

Attendance, Punctuality and Expectations Policy



1. Introduction

Sitwell Junior School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- 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.
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents, and pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

1.1 Legislation and Guidance

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

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education 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 (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'

- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2023'
- DfE (2024) 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Inspire Trust Safeguarding Policy including Child Protection
- Sitwell Junior School Behaviour Policy
- Inspire Trust Complaints Policy
- SEND Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy

1.2 Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, which is the government target.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers, and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, and carers so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers and learning mentors, in promoting good attendance.
- Act early to address patterns of absence and lateness, including persistent absence, which will include following the Rotherham Local Authority Attendance Pathway (see appendix 2).

2. School expectations

2.1 What the school expects of the pupils:

- to attend every day that they are expected to be at school.
- to arrive on time, ready for the school day.
- to report to reception should they arrive after their official start time.

2.2 What the school expects of the parents/carers:

- To fulfil their responsibility by ensuring their child attends school regularly, on time and is prepared for the school day.
- To ensure that they contact the school on the first day their child is unable to attend.
- To make contact with the Admin Manager (Mrs Tabusam) or Admin Assistant (Mrs Hoyland) whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.

- To inform the Admin Manager or Admin Assistant and seek authorisation for any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, arrange appointments outside of the school day.
- To ensure the continuity of their child's education by taking holidays during the school holiday period. To notify the school of any planned absence using the correct paperwork (see appendix 3 - Leave of Absence During Term Time Request Form) This form should only be used when absolutely necessary.
- To attend any relevant meetings that have been organised to discuss their child's attendance.

2.3 What parents/carers and pupils can expect of the school

- A broad and balanced education that is dependent on regular attendance at school.
- The encouragement and promotion of good attendance.
- Regular and accurate recording of attendance.
- The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, and identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance and act as lead practitioner if attendance is the only issue and/or the local threshold for formal early help is not met.
- If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. If a case meets the local threshold for formal early help/family support, this includes conducting the early help assessment and acting as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.
- Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments for pupils with SEND, SEMH or medical conditions.
- Be aware of pupils who have, or who have had, a social worker. Understand how the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced, can have an impact on attendance – whilst maintaining a culture of high aspiration for the cohort.
- Work in partnership with the local authority at a strategic and individual level, sharing data on attendance including, at an individual level, informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.
- Have high expectations for looked after and previously looked after children, – with expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after pupils. Work in partnership with the local authority Virtual School Head to develop and deliver high quality Personal Education Plans for looked after children that support good attendance.
- School attendance data will be collected, analysed, and monitored regularly. The school will respond to any areas of concern identified.
- School will notify parents of their child's attendance record annually in their end of year Record of Achievement.
- Close liaison with the Local Authority and Early Help Attendance Lead to assist and support parents where needed.

- Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention. Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through a referral to statutory children's social care.

3. Basic School Protocols

3.1 Start and Finish Times

The school has staggered start and finish times for each year group as follows:

Start Times

Year 3 - 8.40am

Year 4 - 8.45am

Year 5 - 8.50am

Year 6 - 8.55am

Finish Times

Year 3 - 2.55pm

Year 4 - 3.00pm

Year 5 - 3.05pm

Year 6 - 3.10pm

Children should arrive no earlier than their year group start time and enter the school site through the green gate on Grange Road, which is open from 8.40am. School staff, including senior leaders and learning mentors are available on the playground at this time.

At the end of the day, parents can enter the playground and collect their children at their designated finish time.

If parents have a concern about their child's attendance, or they know their child is going to be absent, they should contact the school office by telephoning 01709 531867 and speak to Mrs Tabusam or Mrs Hoyland or leave a message by pressing 1 to report an absence.

The school's key attendance staff are Mrs Tabusam (Amin Manager) and Mrs Parker (Learning Mentor). The senior leader responsible for attendance is Mrs Walker (Deputy Headteacher). For further information regarding roles and responsibilities see appendix 1.

3.2. Strategies for promoting attendance

- To set a whole school attendance target is 96%.
- Incentives may be made available to promote and maintain good attendance levels.
- Certificates may be awarded to pupils with high attendance rates and significantly improved attendance. These will be issued in Pupil of the Term Assembly.

4. Punctuality

The online attendance register on Arbor will be taken at the start of the morning and afternoon session of each school day.

Morning registers are taken within 10 minutes of the arrival time during which a child will be marked as present (/). If a child arrives after 10 minutes but before 9.30am, they will be marked as late (L). If a child arrives after 9.30am, they will be marked as late (after register closes) (U).

Afternoon registers are taken at 12.30pm for Year 3 and Year 4 and 1.15pm for Year 5 and Year 6.

5. Absence Protocols

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9am or as soon as practically possible. The school will record all attendance related incoming messages from parents and notify the relevant person. In cases where no satisfactory reason has been received to explain a pupil's absence, the school will endeavour to contact home on the first day of absence. When a pupil is absent and contact cannot be made by telephone, a message via the Arbor app will be sent. If no contact is made by the parent in response to the telephone call or a message via the Arbor app by 11.30am, a home visit may be made by a learning mentor.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

6. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

6.1 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

6.2 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Term-time holidays will not be approved.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in section 6.1.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

6.3 Enforcement Action

The Local Authority takes poor school attendance very seriously, and enforcement action will be taken if a child's attendance does not improve, or if a child has an unauthorised leave of absence in term time. School's will follow the School Attendance Matters Pathway and refer to the Local Authority for enforcement action to take place.

Enforcement action can be one of the following:

- A Fixed Penalty Notice - If a Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid, then it will be referred to the Magistrates Court. There is no right of appeal once a Fixed Penalty Notice has been issued according to the Code of Conduct.
- An Education Supervision Order is a court order made in the Family Court, which gives the Local Authority a supervisory role over a child's education. When an Education Supervision Order is made, the child's parents are legally required to comply with any directions the court makes under the Education Supervision Order. If parents do not comply with the Education Supervision Order they can be prosecuted.
- A referral to the Magistrates Court for prosecution. This could result in a fine of up to £2,500, an order to do unpaid work or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- In some cases, it may also be necessary to refer to Children's Social Care.

7. Persistent Absence

In line with the Local Authority's Attendance Pathway, poor attendance is defined as 92% or 10 sessions of unauthorised absence as this is fast approaching the persistent absence threshold of 90% or below.

If a child's attendance falls into the above category of poor attendance, parents/carers will be contacted by the school and a conversation will be had to try and provide support in order to improve attendance. If this contact does not have the desired effect, the Local Authority Attendance Pathway will be followed (see appendix 2)

8. Pupils moving to a new address and/or school

If you relocate or withdraw your child from school, we must have in writing the following information:

- forwarding address
- date of leaving
- new school details

If we do not have any of these details, then a referral to the Children Missing in Education Officer will be made by the school as part of statutory safeguarding procedures.

9. Child Missing from Education

As a school, we have a duty to monitor attendance through registration and to inform the Local Authority where the attendance of an individual is causing concern; this involves a referral to the CME officer in Early Help where:

- The child fails to attend without explanation.
- The child is expected to start at school but does not arrive.
- The child does not return from a planned holiday (authorised or unauthorised).
- The child leaves the authority without a destination.

If the school has been unable to contact the parent where the child is missing or at risk of becoming CME, the process of notification and referral should begin at the earliest opportunity. Referrals to the CME Officer will be accepted following the completion of the CME Referral and, as a school, we will make adequate attempts at trying to locate the child and family, such as through home visits and calling the family members/liasing with other relevant schools etc.

Please note that children will only be placed on the out of school/CME register after 20 school days of unauthorised absence, unless there is evidence to show the child is elsewhere (Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006). Children referred as Missing from Education will only be removed from the school roll on the advice of, and following consultation with, the Children Missing Education Officer and authorisation from the service.

Pastoral Support Plans (Learning Mentor Support Plans)

Pastoral Support Plans are used in school to help support families and pupils, the plan is also used by Pastoral Leaders to identify the correct strategies, in order to meet the pupil's specific needs.

There are a range of reasons as to why a PSP is put in place, one of these is when a child has missed education due to medical reasons and needs support with reintegration back into school. Additionally, PSPs are used when a pupil does not attend school and needs support to increase their timetable in small achievable steps. In some instances, a child could also have emotionally based school avoidance or other health and wellbeing issues, therefore, a PSP could be used to support.

A final category when a PSP is used is when pupils may struggle to maintain a consistent approach to the expectations of the school. A reduced timetable is always intended to build on areas of success and aim to return to a full timetable. There are times when a pupil will have a timetable in school, which is complemented with alternative provision. Any pupils that are educated off-site are classed as a priority when checking daily attendance.

PSPs are regularly reviewed and are monitored by the safeguarding team with all information inputted on CPOMS.

Early Help Assessment and Plan

The Early Help Assessment is a document that captures what we are worried about and what is working well within families. It is used as a way of supporting families who may need extra help. Issues with school attendance is one of the reasons for offering a family support through the Early Help Assessment. We understand that sometimes families experience difficulties and may need a helping hand. The Early Help Assessment will help in documenting the issues that are affecting family life, resulting in poor school attendance and once this is completed a plan of support is developed with the family to help.

The Early Help Assessment and plan can be completed by any professional working with a child and family, for example school, a health professional, or an Early Help Worker. This will help family and professionals to work together to address barriers to school attendance and other issues the family may be experiencing.

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the SLT in collaboration with all staff. After review, this policy will be approved by the school's Governing Body.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is February 2023.

Policy Review Frequency	Annual
Policy to be approved by	School Governing Body
Date of Review	June 2023
Approved by Chair	Tracey Leeson
Next Review	June 2024
Communication	Staff Handbook, Policy Acceptance
Document Location	Staff Handbook, Policy Acceptance, Every Compliance System
PA/HR Officer	Katie Holland

Appendix 1 – Roles and Responsibilities

- 1.1. The **Governing Board** is responsible for:
- Receiving information from the Headteacher on attendance.
 - Contributing to plans in response to where attendance is a cause for concern.
 - Supporting the school in its efforts to raise attendance.
 - Contributing to the school's strategies to improve attendance.
- 1.2. The **Senior Leadership Team** are responsible for:
The senior member of staff with the responsibility for attendance is Sarah Walker, Deputy Headteacher.
- Developing, monitoring, and reviewing the Attendance Policy.
 - Producing and distributing Attendance information for parents/carers.
 - Setting and monitoring targets for improving attendance within school.
 - Supporting all staff in their work related to attendance.
 - Attending School Attendance Panel meetings of identified pupils and working closely with the Early Help Team to monitor and review these.
 - Collating attendance data for the DfE (Department for Education), LA (Local Authority) and Governors.
 - Liaising with the LA over attendance targets and school strategy.
- 1.3. **Class Teachers** are responsible for:
- Completing electronic registers on Arbor in an accurate and timely manner.
 - Having regular discussions with pupils about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
 - Collecting reasons for absence from pupils, i.e., absence notes and handing them into the office.
 - Responding to queries and concerns when parents initially contact school about attendance.
- 1.4. **Admin Manager & Admin Assistant** are responsible for:
- Ensuring attendance is recorded electronically on Arbor in an accurate and timely manner.
 - Accurately logging when letters and phone calls have been initiated and referring serious concerns to the Learning Mentors.
 - Contacting parents on the first day of absence, when pupils are absent without notification.
 - Referring pupils to Learning Mentors for a home visit on the first day of absence if contact has not been made by 11.30am.
 - Communicating the reason for absence to the relevant member of staff.
 - Half termly monitoring of attendance and following up poor and persistent absence (Admin Manager).
 - Completing statistical returns for LA, DFE.
 - Liaising with the Early Help Team when required.

1.5. **Learning Mentors** are responsible for:

- Making home visits to children on the first day of absence if no contact has been made with parents/carers by 11.30am.
- Identifying individual pupils with known punctuality/attendance problems and ensuring these pupils are monitored closely.
- Identifying those pupils whose attendance is significantly below average, but who do not fall within the group, to ensure they are supported.
- Half termly monitoring of attendance and following up poor and persistent absence.
- Referring pupils to the Early Help Team when attendance gives severe cause for concern and being aware of strategies being used with these pupils and their families to ensure consistency within school.
- Liaising with other partner agencies and services towards improving and developing strategies to raise levels of attendance where relevant.

Appendix 2 – Dealing with Attendance Concerns

If a child's attendance falls below 92% and is fast approaching the persistent absence threshold, the following procedures will be followed, taken from the 'Attendance Matters Local Authority Pathway for Schools' Guidance:

2.1 Hold a conversation with the child/parents/carers to share concerns and follow this up with a letter confirming concerns.

2.2 If the action taken by the school does not have the desired effect, check whether there is a current existing Early Help Assessment in place for the child and family.

2.3 If there is an existing Early Help Assessment in place, make contact with the Lead Professional to share concerns about attendance and ensure that this is named in the plan with clear actions for school to assist in supporting the plan.

2.4 If there is not an Early Help Assessment in place, complete the assessment for children where there is evidence of additional need. This is vital in order to understand fully the issues that may be affecting attendance and where required, bring in appropriate agencies to support the child and family.

2.5 If the family is resistant to having an Early Help Assessment, reassure them that the process is in place to ensure that the right support is offered to them. Early Help also offers a number of courses not just for parents, but also for children that may help with addressing some of the issues around poor attendance.

2.6 If, after reassurance and persistence, the family are still unwilling to engage, continue with the 'Attendance Matters Pathway' and enforcement action can then be considered.

2.7 The School Attendance Matters Pathway contains a series of three letters, sent at different junctures with set timeframes in between.

2.8 Letter 1 is the first in the series. It shares the school's concerns with parents and emphasises the need for improved attendance as well as offering support. If attendance shows an improvement after letter 1, no further letters will be sent.

2.9 Letter 2 will be used when support has been offered and/or taken-up, but attendance has nevertheless not shown improvement. Before sending letter 2, a 3–4-week gap will be given to allow for an improvement to take place.

2.10 Letter 3 will be sent if there is still no improvement in attendance and at this stage, the letter makes clear to parents/carers that they are highly likely to be subject to enforcement action. Before sending letter 3, a 3–4-week gap will be given to allow for an improvement to take place. If attendance improves between letter 3 and the LASAP, school may withdraw the referral, or this will be taken into account at LASAP.

2.11 At the letter 3 stage, also complete and submit a referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Panel. The LASAP is Rotherham’s multi-disciplinary decision-making forum that oversees enforcement action under the provision of the Education Act (1996) with regards to parental responsibility for regular school attendance. The Chair of this group is the Early Help Head of Service, and a range of agencies attend regularly. When school has a case being heard at LASAP a member of school will attend, as will parents and the child where appropriate.

2.12 Following referral to LASAP there will be one of four outcomes as follows:

- FPN issued.
- FPN and decision to hear formally at a future LASAP.
- Decision to hear formally at next LASAP.
- Referral rejected and school notified of reasons.

2.13 If attendance improves whilst progressing through the pathway, however at a later date attendance again deteriorates and there has been less than a twelve-week period between the initial improvement and subsequent deterioration, school will not begin the process from the start but from the place where they last were.

Appendix 3



SITWELL JUNIOR SCHOOL

Leave of Absence during Term Time Request Form

Please read the information on the reverse of this form before its completion

I wish to apply for my child to take leave of absence during term time.

CHILD'S NAME:	
DATE OF BIRTH:	
CLASS NUMBER:	
FIRST DAY OF ABSENCE:	
LAST DAY OF ABSENCE	
NUMBER OF SCHOOL DAYS MISSED:	
REASON FOR REQUESTING LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME: (A LETTER FROM AN EMPLOYER MUST BE ATTACHED TO THIS REQUEST FORM IF THE ABSENCE IS DUE TO WORK COMMITMENTS)	
NAME OF PARENT 1 DATE OF BIRTH ADDRESS	

NAME OF PARENT 2	
DATE OF BIRTH	
ADDRESS	

Signed:..... Parent/Carer 1 Date.....

Signed.....Parent/Carer 2 Date.....

If you go ahead with the leave of absence when unauthorised, you may receive a **Fixed Penalty Notice** issued through the Local Authority. This will be £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days rising to £120 per parent per child if paid within 28 days.

SCHOOL USE ONLY

Date received: _____ Attendance: _____%

Leave of absence in term time

- 1 The decision to grant the request is for the school, not the Authority or the parent. Only schools can authorise absences.
- 2 There is no requirement to authorise just because a request has been made.
- 3 The Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) gives the Local Authority the power to issue fixed penalty notices for unauthorised leave of absence during term time.
- 4 No parent can demand leave of absence for the purposes of a holiday as a right.
- 5 Any request for leave must be made in advance.
- 6 Holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively.
- 7 If the application for leave of absence in term time is made because of the parent's workplace holiday arrangements, then a letter from the employer explaining why the leave of absence must be taken in term time **MUST** be attached to this form on proper letter-headed paper.
- 8 If important work has been missed by the pupil due to the parents making a request for leave of absence for a holiday the parents should not expect special arrangements to be made by the school for that pupil to catch up that work.
- 9 The circumstances of each individual request will be taken into account. The following factors may be relevant, but this should not be regarded as a comprehensive list:
 - Parent's workplace holiday arrangements if supported by a letter from the employer.
 - The overall attendance of the child for the previous academic year or 3 terms.

- If taking leave of absence in the first half of the first term would have a negative impact on pupil progress.
- If a previous holiday has been taken in the same academic year.
- Timing of internal and/or external examinations/assessments.
- The reason given by a parent for requesting leave of absence in term time.