

Simonside Primary School

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Headteacher: Mrs Hills



Monday 24th November 2025

ALL ABOUT ATTENDANCE!

Dear Parents and Carers,

This newsletter, as the heading suggests, is all about attendance! We have had a number of queries about our attendance procedures and questions about why it is so important. Our full Attendance Policy can be found on our school website. However, I have provided an overview and the main headlines below. Please do read this letter (and preferably the policy as a whole) as ***it is a parent/carer's legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school.***

We want all young people at this school to be **confident both academically and socially**. This will ensure that they succeed in the next stage of their learning. Success at school allows young people to make more choices about their lives, have ambitions about the future, enjoy a wide range of experiences and make lifelong friends. In short, it allows them to 'dream, believe and achieve'.

School isn't always easy. Most young people have days when they don't want to go. However, if they aren't in school, they will feel behind in their learning when they return. That can have a big effect on their confidence. They also **miss out** on shared experiences with friends, which can make them feel left out. This can make school feel even harder and lead to more regular absence.

Important to note:

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Children whose attendance is low are likely to have poor outcomes, so will be treated as vulnerable.



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These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

We expect parent/carers to:

- **Encourage school attendance and the value of attending school regularly.**



- **Provide up-to-date contact numbers and changes of address.**

- **Provide details of at least two contacts for emergency use.**

- **Notify the school before 8:45am either by telephone (0191 2860776) or by email admin@simonside.newcastle.sch.uk when your child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first day of the absence.**

- **Telephone the school after the first day of absence if the absence is continuing.**
- **Keep the school well informed, especially about circumstances that might mean your child is absent for several days.**
- **Provide medical evidence, if possible, indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor, or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation arises. This might include an appointment note or an NHS App message. Whenever possible all appointments should be made outside of school hours.**
- **Ensure that your child arrives at school on time each day.**
- **Let the school know if your child is going to be late, e.g., if a car breaks down, if an urgent appointment has been made.**
- **Book family holidays during school holiday time.**



Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers' legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the Head Teacher creates an offence in law.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

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.
- Sibling unwell.
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (after the close of registration).

First Day Absence Contact

You must notify us by 8:45am if your child is unable to attend for any reason. If we don't receive notification, we will contact you as early as possible in the school day. This is because your child may have set off for school but not arrived.

First Day Response Procedures

We will follow First Day Response (FDR) procedures by:

- Contacting you on the first day of absence by telephone/text, to try to ascertain the reason.
- Making a home visit if phone calls are unanswered.
- Informing any appropriate professionals or agencies working with your child or family.

If your child is still too unwell to attend the following day, **you must contact us again before 8:45am to inform us. If we already have concerns about your child's attendance, we may carry out a home visit even if you have given us a reason for the absence.**

Continued Absence Procedures

If after three days of absence, your child has not been seen and you have not contacted the school, we will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with you, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family.

If this is unsuccessful, we will make a home visit to check the safety and wellbeing of your child. We may also contact officers from the Local Authority.

If we have concerns about your child's attendance, we will invite you into school to discuss the matter. If attendance fails to improve, we will refer the matter to the Local Authority.

Legal Intervention

You have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full-time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996).

We regard the use of legal sanctions as a last resort where attendance is low and has not improved despite our best efforts to work with families. However, our use of legal sanctions underlines the importance of attendance and our determination that all young people at this school receive a suitable education.

If your child's attendance drops below [96%] without a suitable reason, you will receive a letter telling you that we are concerned. If there are further absences including unauthorised absence you will be invited to an Attendance Contract meeting to develop a plan of support that improves attendance. Further unauthorised absence totalling 10 or more unauthorised sessions in previous ten weeks and attendance below 90% will result in a referral to the Local Authority for consideration of legal action.



Information for Parent/Carers – Common Questions

Q. I understand why it's important for older kids to attend, but why is it so important when they're younger?

A. It's really important that children make a good start as early as possible in their school life. If they are absent a lot they will fall behind academically and socially, and this will make the move into secondary school much more difficult. **If children get into the habit of thinking that it is OK to miss school, it**

will definitely get worse as they get older. Most parents faced with a teenager who refuses to go to school wish they had been firmer about attendance when their child was younger.

- Q. My child cries when I take her to school. What can I do?
- A. **It's not uncommon for young people to feel anxious about going to school, and it is often tough for parents to take a firm line. However, it is really important for children to get into the habit of going to school right from the start.** It's very rare for a young person to continue to be distressed after they have arrived in school and settled in, so don't sit worrying all day. School staff are experts at helping young people who are anxious, so if it is happening regularly, talk about it with staff.
- Q. My child always says they feel ill. How do I know it's OK to send them to school?
- A. **Unless they have an obvious medical condition, it is usually worth sending your child to school. Once young people are at school, they are usually too busy to feel anxious.** If your child becomes ill at school, we will get in touch.
- Q. Sometimes my child is really tired. Surely, it's better to let them sleep rather than send them in to school?
- A. The problem with doing this is that they get into a different sleep pattern, and **it makes the problem worse.** Many young people are tempted to play games or be on their phones late at night. It's important to help them take responsibility for being ready for school the next day. If they are tired, they will sleep better the following evening.



I am aware that it may feel as though we're talking about attendance all the time. This is because it's so important and our overall attendance is not high enough. We will be launching our Advent Attendance initiative next week which we will provide more information on in the coming days. **Every child who is in every day on time this week will have the chance to win cinema vouchers. Be 'in it to win it'!**



Take care,

Mrs Hills
Head Teacher

