Attendance Policy

Author: Matthew White

Policy Revised: September 2022

Next Review: September 2025

Contents

---

1. Aims

Children are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have, and we will endeavour to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support regular attendance. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our academy a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to academy attendance through our whole-academy culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

> Promoting good attendance

> Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence

> Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled

> Acting early to address patterns of absence

> Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend academy

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve academy attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on academy attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern academy attendance:

> Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

> Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

> Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

> The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

> The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the academy census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The board of trustees

The board of trustees is responsible for:

> Promoting the importance of academy attendance across the academy's policies and ethos
> Making sure academy leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
> Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
> Monitoring attendance figures for the whole academy
> Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
> Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

> Implementation of this policy at the academy
> Monitoring academy-level absence data and reporting it to trustees
> Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
> Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
> Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

> Leading attendance across the academy
> Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
> Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
> Having an oversight of data analysis
> Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
> Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
> Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Matthew White and can be contacted via 01403 733254, or m.white@southwaterinfants.co.uk

3.4 The attendance officer

The academy attendance officer is responsible for:

> Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
> Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
> Providing regular attendance reports to academy staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
> Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
> Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Matthew White and can be contacted via 01403 733254, or m.white@southwaterinfants.co.uk

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the academy office in the morning by 9:10 and in the afternoon by 13:10.

3.6 Academy office staff

Academy office staff will:

> Take calls from parents / guardians about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the academy system

> Pass on details from parents / guardians to the attendance officer in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

> Make sure their child attends every day, or timetabled session, on time

> Call the academy to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence advise when they are expected to return

> Provide the academy with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

> Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the academy day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

> Attend academy every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each academy day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

> Present

> Attending an approved off-site educational activity

> Absent

> Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

> The original entry

> The amended entry

> The reason for the amendment

> The date on which the amendment was made

> The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

> Whether the absence is authorised or not

> The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

> The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in academy by 8:45am on each academy day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:00.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the academy office staff (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the academy may ask the pupil's parent/carer 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 academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the academy in advance of the appointment.

Parents / carers should contact the school office in order to request leaves of absence.

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

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the academy can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

> Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
> After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
> Where there are concerns about punctuality, the academy will make verbal contact with parents/carers, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to the academy on time. If the concerns persist, the Attendance Officer will write to the parents / carers, including a copy of the child's registration certificate, and stating the total minutes late over a determined period.
> If there is no improvement, the Headteacher or Attendance Officer will arrange a meeting with the parent / carer.
> In the event of persistent lateness, the academy may make a formal referral to the Pupil Entitlement Investigation Team at West Sussex.
> We monitor late collection from the academy premises at the end of the school day. Names of such pupils are recorded in the Office and a reason for the late collection must be recorded on each occasion. The academy will invite you to meet with them to discuss late collection of pupils if it becomes frequent and regular or a pattern emerges and letters will be sent home once a child is collected late from the academy on three or more occasions.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend academy does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the academy will:

> Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the academy cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts.

> Identify whether the absence is approved or not

> Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

> Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the academy will consider involving an education welfare officer

> If the academy has safeguarding concerns regarding the unexplained absence of a child, an immediate referral to the MASH or Police may be made.

> Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the academy to establish their whereabouts without success, the academy will make an immediate referral to the Pupil Entitlement Investigation Team or West Sussex Children Missing in Education Team.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The academy will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels every year via a class teacher report and during parent / teacher conferences twice a year.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

'Exceptional circumstances' may include:

> A major family event such as the wedding of an immediate relative

> Serious or terminal illness, or funeral of a close relative

> Significant family trauma has occurred and it is believed that a break is in the child's best interests.

Please check with a member of SLT or the office team if you are unsure whether your request would fall under 'exceptional circumstances'

The academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

> Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

> 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 academy 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 academy, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Legal sanctions

The academy or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from academy, where the child is of compulsory academy age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

> The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
> One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
> Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during academy hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

> The most vital part of encouraging good attendance is to ensure that the academy is a place to which the children want to come: that the academy is a place where the children are treated with respect and feel valued; a place where their needs are recognised and are being addressed; a place where all children can experience success within a rich, relevant and diversified curriculum.

> It is clear that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at the academy. From the outset, parents are encouraged to take an active interest in the work of the academy and to build and support their children's enthusiasm for attending school.

> All staff make children aware of the importance of good attendance and children are praised.

> Each child's attendance record is shared with the parents as part of the End of Year written reports and at Parent Consultations. It follows that individual records of attendance are kept on file and are passed onto subsequent schools.

You can support your child by:

> Ensuring regular and early bed times
> Helping with homework
> Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
> Providing a healthy breakfast
> Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
> Retaining open & honest communication with the academy
> Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
> Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The academy will:

- The academy follows West Sussex policy for managing attendance of the children at the academy. We work in partnership with the Pupil Entitlement Team at West Sussex to monitor and, where appropriate, support families in improving levels of attendance for their child.

- The academy will log conversations with parents about attendance to assist in the monitoring of attendance and the offering of support.

- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil. The academy will ensure that its staff receive appropriate training and support to appropriately use attendance codes in line with DfE guidance and best practice.

- To enable the appropriate coding of attendance or the authorisation of absence, the academy may request additional information or evidence, eg. in relation to medical appointments or illness. (Medical evidence may include: an appointment letter, a GP appointment card signed / stamped by a receptionist, a prescription, prescribed medication.)

- Regular checks on attendance are carried out by all class teachers. The Attendance Registers are marked twice each day, at the start of the morning session and again in the afternoon. Registers are checked by Office Staff.

- All absences and persistent lateness are investigated. When the register closes the Office Staff check the messages and operate 'first day calling' for those pupils absent with no reason given.

- Attendance data is held electronically on separate SIMS Management Information System, accessible by the Head teacher and Office Staff who are able to conduct spot checks on individual children and provide comprehensive attendance records.

- The attendance monitors the attendance of pupils each half term. The staged approach appended outlines the academy's approach for monitoring and enabling attendance.

- Returns of academy data are made termly to the Department for Education (DfE) and benchmark data exists to compare our academy within local and national contexts.

- The academy sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and Trustees at the first Full Board meeting of the school year. Targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's academy absence national statistics releases. The underlying academy-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The academy will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the board of trustees.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The academy will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families

- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The academy will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other academy leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of academy time, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of academy.

The academy will:

> Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
> Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the academy (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at academy
> Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
> In the first instance, a letter will be issued outlining attendance figures, cause for concern and an offer of support
> The escalation process as outlined in Appendix A, will be followed.
> In the event of persistent lateness, the academy may make a formal referral to the Pupil Entitlement Investigation Team at West Sussex and a FPN may be issued.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum two years by Matthew White (attendance officer). At every review, the policy will be approved by the full board of trustees.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

> Child protection and safeguarding policy
> Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on academy attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the academy
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the academy

Code	Definition	Scenario
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the academy

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness	Academy has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the academy
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	Academy is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at academy after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in academy	Pupil of non-compulsory academy age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Academy site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the academy
#	Planned academy closure	Whole or partial academy closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix A

The Southwater Infant Academy Attendance Monitoring (Escalation process)

MONITOR ATTENDANCE (every half term but more frequently if necessary)

Attendance falls below the expected school attendance target of 97% **and** is a cause for concern.

Send initial letter of concern to parents (include registration certificate*)

Monitor attendance over the next 4 weeks

Attendance improves

Attendance declines

Send "praise" letter and continue to monitor

Send 2nd letter to parents* advising that child's attendance is in danger of becoming a persistent absentee, therefore school to closely monitor. Parents may be requested to provide medical evidence in order to support absences and school will continue to monitor over next 4 weeks

Monitor attendance over the next 4 weeks

Attendance improves

Attendance declines

Send "praise" letter and continue to monitor

Send 3rd letter to parents* inviting them to attend a meeting to discuss strategies to support an improvement (set internal 6 week target, offer EHSA if appropriate, record conversation and send letter to parents outlining actions to be taken by school and by parents)

Monitor attendance over the next 6 weeks

Attendance improves

Attendance declines

Send "praise" letter and continue to monitor

Send letter to parents* advising them that as attendance has not improved despite various supporting strategies, a discussion with ACE service for possible further intervention will be arranged

*registration certificate to be available / included with all correspondence and communication with parents (and minutes late report if appropriate)