

School Attendance Policy



Southbury Primary School

Policy Established: March 2011

Policy reviewed: Sept 2025

Why Does Attendance Matter?

Attending school every day and on time is essentially the key to children performing well at school and potentially giving them the most important start in life. Good attendance teaches children life skills and good habits which will help them when entering adulthood and the working world. It will also give your child the opportunity to: - Make friends and feel included. - Learn new subjects, developing their minds and skills set. - Increase confidence and self-esteem. - Improve social skills. - Achieve their potential and fulfil their aspirations.

Identified staff with responsibility for attendance:

- Attendance Lead – Ms Whincup (Assistant Head)
- Education Welfare Officer – Rosana Hermosa London Borough of Enfield

All staff, pupils and parents are aware of the **Attendance Policy** and the procedures associated with it. The policy is on the school website and is available upon request.

All staff acknowledge their responsibility for attendance and promote a positive culture that absence is not acceptable, except in the case of genuine illness.

Context:

The vast majority of children at Southbury have English as an additional language and have close family living abroad. This impacts upon attendance in several ways:

- Overcoming the language barrier to communicate with parents.
- Parents who take their children abroad for extended periods to attend to family matters, despite being refused permission by the school.

An extremely high percentage of children live within walking distance of the school, but punctuality is an issue for some families. Discussion with these families often raises parenting issues about routines, diet, sleep etc.

Roles and Responsibilities – a joint effort and shared responsibility

Organised allocation of roles in school is at the discretion of the Headteacher. The key thing, however, is that everyone is clear about their own role and how they work with their colleagues, in the school and the local authority, to ensure pupils attend school.

Headteacher:

- Overall responsibility to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly
- To delegate to a senior member of staff (currently Ms Whincup, Assistant Headteacher) overall day to day responsibility for attendance
- Registers are completed correctly and kept for the required statutory period. Head teachers may be called upon to give evidence in court
- Ultimate responsibility for authorising absence, but may delegate this to Deputy Headteacher/Assistant Headteacher .
- Ensure all statutory requirements are met e.g. reporting to parents on attendance
- Ensure targets are set and data shared with the relevant agencies such as the local authority or the DfE

- Ensure Attendance Policy is regularly reviewed
- Authorise issue of Fixed Penalty Notice and support Education Welfare Service (EWS) with the prosecution
- Ensure accurate information is sent back to the Local Authority

Attendance Lead (Assistant Headteacher):

- Day to day management of absence
- Ensure appropriate systems are in place
- Lead training for staff on attendance monitoring and recording
- Ensure first day calling takes place
- Make referrals to Education Welfare Service
- Liaise with Education Welfare Service / Class Teacher and other agencies
- Ensure school is represented in meetings with parents
- Aim to resolve issues around management and monitoring of attendance
- Report to Headteacher and/or Management Team on attendance issues
- Check / ensure accurate data is submitted and measured over the appropriate time scale and submitted on time
- Notify Education Welfare Service of the need for a Fixed Penalty Notice and provide support with prosecution
- Generate warning letters to parents
- Lead the Attendance Incentive Scheme

Governors:

- Fulfil statutory responsibilities including setting and agreeing attendance targets as required in the target setting arrangements
- Appoint Lead Governor for attendance
- Make regular reports on attendance to Governing Body
- Hold the school to account for attendance by providing challenge at the governing body and ensuring there is accountability for attendance
- Approve the Attendance Policy

Education Welfare Service:

- Deal with referrals in accordance with agreed procedures
- Monitor and supervise parenting orders, as directed by the court.
- Fulfil duty for safeguarding children in line with statutory regulation
- Liaise with family, school and other agencies to ensure pupils attend school regularly
- Advise schools on strategies to improve pupil attendance and work with schools to implement strategies.
- Work with schools and Safer Schools officers to carry out truancy patrols.
- Support schools with early intervention in order to improve attendance
- Support attendance officers, through training and support, on the accurate use of attendance codes and running attendance reports
- Comment on the data sent to Research and Information from schools. Identify any issues / trends / inaccuracies and raise them with schools
- Provide advice and guidance on target setting

Parents:

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting Ms Whincup or the school office

Legislation

Our school's actions in regards to attendance are guided by the following legislation:

[Working together to improve school attendance 2024](#)

- Part 6 of [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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

Guidance from Enfield Local Authority [Improving school attendance - Your role as a parent or carer](#)

Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level. Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely, as well as joining the Study Bugs program used by Enfield Admissions team to monitor absence. Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

Attendance Target for 2025-26 is 95%

Absences in Term Time

Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave will never be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. We will always pursue a Fixed Penalty Notice for holidays taken in term time. Following Government legislation in September 2013 and the subsequent [2024 School Attendance Regulations](#), no requests for pupil absence will be authorised by the Headteacher except in circumstances deemed to be exceptional. Parents can and will be fined for taking their child on holiday or out of school in term time without consent from the school. Please be aware that a Penalty Notice can be issued to **each** parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school.

Exceptional circumstances include:

- When a family needs to spend time together because of an immediate family bereavement, crisis or serious illness
- Funeral of immediate family member
- Religious observance
- Transport was not provided by the LA when it should have been
- Children of service personnel about to go on deployment (permission would be considered as long as the request is accompanied by a letter from the Commanding Officer)
- One day of absence could be authorised for a wedding of an immediate family member and the invitation has been provided as evidence
- One off sporting events/performing arts competitions, if the child is participating and is at county standard or above and a letter has been provided from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence
- One day of absence could be authorised for an immediate family members graduation ceremony/passing out parade
- Medical appointments (parents/carers should be encouraged to arrange non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours when possible. If the medical appointment is during the school day, evidence must be provided. Schools should not authorise a whole days absence for a medical appointment that occurs in the morning – the child would be expected to return to school in the afternoon, and vice versa.

Absence will not be authorised for reasons such as the following:

- To care for other family members
- Birthdays
- To interpret for other family members
- No school uniform/shoes
- Bullying
- Friendship problems
- Head lice
- Learning difficulties
- Family holiday
- Weddings abroad – regardless of whether it is for immediate family members
- Family Anniversaries
- Death of a pet
- Travel problems
- School refusal

(The immediate family is a defined group of relations, used in rules or laws to determine which members of a person's family are affected by those rules. It normally includes a person's parents, spouses, siblings and children. It can contain others connected by birth, adoption, marriage, civil partnership, or cohabitation, such as grandparents, grandchildren, siblings-in-law, half-siblings, adopted children and step-parents/step-children, and cohabiting partners)

Penalty notices

The head teacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice. If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence. The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice. If issued with a first penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days. If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days. A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Persistent Absence:

Under new government guidelines, children whose attendance is 90% or lower are now classed as Persistent Absentees – these are identified at regular meetings between the Attendance Lead and the EWO. Strategies are discussed and regular contact with parents is maintained. Where school interventions are shown not make an impact on the child's attendance referrals to the EWS are made.

Although a range of strategies and actions will be taken on an informal basis, a formal procedure is applied when an absence remains unexplained, or lateness or absence are persistent.

This is:

- On the first day of absence a “phone call” is made by the school
- If absences persist, letters are sent from the school drawing attention to the child's attendance/lateness
- Persistent absence will trigger a discussion, on an informal basis, with the child/parent and reminder about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. Parents are invited to the school offering them the opportunity to meet with the Attendance Officer and The Assistant Headteacher in charge of attendance to discuss the pattern of attendance
- If the parents do not attend the meeting, the next stage is for an approach to be made by the EWS either by letter or through a visit
- Further formal approaches might then be made according to the Local Authority's attendance policy

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school. They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with.
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Removing children from roll:

In the event of a child being absent from school for longer than has been authorised, the school will liaise immediately with the Education Welfare Service/Children Missing Education Department and take the necessary steps for the child to be removed from roll. Nationally imposed procedures are adhered to at all times.

Late procedures

It is important that all children arrive to school on time every day. This helps the child to be calm and responsive for the start of the school day. If your child is late for school, they miss the introduction of the first lesson and this can put them at a disadvantage for the rest of that lesson. Being late can be worrying for a child as well as disrupting the work of the child's class on their entry. Good punctuality is positive habit forming for the future and encourages the important value of education.

A Good Start to the Day

- **Clear signal of start of day** – A whistle is blown on the playground at 8.50am as a signal that the children should line up in their classes.
- **The Headteacher**, Deputy Headteacher, other senior staff and the Attendance Officer all patrol the playgrounds before school to monitor behaviour and to talk with parents informally, thereby creating a calm start to the day.

Members of the school office staff log late comers and talks to parents.

- **Register closure** - half an hour after registration at 9.20am.
- The Swansea Road gates are locked after 5 - 10 minutes
- All late arrivals have to report to the office
- Parents are required to give a reason for lateness
- The school gives a clear signal lateness is not acceptable

Working with Parents:

The Assistant Headteacher, members of office staff and the EWO liaise closely to support parents as much as possible. This may include:

- Challenge parents calling in to report absence
- Promote expectation of attendance on time
- Follow up on missing letters or medical evidence (required for those identified children whose poor attendance has been a matter of concern).
- All staff promote expectation of good attendance
- Remind parents of school policy through newsletters – e.g. no holidays during term time
- Meet with targeted groups of parents to discuss specific issues (e.g. poor punctuality) and to share strategies for improvement.
- Induction sessions for parents of new pupils to promote attendance generally.
- Use printouts of attendance to send to parents on an annual basis and use in individual interviews (e.g. parents' evenings)

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy