does not receive notification, a member of staff will telephone on the first day of absence, to try to ascertain the reason. First day contact will be carried out as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school, but not arrived, as quickly as possible.

On the first day of absence, **and for all subsequent days** (unless otherwise agreed) and as early as possible in the day, our expectations of parents are:

Selwyn (notification to be received before 09:30 when the attendance registers close)
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- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Call the school office to notify staff of the child's absence |
|---|

At our school, there is a detailed procedure regarding contact with the family of any child not at school due to sickness/absence throughout the period of absence as outlined in Appendix 1.

2.6.5. Second day absence contact

If the child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, a telephone call will be made to the home.

Please see Appendix 1 for the detailed arrangements in place.

2.6.6. Continuing absence procedures

In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be made (a home visit will be made on the first day of absence for a Looked After Child, a child subject to a Child Protection Plan or a Child in Need). Any child who has a pattern of erratic attendance or persistent lateness after registering is referred to the school leadership team.

Appendix 1 describes the way in which we manage the daily attendance of any child who is absent from school.

2.6.7. Frequent/persistent absence procedures

Weekly reviews of the registers will be made to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to persistent absence (PA); that is to say, absence of 10% or more in a half term.

The Attendance Officer will be responsible for identification of any emerging concerns, and putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially, the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues the school will refer to the School Nurse if the problem appears to be a medical one.

In cases where there appear to be issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child, referral may be made through Newham's Children and Young People Service or external agency support. Persistent Absence could result in an Action Plan or Parenting Contract. Such a plan or contract may include allocation of additional in-school or external support.

2.6.8. Consequences of poor attendance / punctuality

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

- The school may ask the Council to issue a Penalty Notice on its behalf. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £80, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 21 calendar days, it rises to £160 per parent, per child. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.
- A maximum of two penalty notices can be issued within a rolling three year period. Upon the third and any further offences, the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's court and can lead to prosecution and a fine of up to £2,500.
- A referral may be made to the Attendance Targeted Support Service to action accordingly. This may lead to court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.

2.6.9. Children who cease to attend without prior notification (Child Missing in Education or CME) procedures

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in Newham's Children Missing Education guidance. However, if, after ten days' continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil,

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they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to school. If after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, your child's place at the school may be at risk and school will follow the advice of the Enforcement/CME team accordingly. In the event of your child being removed from the register, you may have to reapply for a school place. Similarly, Nursery children with unauthorised absences of 10 days or more are at risk of losing their place at the school.

2.6.10. Non-starters

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as children missing in education. If we have been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the Local Authority's Children Missing Education team for further checks.

If your child is allocated a place at the school and it is refused, a school attendance order may be considered by the school - this would involve making a referral to Newham's CME monitoring and enforcement team.

2.6.11. Vulnerable children

Children who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP), Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Officer. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home, a home visit or by a call to the allocated Social worker/Families First worker. The Attendance Targeted Support Service will be informed and action will be coordinated and acted accordingly.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

2.6.12. Removing children from the school's roll

In addition to the circumstances described in 2.6.10 and 2.6.11 above, children may be removed from the school's roll for a number of reasons, all of which are outlined in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

To give their permission for the removal of a child from the roll, parents are requested to speak to the school office team, who will provide a form for completion. Once this form is returned, our school is able to process the removal from roll, further to the requisite checks and procedures. All associated paperwork will be retained on file.

As part of this process, the Local Authority is notified as per the above Regulations and provided with all the necessary information.

2.6.13. Data protection and retention

As per DfE (Department for Education) guidance, all attendance register information is securely stored. In line with the guidance, we retain the information on the child’s file until they leave our schools.

2.7. Appendix 1 - detailed absence management procedures

Day	Actions	Next steps
1 st Day absence	Check the voice messages Call family	Answer: Record the responses on Arbor *No answer: Record action on Arbor * CP/SEN/CIN (vulnerable) families with FSW – Home Visit and relevant SLT informed. Email FSW/safeguard team
2 nd Day absence	Call family	Answer: Record reason on Arbor No answer: Record action on Arbor
3 rd Day absence	Call family	Answer: Record reason on Arbor *No answer: Record action on Arbor and send email requesting contact with the school about absence and explaining the likelihood of a home visit. *Letter left at address requesting contact with the school about absence.
4 th Day absence	Call family	Answer: Record reason on Arbor No answer: Record action on Arbor *Home visit (depending on outcome any home visit made be required between day 6 th and 10 th day) *Letter left at address requesting contact with the school about absence.
5 th Day absence	Call family	Answer: Record reason on Arbor No answer: Record action on Arbor
6 th Day absence	Call family	Answer: Record reason on Arbor No answer: Record action on Arbor
7 th Day absence	Call family	Answer: Record reason on Arbor No answer: Record action on Arbor
8 th Day absence	Call family	Answer: Record reason on Arbor No answer: Record action on Arbor

9 th Day absence	Call family	Answer: Record reason on Arbor No answer: Record action on Arbor
10 th Day absence	Refer to CME Referral to ATSS	

Medical Evidence:

Letter seeking medical evidence sent within the first week of absence. This will be dependent on each individual family. Any families with attendance of below 90% absence will be required to provide medical evidence. According to DFE guidelines, all N codes need to be addressed within a two-week period.

2.8. Appendix 2 – Useful information for parents and carers

2.8.1. Introduction

We aim to encourage all members of the school community to reach for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. *It is for you as the adult to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling.* It will be better for them in the long run to go to school, rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and make them even more reluctant. Your job as the parent is to encourage them to attend.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is **your** legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued (see below).

2.8.2. Learning

Any absence affects the child's learning, and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up. Research has shown that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

2.8.3. Safeguarding

There is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

2.8.4. Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 95%. This may make it easier to understand:

- 95% equates to half a day off every two weeks
- 90% equates to a day off every two weeks
- 85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks
- 80% equates to one whole day off every week

A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school

Even the brightest and most enthusiastic learner will find it hard to keep up with their work with these levels of absence. This is why, at Selwyn Primary School, we aim for 100% attendance.

2.8.5. Understanding types of absence coding

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as *authorised* or *unauthorised*. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, Pharmacy First Advice Voucher, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time and emergencies.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will be unauthorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family.
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell.
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed.
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark.
- Truancy.
- Children attending parent's medical or legal appointments.

2.8.6. Reluctant attenders

Parents and carers should do everything possible to encourage their child to attend school. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with your child's class teacher in the first instance.

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At Selwyn Primary School, we have a large number of trained staff and external specialists who are able to offer timely, targeted support should children be experiencing any difficulties. We also have an *Anti-bullying and School Behaviour Policy* which is published on the website. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is unlikely to lead to improvements.

School refusal/school phobia is a psychological condition that usually has been medically diagnosed. Other arrangements may be put in place for a child with genuine school phobia.

2.8.7. Persistent absence

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% of their own individual possible sessions or more schooling across the school year, **for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both.** Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. Persistent Absence pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. Persistent Absence could result in an Action Plan, which may include allocation of tailored support.

2.8.8. Parenting contracts

You may be asked to participate in a Parenting Contract to support your child's attendance. These are initiated where the school feels you may need help in influencing your child to attend properly. They have no force in law, and are entered into voluntarily. A meeting will be held to which you and your child will be invited. The problems will be discussed and agreement reached as to what the school will do, the child will do and what you as parents/carers will do to try to improve the situation. You may be offered some form of support such as counselling or parenting classes to assist you in setting boundaries and enforcing expectations of your child.

2.8.9. Reporting your child's absence

If your child is absent you must contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence. The ways we have arranged for parents to be able to do this are described above.

2.8.10. Applications for leave of absence in term time

Newham Community Learning trustees, the local governing body, the Headteacher, and all staff will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement, newsletters, rewards and

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incentives for good or significantly improving attendance. Weekly newsletters are sent home with children, and copies are posted on the school websites. Good attendance is celebrated every week.

The Headteacher has the discretion to authorise leave of absence in term-time. However, at Selwyn Primary School, that discretion will only be exercised in the **most exceptional circumstances: being granted such permission is not an automatic right**. Each application will be considered on its own merit, and the attendance record(s) of the child/ren concerned will be taken into account when making a decision.

Should a parent wish to request that their child's absence from school during term time is authorised, they are required to request a form for this purpose (either in hard copy or electronic format) from the school office.

The form requires various details of the planned term time absence. We also ask that parents requesting such absence include supporting evidence.

Parents are asked to note that the granting of such absence is at the Headteacher's discretion and are strongly encouraged not to make any arrangements until they receive a response. In informing parents of any decision, the Headteacher is not required to provide any reason or rationale.

Finally, parents are asked to note that as per the [current DfE guidance](#) regarding term time absence.

2.8.11. Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices can be issued for a range of attendance-related offences, including unauthorised term-time holidays, poor attendance and poor punctuality, a child coming to the attention of the police in school time, or located twice or more in truancy sweeps in 6 months. Further details are available on <https://www.newham.gov.uk/schools-education/attendance-exclusion-1/3>.

In agreement with appropriate local partners, the following circumstances may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice:

- Where parents persistently fail to ensure their children attend school and attendance is 90 per cent or below of absence in a 10 week period (i.e. 10 or more sessions), with no acceptable reason, and no other legal sanctions are underway;
- Term time leave of 5 days or more is taken without obtaining the agreement of the school and the parents have been warned that a Penalty Notice may result;

- Unwarranted delayed return from term time leave without school agreement resulting in a child missing the beginning of term or the school year, or the date set by the head teacher for return from an authorised leave of absence;
- Persistent late arrival after the registers have been closed (U code only) (10 sessions or more); and
- Parents' or carers' failure to make arrangements to ensure that children who have been excluded from school due to misbehaviour are not in a public place at prescribed times during the first five school days of any exclusion, without reasonable justification.

2.8.12. Parental contact details and data protection

Please make sure that the contact details you have given to school are kept up to date, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you we have the correct details.

Any and all personal data that you provide to Selwyn Primary School will be collected, processed, stored and retained as per our *Data Protection Policy*, available on the [Policies Page](#) of the Trust website. When providing the school with personal data, you will be informed of the school's obligations, and your rights regarding this data, by way of our Privacy Notice (a copy of which is also available on the Policies Page of the Trust website).