



South Lake Primary School

Attendance Policy

Approved by: Local Governing Board **Date:** November 2025

Next review due by: November 2026

Commitment to Attendance

The staff of South Lake Primary School are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, pupils, governors and the Local Authority, to provide an education of the highest standard for all our children. Regular attendance is essential to achieving this. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment

At South Lake, good attendance and punctuality is expected from all members of our school community, as soon as they join us.

Absence from school affects well-being as well as attainment, and is a potential safeguarding risk.

The better your child's attendance, the better they will do educationally.

Being late to school on a regular basis impacts on valuable parts of the day and, ultimately, on the child's attainment and well-being.

Doors open at 8.40 a.m. and children must be in class, ready to learn, by 8.45 a.m. Any child not in class at 8.45 a.m. will be marked as late.

Expectations

We expect all pupils to:

- Attend school every day unless they are prevented from doing so by unavoidable reason or they have been granted Leave of Absence.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Talk to their parent/carer, class teacher or an appropriate member of staff if they are worried about anything that may affect their school attendance.

Definition of a Parent:

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child (having care of a child means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child) is considered to be a parent in education law

We expect all parents/carers to:

- Encourage daily school attendance throughout the academic year and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure their child arrives punctually and prepared for the school day.
- Advise school by 9.15am, via the Arbor app on the first and any subsequent days, if their child is going to be absent, giving the reason for absence.
- Arrange non-urgent medical and dental appointments outside school hours or during the school holidays. Evidence of any appointments during school hours will be requested for each absence, this can be emailed to attendance@southlake.wokingham.sch.uk prior to the appointment or shown in person on the day.
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**, in which case Leave of Absence must be requested in advance.
- Contact school promptly should a problem occur that may prevent their child from attending school.

- Notify the school of any changes in home circumstances that might affect their child
- Notify school immediately of any changes to phone numbers, home address or emergency contact details.

Unwell Children

If a child is too unwell to be in school, please contact the school office by phone or by emailing attendance@southlake.wokingham.sch.uk. If the child's attendance is usually good, or we are sure they are genuinely ill, we will authorise the absence. If your child's attendance is a concern, we may ask to see evidence. If your child has an ongoing diagnosed medical condition that necessitates hospital attendance, please provide hospital appointment letters.

Children with diarrhoea or vomiting must stay away from school until they have not been sick or had diarrhoea for at least 2 days (48 hours). This is in line with NHS recommendations and helps prevent the spread of illness within the school community. Check the NHS website for guidance on whether a child should be in school

The school will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's or parent's/carer's concerns
- Use a 'team' approach with the teacher/s, the attendance and the pastoral teams working with the family to improve attendance
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual pupils' attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received by 9:15am, to seek an explanation for the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case where a child has been absent for 4 days or more, evidence will be requested, for example a copy of a prescription, or an appointment text or email
- If long term or frequent absences occur due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested
- Inform parents where attendance falls below 90% provide and adhere to a protocol for monitoring and intervention by the attendance officer
- Inform parents/carers of the percentage % attendance of all pupils in end of year reports
- Meet with Education Welfare Service termly to ensure children are attending school
- Conduct a home visit if we have reasonable grounds to believe that a student may be on holiday during a period of reported illness or other authorised leave. During this visit, a member of staff may deliver a formal letter outlining our concerns and requesting clarification regarding the student's absence. This measure is taken to ensure the safeguarding of students and to uphold our statutory responsibilities around school attendance.
- Conduct a home visit if we have reasonable grounds if a child is absent for an extended period, or if there are concerns about the reason for their absence. This is a safeguarding measure designed to ensure the child's wellbeing and to confirm that they are safe and appropriately cared for. Home visits in these circumstances help the school fulfil its duty of care and maintain accurate oversight of student welfare and attendance.

Emergency contacts

Schools are required, where possible, to hold at least two emergency contact numbers for each pupil. This supports good practice in ensuring that the school has multiple options to pursue for any child who is not attending school or who poses a welfare or safeguarding concern. We ask all parents to provide two or more emergency contact number for their child.

Monitoring of Vulnerable Pupils

Pupils who are vulnerable are known by the attendance team and monitored daily. The Designated Safeguarding Lead contact additional emergency contacts or supporting agencies eg social worker. For pupils who are in the care of the Local Authority, the procedures for the placing authority are followed, such as reporting daily attendance.

The safeguarding team may contact the Social Care Referral and Assessment Team for guidance if there are concerns with safeguarding

Staff are aware that for some families there may be barriers to good attendance, eg health and finances. Whether short or long term, the pastoral team will support the family to make a plan to manage barriers. This could include extended day clubs, providing school uniform, signposting parents/carers to supporting agencies

Pupils Leaving During the School Day

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Parents/carers should arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents/carers are requested to complete a leave of absence request for the absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time and also providing relevant evidence.
- Pupils must be signed out at reception on leaving the school and signed back in on their return.
- When a pupil is being collected from school, parents/carers are requested to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents/carers will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupil as a missing person, or to contact Children's Social Care.

Punctuality/Lateness

It is crucial that children arrive at school on time for registration at the beginning of the day.

Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

- Classrooms open at 8.40 a.m.
- Registration takes place at 8.45 am and pupils who arrive after the register is taken will be recorded as late to school
- Registers close at 9.15 am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence (This could lead to prosecution by the local authority if the problem persists)
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will initially be followed up by school staff and if not resolved will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Changing Schools

It is important that if parents/carers decide to send their child to a different school, they must inform the school in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- A new home address, if applicable.

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school and notification sent to the Local Authority. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to Education Welfare Service following 'reasonable efforts' to contact the family and after four weeks the pupil will be registered on the S2S website as a Child Missing Education.

Managed Move

A "managed move" with Wokingham Borough Council usually refers to a pupil transfer between schools, often an alternative to permanent exclusion, arranged at the school level via their [Fair Access Protocol](#) for a fresh start

For School Transfers (Managed Moves as Alternative to Exclusion):

Arranged by Schools: These are typically school-led, involving the current school, a potential new school, and parents, using a formal protocol.

Fair Access Protocol: Wokingham Council uses this to manage such transfers, often for pupils struggling in their current setting.

Elective Home Education

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their children receive a suitable full time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The law allows parents/carers to choose to educate children at home instead of sending them to school. This is known as Elective Home Education (EHE).

Should parents/carers wish to follow this route, they are required to put this in writing to the Head Teacher requesting that their child is removed from the school roll.

School will then inform the EHE Officer who will make contact with the family and ensure that education is 'suitable and efficient'.

Leave of Absence

- The school holiday dates, INSET days and SATs dates are published with sufficient notice
- Only in "exceptional" circumstances will leave of absence in term time be authorised. This is as per current Department for Education guidance.
- An 'exceptional circumstance' is where an absence is unavoidable and brief, such as the day of a funeral.
- Extended leave for events, such as weddings and funerals, will not be authorised.
- Holidays in term time will not be authorised.
- If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the Education Welfare Service may be notified.

Penalty Notices for Holidays

- The Headteacher can now request that the local authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents, when pupils are taken out of school for five or more days' unauthorised holiday. Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per pupil
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notices is £80 per child and per parent if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £160 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for the original offence of non-school attendance.

Penalty Notices

In addition to Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised leave, Penalty Notices may also be issued if a parent/carer fails to ensure regular school attendance. Following Educational Welfare Guidelines, 10 unauthorised absences (10 sessions, equivalent to 5 days – 1 day = 2 sessions) during a 10 week period could trigger a penalty notice being raised.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance – the school's protocol

If concerns regarding attendance arise, the following protocol will be applied:

If your child's attendance is below 90% without good reason, their attendance will be monitored weekly by the attendance team until a sustained improvement is seen. (Good reason would be, for instance, a stay in hospital).

The pastoral care team will contact any family where attendance is below 90% to seek reasons for the absence and ways to support the child's attendance.

If the absence fails to improve, a meeting will be called with the attendance officer and/or pastoral care team to seek a solution. A target will be set. If necessary, the case will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer.

If this target is not met, the parent/carer will be called to a meeting with the Headteacher and attendance officer to discuss reasons for absence and the school's expectations.

If the attendance does not improve within the given timeframe, advice will be sought from the Education Welfare Team and a decision will be made whether to refer the case to them to seek their intervention, which could include prosecution, or to refer to Children's Services as a safeguarding risk.

Children Missing in Education (CME)

In line with DfE requirements and Wokingham Local Authority Children Missing in Education procedures, staff will act immediately on any known welfare or safeguarding concerns where a child is missing from school, including, where necessary, a CME referral to the Educational Welfare Officer, and/or a referral to Social Care. In Wokingham, a [CME \(Children Missing Education\)](#) referral happens when a child isn't on a school roll or receiving suitable education, often triggered by a school noticing 10+ days of absence or parents not engaging with home education inquiries, leading to intervention by the local authority's CME Officer (Paul Nicola at CME@wokingham.gov.uk) to ensure the child's safety and education, with policies focused on support, investigation, and statutory duty to return them to learning.

What is a CME Referral?

Definition: A formal notification to Wokingham Borough Council about a child of compulsory school age not registered at school or receiving suitable education.

Triggers:

A school identifies a child absent for 10+ days (consecutive or otherwise).

Parents fail to respond to attempts to arrange home education.

Evidence suggests a child isn't receiving any education.

Purpose: To protect the child's safety and well-being, not just their education.

Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996, says:

"If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence".

If the reasons given for your child's irregular school attendance are not satisfactory, then the Local Authority may take legal proceedings against you for failure to comply with the Law. This may result in:

Key Provisions:

Section 444(1): A parent is guilty if their child, a registered pupil, fails to attend regularly, with no requirement for the parent's intent, making it a strict liability offence.

Section 444(1A): An "aggravated" offence where the parent knowingly allows the child's unauthorised absence.

Penalties:

Section 444(1): Can result in fines up to £1,000 (as amended).

Section 444(1A): Can lead to fines up to £2,500, up to 3 months imprisonment, or both.

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

Behaviour

Anti-bullying

Child Protection and Safeguarding

Whistle blowing

Online safety

Equality

Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children

SEND