



South Lake Primary School

## Attendance Policy

Version	Date	Description
1	September 2007	
2	June 2018	Full review and update to reflect requirements as per Ofsted framework
3	August 2020	No Changes
4	November 2021	Changes to reflect timings due to change in school practice, reference to vulnerable pupils and the absence protocol.
5	March 2023	Changes to reflect timings and attendance team details

This policy is due for review in: December 2023

## **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.

## **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 9.30am, 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.
- 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.

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 10am, 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 of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested
- Inform parents where attendance falls below 90% and 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
- Work with the Education Welfare Service to ensure children are attending school.

### **Emergency contacts**

Schools are required, where possible, to hold more than one emergency contact number 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 for all parents to provide two or more emergency contact number for their child.

We hold a list of any pupils for whom two or more emergency contact numbers are not able to be provided, and these children receive a priority response in our first day absence procedures to ensure any welfare or safeguarding concerns are promptly addressed

### **Monitoring of Vulnerable Pupils**

Pupils who are vulnerable are known by the attendance team and monitored daily. The DSL will contact additional emergency contacts or supporting agencies eg social worker.

For pupils who are CLA, the procedures for the placing authority are followed such as reporting daily attendance.

DSL may contact the LA 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 breakfast club, 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 confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time.
- 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 contact Social Services.

### **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 8.50 am and pupils who arrive after the register is taken will be recorded as late to school
- Registers close at 9.20 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

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 pupil missing education.

### **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.
- 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 £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 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.

### **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.

### **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:

- A Fixed Penalty Notice payable up to **£120** fine
- Prosecution under Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to **£1,000**.

- Prosecution under Section 444 (1a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to **£2,500 and/or sentenced to a term of imprisonment for up to 3 months.**

**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

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