



## **Simonside Primary School Attendance Policy**

**Article 28: Children and young people have the right to education regardless of race, gender, religion or disability (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)**

### **Introduction**

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Simonside Primary school fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. As it states in the school's Vision and Values statement, *'We work hard to create a community and environment which encourages everyone to attend school every day'*.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website, or is available from the school office for those without access to the internet.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department of Education (May 2022) [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/107121/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf), in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head teacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent can fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school could develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

## **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

As a school we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance or above, apart from for those with chronic health issues.
- Support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that all pupils, whatever their needs, have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to maximise learning.
- Enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school.
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities and of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff and the Attendance Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by barriers causing unnecessary absence.
- Establish and maintain a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.
- Recognise the role of class teachers as they will be able to identify where attendance is having an impact on attainment.

### **Simonside Primary school maintains and promotes good attendance and punctuality through:**

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors regarding school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school

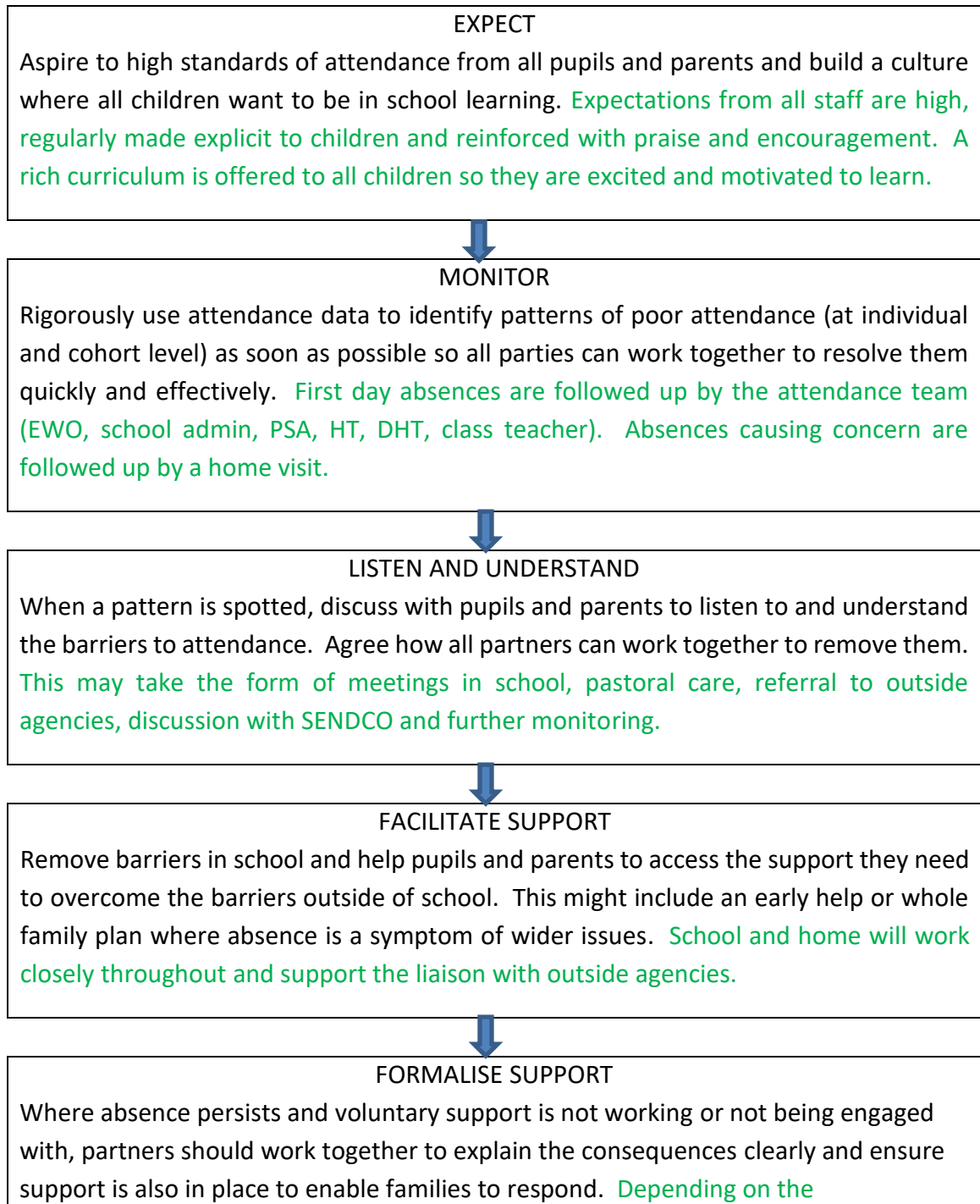
## Procedures

### **Our school will follow procedures to support good attendance:**

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Attendance Service or appropriate agencies any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the nominated person with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

## Working together to improve attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance at home, in school or more broadly requires school and local partners to work collaboratively with families. All partners should work together to:



circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract. This is a formal written agreement between a parent and school to address irregular attendance. The contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement where a voluntary early help plan has not worked.



#### ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education. At all times school staff will continue to provide as much support as possible in removing barriers and improving attendance.

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absences**

The school has, by law, to classify every absence mark a child has as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. Schools have a duty to monitor every child's attendance and take swift action when attendance falls below the expected standard. An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

#### **Authorised Absences**

- ✓ Illness
- ✓ Medical/Dental (where a hospital letter or appointment card has been seen)
- ✓ Bereavement
- ✓ Agreed special occasion or exceptional circumstances
- ✓ Religious observance
- ✓ Approved sporting activity

#### **Unauthorised Absences**

This type of absence is not permitted by law. School cannot authorise absences for:

- ✗ Going to the shops or hairdressers
- ✗ Going on holidays
- ✗ Visiting relatives
- ✗ Children not wanting to come to school
- ✗ Staying off because a sibling is off poorly
- ✗ Birthdays
- ✗ Waiting for a delivery
- ✗ Oversleeping because of a late night

- ✗ Getting up late and not wanting to come into school for that day
- ✗ Keeping your child off because you are ill
- ✗ Appointments for other family members

## **Illness**

We know that young children can be susceptible to illness and understand that if they are poorly they may need time off to recover. This is reflected in our school target for every child to have at least 97% attendance.

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services (Bridges Hospital Teaching – Newcastle LA) to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

If a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness-related absence. This evidence should be a doctor's note, appointment card/letter or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from parents for the school to make their own enquiries. Alternatively, we may make a referral to the School Health Advisor to offer support.

*In all cases of absence parents should:*

- Only keep their child away from school if really necessary.
- Telephone school on the first day of absence. If no contact has been made by 9.30am from parents/carer, school will phone. If contact can still not be made, the information will be passed onto our Parent Support Advisor or Attendance Officer who may come and visit children's homes to investigate why they are not in.
- Keep school informed if more than one day's absence is necessary.
- Avoid medical appointments in school time but, if absolutely necessary, bring their child to school before and/or after the appointment.
- Speak to the class teacher who will be able to provide parents with work for their child if appropriate.

## **Registers, Punctuality and Lateness**

Punctuality is crucial. 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 at the correct time for their year group. Learning starts as soon as the child walks into their classroom. Being late is extremely detrimental to their learning.

Registers are legal documents and will be marked twice a day.

Registration takes place as soon as the children come into class. Any child arriving after 9:10am will receive a late mark (attendance code L on the electronic register) and the number of minutes late is recorded. Any children who are late must report to the main reception to receive their mark and give the reason why they are late. Any child arriving after 9:30am will have their late arrival classed as an unauthorised absence. Afternoon registers are taken at 1:00pm for KS1 and LKS2 and 1:15pm for UKS2.

All attendance records are documented using SIMS software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of the 1996 Education Act. The school seeks to improve general punctuality and to improve attitudes of persistent offenders by:

- Informing parents of our expectations and offer ways of helping combat lateness.
- Contacting parents of persistent offenders and reporting to the Attendance Officer if no improvement. Parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.
- Praising and acknowledging latecomers who improve.
- Ensuring that all children and parents understand that lateness is actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases.
- Putting in place school incentives (e.g. Dojo points and class attendance rewards) to improve levels of punctuality.
- Utilising the role of the PSA to support pupils and families with any of the above issues.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school late will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

### **Reintegrating Long Term Absentees**

Following a long period of absence, a child may feel vulnerable so staff may wish to arrange a phased or gradual return. Staff will consider whether Special Needs support is appropriate, ensure that all staff are aware of the situation and nominate a key person to monitor the child's reintegration into school. All children must feel welcomed back and know from whom they can seek help. Never leave children sitting in corridors or outside an office for long periods.

### **Home Time**

We also record details of any pupils who are collected from school before 3:15pm (reason, number of minutes absent from school and whether an appointment card/letter has been seen). If the reason is not connected to an appointment, or an appointment card/letter is not seen by a member of staff, the minutes absent from school are recorded as unauthorised.

If a parent/carer turns up without prior warning and asks to collect their child early we would need to see the medical letter or appointment card. If no paperwork is available there is a form called 'Request to collect my child early from school' which the parent will be asked to complete. This is to ensure we have a recorded reason for the early collection. The confirmed reason will determine as to whether the minutes absent are recorded as authorised or not.

All children should be collected promptly at the end of the day. Exceptions to this are:

- Parents who have given permission for their child to walk home
- Children going to an after-school club

If a child is not collected by 3:30pm and we have not been informed by a parent/carer of any reason for this, a referral may be made to social services.

### **Holidays**

Holidays should not be taken during term time. As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. Taking holidays in term time may therefore result in the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice if the child is absent for 5 consecutive days (10 sessions).

Such a penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 if paid within the first 21 days which increases to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. Thereafter, if the Penalty remains unpaid this may lead to prosecution through the Magistrates Court.

If parents would like their child to have time off school for any reason- including holidays and medical appointments- they are required to:

- Collect a form (Application for Leave of Absence) from the school office BEFORE the absence
- Complete the form with as much information as they can about why they want to take their child out of school and return it to school

Medical/Dental Appointments should be supported by evidence i.e. appointment card/hospital letter.

Parents are advised that we always look at every case individually and take into account their child's attendance record over the previous year before making a decision about whether the absence will be authorised or not. Mrs Thompson may want to talk to them about it before making a decision. If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.



## **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. It is important that full and accurate details of the reason for absence are provided and an expected date of return is given. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

## **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers between 9:00am and 9:30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. If contact cannot be made by phone or text, then the PSA or Attendance Officer will undertake a home visit.

## **Legal Monitoring**

The school expects attendance of at least 97%. It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. Initially, concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home and parents may be offered a parent contract. A parent contract is an agreement/action plan which looks at ways to work together to improve attendance. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school and the local authority will work together and make use of a range of legal interventions. These are:

- **Education supervision orders.** These are made through the Family or High Court and give the local authority a formal role in advising, helping and directing the parents to ensure the parents receive suitable education.
- **Attendance prosecution.** The law makes parents and carers responsible for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age (5 to 16) receive a suitable, full time education (Section 7, Education Act 1996). Schools and the local authority monitor school absence and work with families and young people where the level of absence is causing concern.

The Local Authority may take legal action against parents/carers if their children do not attend regularly and if the absences are not authorised by the school (Section 444, Education Act 1996).

Prosecution under Section 444(1), Education Act 1996:

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

There are two offences relating to parental responsibility for ensuring regular attendance at school or alternative provision:

- 1) If a registered pupil is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. This may result in a fine up to £1000.
  - 2) If the parent knows that their child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails to cause him to do so, he is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996. This is known as an aggravated offence. This may result in a fine of up to £2500, and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- **Parenting orders.** This is an ancillary order that can be imposed by the Court following conviction for non-attendance alongside a fine and/or community order.
  - **Fixed penalty notices.** These are served as an alternative to prosecution where parents have failed to ensure that their child attends school. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Monies collected through fixed penalty notices can only be used for the administration of the fixed penalty notice system or for prosecuting for the original offence in cases of non-payment. Any surplus at the end of the year must be returned to the Secretary of State.

### Rewards and Recognition

As part of our commitment to raising attendance levels in our school, we offer a number of different initiatives.

- A trophy and 'Simon', the attendance bear, is awarded to the class each week which has the best attendance. The attendance percentage for each class is displayed on a graph in the hall for the children to see.
- Classes are given a letter for every day they have 100% attendance. When they have the 13 letters to spell out 'Star Attenders' that class will have pizza as a treat.
- Classes who have an attendance percentage of 97% or over each week receive an extra play time.
- Termly prizes/treats for 100% attenders.
- Termly certificates for children with 97% or above attendance.
- Attendance ambassadors who work with teaching staff to discuss attendance issues e.g. barriers to attendance/punctuality and ideas for incentives.

### *Named personnel with designated responsibility for Attendance:*

Headteacher	Deputy Headteacher	Attendance Officer	Chair of Governors
Mrs Louise Thompson	Mrs Emma Hills	Mrs Lauren Anderson	Mrs Lynn Rae

