

Attendance Policy

Swavesey
Primary
School

Principles

Swavesey Primary School aims to work together with Parents, Carers and the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) to ensure that all children registered at school attend every day and on time, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Through this we further aim to improve the achievement of pupils by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality by creating an ethos in which attendance and punctuality are seen to be valued by the whole school. The recognised expected level of attendance at school is 100% unless pupils have chronic health issues or there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

The following guidance has been taken into consideration when developing this policy: Working Together to Improve School Attendance. August 2024.

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Support children and their parents/carers to have the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer.
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities.

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. As a school we will encourage parents/carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

The school also has a safeguarding duty of care to all its pupils, part of which is ensuring a child has good attendance.

Responsibilities

Parents and Carers' Responsibilities

Parents and Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that children of statutory school age (term after the child turns five) attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting an absence from school without good reason is an offence. A pupil whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed the equivalent of two whole terms of learning.

Parents and Carers must:

- Ensure all children registered at Swavesey Primary School attend regularly and punctually every day unless prevented from doing so by illness or a necessary medical appointment.
- Inform school in advance of any medical appointments during school time, parents will be asked to provide supporting evidence from the hospital, doctor or dentist, such as appointment details card/letter/text message in relation to the time requested.
- Ensure their child arrives at school in time for registration. Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as unauthorised.
- Inform the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that any problem can be quickly identified and supported.
- Follow application procedures regarding a request for leave of absence during term time, which should only be taken if absolutely necessary. Leave is not automatically authorised unless considered an

exceptional circumstance. Any leave taken during term time, that has been unauthorised, could be subject to a penalty notice/fine.

- Report any changes to their contact details to the Office to ensure the school has the most up to date contact information.
- Engage with early interventions designed to support the family and their child's attendance at school.
- Discuss attendance where necessary face to face or on the telephone – conversations are preferable to messages or emails.

School Responsibilities

Swavesey Primary School will provide a safe learning environment for all children to encourage good attendance and support teaching and learning for positive outcomes. They will ensure they keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality as laid down in their legal duty.

All members of the school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for monitoring individual children's attendance and punctuality identifying trends in attendance and lateness. The Head teacher has overall responsibility for the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil. Where there are concerns, parents and carers will always be informed by letter and/or telephone conversation and given an opportunity to come into school to meet with designated staff.

Staff will:

- aim to contact the Parents and Carers of any pupil who is absent from school where a reason has not been provided once the registers have closed at 8.55am.
- ring the first priority contact number to establish a reason for the absence.
    - If unable to make contact, they will call the next contact until we have been provided with a reason for absence.
    - If the reason for absence is still unknown at the close of our registration administrative period, staff will:
        - Leave a voicemail where possible and/or email the contact numbers provided by the Parent and Carers to enquire about a pupil's absence
        - Complete the registers in accordance to the guidelines relating to correct usage of codes
        - Log the outcome of the phone call/email on Bromcom – our pupil data system
        - Inform a member of the SLT or a DSL/DDSL should there be a particular concern regarding an individual pupil's attendance or lateness

The School Attendance Staff

Lateness and attendance are monitored daily by the school attendance staff who will:

- Scrutinise the registers daily, monitoring authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons provided for pupil absence and lateness.
- Raise concerns with Parent/Carers of identified patterns of lateness with an initial 'Late Letter'.
- Contact parents by telephone, email, or letter to establish a reason for a pupil's absence if the reason is unknown.
- Raise concerns with Parent/Carers once attendance has fallen below the threshold set of 96%, offering support or sign posting to other areas of support within the community:

- Step One - Informal contact should attendance drop to 96% (or below due to a single period of absence). This will be via telephone, or a brief catch-up at the start/end of the school day by any member of staff, to ascertain barriers to accessing education and offering support and signposting.
- Step Two – If attendance does not improve or drops further a letter advising Parent/Carers of our concerns regarding the level of their child(ren) attendance and/or lateness
- Step Three - If attendance continues to be below the threshold a formal Parent Contract Meeting will be held in school, with Parent/Carers to discuss concerns and, working together, identifying support which can be offered and signposting. Targets will be set to improve the attendance and/or lateness. These targets will be reviewed at the end of an agreed monitoring period.
- Step Four - Should the targets set at step three not be met following a review, despite every attempt by the school to support the family, a referral for the issue of a penalty notice or prosecution could be made to the Local Authority's Attendance Legal Panel for children of statutory school age.

- Liaise with other external organisations in relation to a pupil's attendance and/or lateness.
- Monitor pupils attendance within specific and identified groups
- Monitor pupil absences for those with additional medical needs
- Monitor pupils and follow procedures for pupils 'Missing in Education'.
- Follow reporting procedures for parents/carers who have requested to Home Educated their child(ren)
- Follow procedures when deleting a pupil from roll
- Meet with AIO on the allocated (virtual) visits to school, who will also monitor the registers and follow up any identified concerns.
- Monitor absences for illness and requests for leave to attend medical appointments.
- Complete a Medical Needs Assessment on pupils with absences of 15 consecutive days during the school year
- Monitor and act upon requests for term time leave of absence and ensure Parent/Carers are informed of procedures in relation to authorised/unauthorised leave

Only the Head teacher may authorise any absence for a legitimate reason, not all absence supported by Parent/Carers will be classified as authorised.

Children's Responsibilities:

- Attend school every day.
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher any problems that may affect their school attendance.

Governors' Responsibilities:

- Monitor attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis.
- Hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

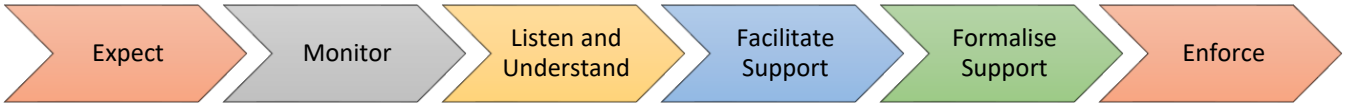
Local Authority Responsibilities:

- Provide support, information and guidance to school by having regular meetings to discuss attendance.
- Act as a partner with school to support in some cases of persistent absence.
- Work with schools in the enforcement of penalty notices, fines and prosecutions in cases that require legal involvement.

- Identify suitable provision and reasonable adjustments for pupils unable to access education due to prolonged ill health.

School Attendance Strategy

As a school, we aim to work collaboratively with parents/carers to improve school attendance. This means that we will listen, empathise and support with attendance. However, if this is unsuccessful, we will follow the DfE and Local Authority guidance and Code of Conduct including considering legal sanctions where appropriate**.**



Support and Signposting:
Where a child's attendance is falling, or has fallen below the threshold, school staff will offer support, including signposting, in a variety of ways:

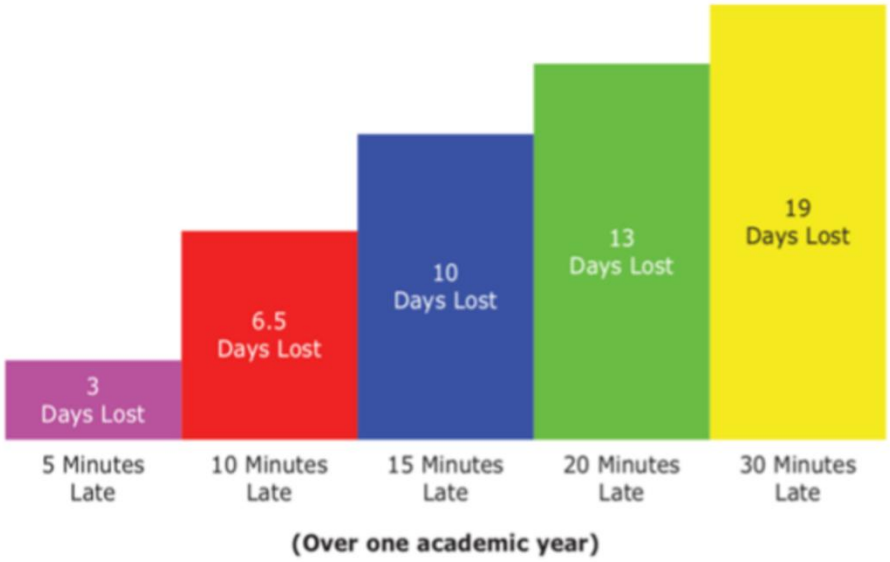
- Signposting to our website for the resources for Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) and Wellbeing - these can be accessed here.
- Direct support from school staff in supporting school engagement through such opportunities as attending sensory circuits at the start of the day, coming into school earlier.
- Support from the SENDCo following Cambridge Therapeutic Thinking processes such as Anxiety mapping to identify triggers and create a plan to reduce/negate these.
- Signposting support from Jane Rogers our Education Inclusion Family Advisor and/or referring directly.
- Signposting support from the school nursing team, which may include a school referral.
- Signposting support from the Local Authority Wellbeing team.
- Support from the SENDCo and/or DSL (or DDSL) to access targeted support through an Early Help Assessment (EHA) where a multi-agency approach would be more supportive.
  (The Local Authority EHA page contains a variety of additional signposts to support children and families, which can be accessed here.)

Registration
Reception to Year 6**:**

- The school gates and classroom entry points are opened at 8.45am
- All external classroom entry points are closed at 8.55 am.
- After 8.55am, entry to the school is via the front gate and main entrance only.
- Registers open at 8.50am and close at 8.55am. Pupils who arrive at school after this time will be recorded as L, late on the register.
- Pupils who arrive at school after 9.10am, without an unavoidable reason, will have their lateness recorded as U (unauthorised late) which then impacts on their overall attendance level.

Lateness

Registration takes place from 8.50am to 8.55am during the starter activity of the day. Pupils who arrive after the registration period and up to 9.10am will be marked as late. Any pupil who arrives after 9.10am will be marked as an unauthorised late. Children who are persistently late to school will miss a significant amount of their education.



Where pupils show a persistent pattern of lateness, Parents/Carers will initially receive a letter informing them of the school's concerns. This will advise Parents/Carers to speak to a member of staff to help address the issue. Should the lateness continue, Parents/Carers will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss their child's lateness.

If there is no improvement, despite the school's attempts to address unauthorised absences, a referral could be made to the Local Authority's Attendance Legal Panel for a Penalty Notice (PN) or prosecution for pupils who are of statutory school age.

Reporting a Pupil Absence

Parent/Carers must contact school on the first and every subsequent day of absence by 8.55am.

For any pupil not present at the close of registration, and where the reason is still unknown, a member of staff will attempt to make contact with the Parents and Carers once the registers have closed.

The member of staff will ring every contact, starting with the priority contact, until a reason for absence is known. Failure to make contact with the Parents and Carers to establish a reason for an absence will result in an email being sent home for the Parents and Carers to reply to school at the earliest opportunity detailing the reason for the absence. Any unexplained absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence if there is no response from Parents and Carers to an enquiry regarding their child's absence from school. In cases where safeguarding concerns are raised by the absence, safeguarding protocols will be followed as per the school's safeguarding policy.

For absences relating to a medical appointment, supporting evidence will be requested to authorise this absence. This can be a text message which clearly identifies who the appointment is for, a letter that is headed

from the medical professional or an appointment card. A period of absences will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment. Children who fail to return to school within a reasonable time following their medical appointment could result in an am/pm session being unauthorised.

Illnesses

As a school we have children and staff who are medically vulnerable and as a school we have a duty to safeguard our children and staff, which we do by following NHS guidelines.

Children who have diarrhoea or vomiting should not attend school, returning after they have been 48 hours clear of the last bout.

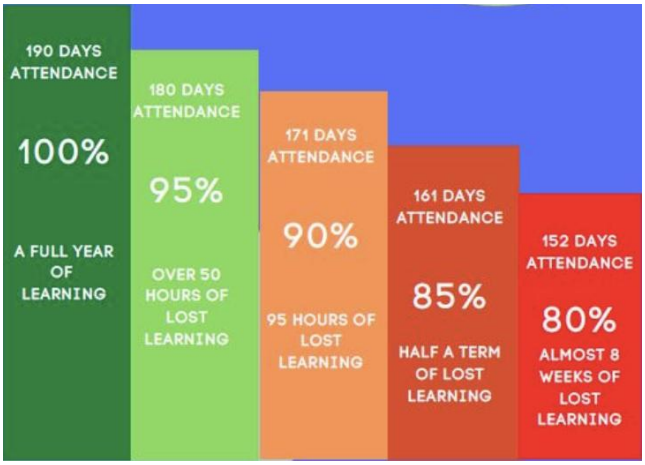
If children have a temperature, they should stay at home until their temperature has reduced and are well enough to return to school.

COVID-19 - The Covid virus continues to be a real risk to our medically vulnerable children and staff and their health, so we ask parents and carers to test where possible should children display Covid-19 symptoms as described by the NHS (which can be accessed here). If a pupil tests positive for COVID-19 this should be reported to the school and the pupil should stay at home returning to school after 3 days if they feel well enough to do so and do not have a high temperature.

As a school, we are continuing to maintain the good practice of regular handwashing and pupils are encouraged to cough and sneeze into a tissue to help reduce the risk of passing on any infections. We ask that you support our community in this by continuing these practices at home.

Definitions of Leave:

Swavesey Primary School expects attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence. Children who are regularly absent miss a significant amount of their education, which research shows significantly impacts on future prospects.



Authorised leave:

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason such as illness, subject to pattern of illness, or a medical appointment where supporting evidence has been provided to cover the period of absence. However, there is an expectation that the pupil will be in school

for registration or return to school after the appointment, depending on where the appointment falls within the school day.

- Religious Observance - only day (s) exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong to
- The leave of absence has been authorised due to a short and exceptional, unavoidable circumstance.

Unauthorised leave:

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school, even with the support of the Parent/Carers, such as shopping, hair appointments, visiting family or birthdays.
- Medical appointments where supporting evidence of appointment details have not been provided when requested.
- There has been no reason provided by the Parent/Carers to support an absence.
- Failure to follow school procedures or inform the school when taking a pupil out of school during term time.
- A leave of absence that has not been authorised due to not being considered an exceptional circumstance.

Guidance for Parents/Carers – Term Time Leave

Parents/Carers do not have the right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term time holiday. Government guidelines have removed the discretion on head teachers agreeing to term time leave. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted before the leave is taken. Parent/Carers must complete a Term Time Exceptional Leave Request form and provide any supporting evidence, if applicable, with their request. This also applies to parents/carers requesting to take their child out of school during the school day.

If the school suspect Term Time Leave has been taken but the parent/carers have not completed a Term Time Exceptional Leave Request Form, we will write to all parent/carers giving them an opportunity to clarify the reason for absence and provide supporting evidence. Failure to respond to or provide supporting evidence will result in a referral to the Local Authority for unauthorised leave from school.

Exceptional circumstance (*definition of exceptional*: *rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis, such as up to two days absence from school to visit a dying relative, death of a family member, attendance at a funeral or any unavoidable one off event.

The following examples of requests for leave of absence that **do not meet** the criteria of an exceptional circumstance and **will not be** authorised and could be subject to a Penalty Notice Fine/Prosecution for pupils of statutory school age are:

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term/half term
- Trip of a lifetime
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad
- Relatives coming to visit
- Extension of leave if a pupil has not returned to school after an agreed absence if the reason for this does not meet grounds for an exceptional circumstance

Any parent/carer who takes a child out of school for term time leave of six or more consecutive sessions (a session is a morning or afternoon i.e. 1 day equals 2 sessions) over a four-week period, not authorised by the school (under the exceptional circumstances rule), will receive a Penalty Notice.

If 3 or more term time leave Penalty Notices have been issued over a 3 year period then prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996, may be considered as an alternative to a Penalty Notice fine being issued. Where a parent takes a child out of school during term time for an extended period (20 days or more), not authorised by the school, prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996, may also be considered.

Penalty Notice

If a pupil takes unauthorised term-time leave for 10 consecutive sessions or more (generally 5 days) they will be subject to a Penalty Notice. The fine for a penalty notice is £80 per child, per parent/carer, increasing to £160 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child and this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent.

For second offences of unauthorised term-time leave (10 consecutive sessions or more) within a three-year rolling period, the fine is a flat £160 per parent, per child. For the third offence in a three-year rolling period, the referral will be automatically considered for prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Definition of a 'Parent'

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

- All natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person;
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Who has "Parental Responsibility"?
(The Children Act 1989)
Having parental responsibility means assuming all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent of a child has by law.
People other than a child's natural parents can acquire parental responsibility through:

- being granted a residence order
- being appointed a guardian
- being named in an emergency protection order (although parental responsibility in such a case is limited to taking reasonable steps to safeguard or promote the child's welfare)
- adopting a child

If the parents of a child were not married to each other when the child was born, the mother automatically has parental responsibility but the father only does (from 1 December 2003) by jointly registering the birth of the child with the mother. He can, however subsequently acquire parental responsibility by various legal means.
What does having "care" of a child mean"?
Having care of a child or young person means that a person who the child lives with and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law. This could be shown by:

- Interaction with the school – attending meetings, making phone calls, being on the School's record as being involved (in whatever capacity) etc.
- Residence with the child where, for all intents and purposes, the person is part of the family
- A man or woman married to a parent of a child

Children Missing in Education (CME)

Should a pupil leave our school, the school must inform the local authority providing the following information and therefore will require this information from parents/carers:

- details of the pupil's residence, the name of the person with whom they will reside, the date from which they will reside there
- the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school.

When a parent/carer elects to home educate the school will follow its legal duty and notify the Local Authority.

Should a pupil fail to return to school 10 days after an agreed authorised leave or 20 days without authorisation then the school will liaise with the local authority to locate them.

Where the school is **unaware of a pupil's destination and/or the pupil and families whereabouts**– this also includes those pupils who fail to transfer to statutory education from nursery school, then a referral will be made to the central Attendance Team, after the school has made an initial investigation to the pupil's whereabouts, including a home visit. If a pupil is deemed vulnerable then the referral will be made immediately.

The Local Authority's CME information/policy can be found here.