

Southbury Primary School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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OUR ATTENDANCE COMMITMENT

At Southbury, we believe that every day matters. We promote regular attendance through high expectations, positive relationships, early support and a strong sense of belonging. Where barriers arise, we work with pupils and families to understand and overcome them.

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1. Our approach to attendance

At Southbury Primary School, we believe that every day matters.

Regular attendance gives children the opportunity to access learning, develop positive relationships, build confidence, participate in the wider life of the school and make progress towards their aspirations. Good attendance is also an important part of developing positive routines, independence and a sense of belonging.

Our school motto is 'Dream Big, Fly High', and regular attendance is an important part of helping every child make the most of their time at Southbury.

We recognise that there can be a range of reasons why a child may struggle to attend school regularly or arrive on time. Our approach is therefore based on high expectations, positive relationships, early identification and appropriate support. We work in partnership with pupils and their families to understand and overcome barriers to attendance wherever possible.

Where attendance does not improve despite support, or where support is not appropriate or is not engaged with, the school will take appropriate further action in line with statutory guidance and the procedures of the London Borough of Enfield.

2. Aims

- promote a positive culture in which regular attendance is valued by all members of the school community;
- ensure that every pupil attends school regularly and punctually;
- provide a welcoming and inclusive environment in which pupils feel that they belong;
- identify barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity;
- work collaboratively with pupils, parents/carers and relevant professionals to overcome barriers to attendance;
- monitor attendance and punctuality effectively and use data to identify patterns and areas requiring action;
- provide appropriate levels of support for pupils and families experiencing attendance difficulties;
- identify pupils who are at risk of persistent or severe absence and provide appropriate intervention;
- ensure that attendance concerns are considered within the wider safeguarding context;
- fulfil all statutory duties relating to school attendance, admission registers and children missing education;
- use legal interventions appropriately where support has not worked, has not been engaged with or is not appropriate.

3. Why does attendance matter?

Regular attendance provides children with the best opportunity to benefit from their education and from the wider experiences offered by school.

- maintain continuity in their learning;
- develop friendships and positive relationships;
- feel part of their school community;
- develop confidence and independence;
- develop social and emotional skills;
- participate in enrichment and wider school opportunities;
- establish positive routines and habits;
- make progress towards their individual potential.

Attendance is also an important safeguarding consideration. A pattern of unexplained or prolonged absence may indicate that a child or family requires additional support or that there are wider concerns which need to be explored.

4. Southbury's context

Southbury Primary School serves a diverse community. The vast majority of our pupils speak English as an additional language and many families have close connections with relatives and communities overseas.

We recognise that family circumstances, communication needs, cultural expectations and other individual circumstances can sometimes create barriers to regular attendance or punctuality.

Our approach is therefore sensitive to the individual circumstances of each family. We seek to understand the reasons behind attendance difficulties and work with families to identify practical solutions and appropriate support.

A significant proportion of our pupils live within walking distance of the school. Punctuality can nevertheless be a concern for some families, and we recognise that difficulties with routines, sleep, morning organisation and other family circumstances can affect a child's ability to arrive at school on time.

The school will work constructively with families to identify and address these barriers.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher

- ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities relating to attendance;
- promote a positive whole-school culture of regular attendance;
- ensure that appropriate attendance systems and procedures are in place;
- ensure that attendance registers are accurately completed and maintained;
- oversee the school's attendance strategy and improvement work;
- ensure that attendance data is monitored and acted upon;
- ensure that appropriate information is shared with the governing body and relevant agencies;
- ensure that the Attendance Policy is reviewed regularly;
- authorise absence where appropriate, or delegate this responsibility;
- support appropriate statutory and legal intervention where required.

Attendance Lead – Ms Whincup, Assistant Headteacher

- monitor attendance and punctuality;
- ensure appropriate systems are in place for recording and following up absence;
- ensure first-day absence procedures are followed;
- identify pupils whose attendance is causing concern;
- analyse attendance patterns and trends;
- work with pupils, parents/carers and staff to identify barriers to attendance;
- coordinate appropriate support and interventions;
- make referrals to the Education Welfare Service and other agencies where appropriate;
- liaise with the Education Welfare Service and other professionals;
- meet with parents/carers where attendance concerns arise;
- ensure attendance data is accurate and submitted as required;
- provide attendance information to the Headteacher and governing body;
- oversee the school's attendance celebration and reward arrangements;
- ensure appropriate statutory action is considered where required.

Governors

The governing body will:

- fulfil its statutory responsibilities relating to attendance;
- promote high expectations for attendance;
- provide challenge and support to school leaders;
- receive regular reports on attendance;
- monitor attendance trends and the impact of school strategies;
- approve the school's Attendance Policy.

Attendance Governor – Bradley Jones

The Attendance Governor will work with school leaders to monitor the school's attendance strategy, consider attendance data and provide appropriate challenge and support through the governing body.

All school staff

- promote the importance of regular attendance;
- welcome pupils into school;
- follow attendance and safeguarding procedures;
- record attendance accurately;
- identify and report concerns;
- communicate appropriately with pupils and families;
- support pupils who have experienced periods of absence to reintegrate successfully.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education. Where a child is registered at school, parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that they attend regularly and on time.

- ensure that their child attends school every day and arrives on time;
- notify the school of absence before 9:00am on the first day of absence;
- provide the reason for absence and, where possible, the expected date of return;
- provide the school with more than one emergency contact number;
- arrange routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible;
- provide appropriate evidence where requested by the school;
- avoid booking holidays during term time;
- work collaboratively with the school where attendance becomes a concern;
- engage with support offered by the school or other agencies;
- comply with any attendance agreement or plan agreed with the school or local authority.

6. Attendance recording

Southbury Primary School records attendance in accordance with statutory requirements.

The school day is divided into two sessions: morning and afternoon. Attendance is therefore recorded for each session.

Registers are completed accurately and promptly by staff using our MIS system, Arbor.

Parents/carers must notify the school of absence before 9.00am on the first day of absence.

Where no reason for absence has been provided, the school will make appropriate enquiries and contact the parent/carer.

The school will follow up unexplained absence promptly and will consider safeguarding concerns where appropriate.

7. Monitoring attendance

Attendance and punctuality are monitored regularly at:

- individual pupil level;
- year-group level;
- cohort level;
- whole-school level.

The school uses attendance data to identify:

- pupils whose attendance is beginning to decline;
- persistent absence;
- severe absence;
- patterns of absence;
- repeated lateness;
- particular groups or cohorts requiring additional support;
- potential safeguarding concerns.

Attendance data is considered alongside other information about the pupil and their circumstances. The school does not rely solely on an attendance percentage when determining the appropriate response.

The school will benchmark attendance against relevant local, regional and national data and use this information to inform school improvement.

8. Persistent and severe absence

The school monitors pupils whose attendance is at risk of becoming persistently or severely absent.

Persistent absence

A pupil is considered persistently absent (PA) when they miss 10% or more of their possible sessions.

Severe absence

A pupil is considered severely absent (SA) when they miss 50% or more of their possible sessions.

The school will not wait until a pupil reaches these thresholds before taking action. Where attendance is declining or there are emerging concerns, early intervention will be considered.

9. Our approach to attendance support

Southbury uses a graduated approach to attendance.

Universal support

- positive relationships with pupils and families;
- clear communication of attendance expectations;
- attendance information shared with parents/carers;
- regular monitoring;
- celebration and encouragement of good attendance;
- a welcoming school environment;
- support for pupils to develop positive routines.

Early identification

- review the pupil's attendance and absence patterns;
- consider punctuality;
- speak with the pupil where appropriate;
- communicate with parents/carers;
- seek to understand the reasons for absence;
- identify potential barriers;
- agree appropriate actions.

Targeted support

- arrange a meeting with parents/carers;
- develop an attendance support plan;
- agree specific attendance and punctuality targets;
- provide pastoral or practical support;
- work with other members of staff or relevant professionals;
- make appropriate referrals to external services.

Intensive support

- involve the Education Welfare Service;
- hold formal attendance meetings;
- request further evidence where appropriate;
- develop a more formal attendance agreement;
- involve other agencies where appropriate;
- consider statutory intervention.

Legal intervention

Where appropriate, and in accordance with national and local procedures, the school and/or local authority may use legal interventions where support has not worked, has not been engaged with or is not appropriate.

10. Absence due to illness

Children should attend school when they are well enough to do so.

Parents/carers should notify the school before 9.00am on the first day of absence and provide an explanation for the absence.

The school will follow relevant public health guidance when determining whether a child should remain at home because of illness.

Where a pupil has repeated or prolonged illness-related absence, the school will seek to understand the underlying circumstances and may work with the family and relevant professionals to support the pupil's return to school.

Where there are concerns that illness is contributing to significantly reduced attendance, the school may request appropriate medical evidence and/or seek advice from relevant professionals.

11. Medical and dental appointments

- Parents/carers should arrange routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible.
- Where this is not possible, parents/carers should provide the school with details of the appointment.
- The school expects pupils to attend school before or after an appointment where this is reasonably possible.
- The school will consider each case individually and will record the appropriate attendance code in accordance with statutory requirements.

12. Requests for leave of absence

Parents/carers must request permission from the Headteacher before taking their child out of school during term time.

Leave of absence will only be granted where the circumstances meet the requirements set out in legislation and statutory guidance.

The Headteacher will consider each request individually, taking account of the circumstances of the request and the pupil's attendance record.

Family holidays are not normally considered an exceptional circumstance and should not be taken during term time.

Examples of circumstances that may be considered include:

- bereavement;
- serious illness or significant family crisis;
- religious observance;
- attendance at an exceptional family occasion;
- children of service personnel where the relevant criteria apply;
- participation in significant sporting or performing arts events where the relevant criteria are met;
- other circumstances that meet the statutory criteria.

The list above is not exhaustive. Each request will be considered on its individual circumstances.

The school will not normally authorise absence for:

- family holidays;
- birthdays;
- family anniversaries;
- caring for other family members;

- avoidable travel difficulties;
- lack of school uniform or equipment;
- friendship difficulties;
- bullying where the appropriate response should be support from school;
- head lice;
- learning difficulties;
- school refusal where the appropriate response should be support and intervention.

This does not mean that the underlying issue will be ignored. Where absence is linked to difficulties such as bullying, school refusal, learning needs or family circumstances, the school will seek to understand the reason for the absence and provide appropriate support.

13. Penalty notices

The national framework provides a threshold at which schools must consider a penalty notice: 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. This may include a combination of different types of unauthorised absence, including term-time holidays and certain instances of lateness.

However, a penalty notice is not automatically issued whenever the threshold is met.

Before requesting or issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual circumstances, including:

- whether support is appropriate;
- whether support has already been provided;
- whether the parent/carer has engaged with support;
- whether support has been effective;
- whether a Notice to Improve is appropriate;
- whether legal intervention is appropriate;
- any relevant Equality Act 2010 considerations.

Where a penalty notice is appropriate, it will be issued in accordance with the national framework and the procedures of the London Borough of Enfield.

A first penalty notice is currently £80 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £160 if paid within 28 days. A second penalty notice issued in respect of the same parent and child within the relevant three-year period is £160. A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within three years of the first penalty notice; alternative legal action may be considered instead.

14. Notices to Improve

Where the national threshold for a penalty notice has been met, but support is appropriate and the parent/carer has not engaged with support or support has not been effective, the school may issue a Notice to Improve.

A Notice to Improve will set out:

- the pupil's attendance record;
- the concerns regarding attendance;
- the support that has already been offered;
- further support available;
- the improvements expected;
- the timeframe for improvement;
- the potential consequences if attendance does not improve.

The improvement period will normally be between 3 and 6 weeks, in accordance with statutory guidance.

15. Punctuality

Arriving on time is an important part of good attendance.

At Southbury, the school day begins with a calm and purposeful start. Pupils who arrive late can miss important learning, routines and social interaction at the beginning of the school day.

A good start to the day

- A whistle is blown on the playground at 8.50am to signal that children should line up with their classes.
- Senior leaders and relevant staff are present on the playground before school.
- Staff support a calm and positive start to the day.
- Late arrivals are recorded by the school office.
- Parents/carers are asked to provide a reason for lateness.
- Pupils arriving after the register has closed must report to the school office.

The morning register closes at 9.15am.

Where a pupil arrives after the register has closed, the appropriate attendance code will be recorded in accordance with statutory requirements.

Persistent lateness will be monitored in the same way as absence. Where lateness becomes a concern, the school will work with families to understand and address the underlying reasons.

16. Working with parents and carers

Southbury recognises that parents and carers are essential partners in improving attendance.

- communicate clear expectations regarding attendance and punctuality;
- celebrate and promote good attendance;
- contact parents/carers when concerns arise;
- discuss attendance patterns with families;
- seek to understand barriers;
- provide advice and support where appropriate;
- signpost families to relevant services;
- meet with targeted families where attendance or punctuality is a concern;
- work with the Education Welfare Service and other agencies where appropriate;
- provide attendance information to parents/carers through appropriate school communications.

The school will communicate attendance information in a supportive, accessible and respectful way, recognising the diversity of our community.

17. Attendance and safeguarding

Attendance is closely linked to safeguarding.

The school will follow up unexplained absence promptly and will consider whether absence or changes in attendance may indicate a safeguarding concern.

Where appropriate, attendance concerns will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and considered alongside other information known about the child.

Where a pupil is absent for an extended period, the school will follow appropriate procedures to establish the child's whereabouts and ensure that their welfare and educational needs are considered.

Schools and local authorities have statutory responsibilities relating to children missing education, and Southbury will follow the relevant national and London Borough of Enfield procedures.

18. Children missing education and removal from roll

The school will follow statutory requirements and local authority procedures when considering the removal of a pupil from the admission register.

Where a pupil is absent from school for an extended period, the school will make appropriate enquiries and liaise with the London Borough of Enfield where necessary.

The school will not remove a pupil from the school roll simply because their attendance is poor.

Any removal from the admission register will be undertaken only where the statutory requirements are met and in accordance with the relevant procedures.

This is particularly important in ensuring that children do not become missing from education.

19. Attendance celebration and rewards

At Southbury, we promote attendance positively and celebrate the importance of being in school every day.

We use whole-class attendance rewards so that attendance is celebrated as a shared achievement and no individual child is singled out because of their attendance.

Each week:

- the class with the highest attendance in KS1 receives the KS1 Attendance Dragon;
- the class with the highest attendance in KS2 receives the KS2 Attendance Reward Cup;
- the winning classes are celebrated in our Celebration Assembly;
- the winning classes are added to the Weekly Attendance Winners on the school's attendance noticeboard.

Our approach recognises that attendance is a shared responsibility and celebrates classes working together to develop positive attendance habits.

20. Monitoring and evaluation

The Attendance Lead will monitor attendance data regularly and report significant patterns and trends to the Headteacher.

Attendance will be reviewed:

- weekly where appropriate at individual pupil level;
- half-termly;
- termly;
- annually.

The school will evaluate the effectiveness of attendance strategies and interventions and adapt its approach where necessary.

Attendance information will be reported to the governing body at appropriate intervals.

The school will use attendance data to identify areas for improvement and will consider the attendance of different groups of pupils to ensure that appropriate support is provided.

21. Related policies and guidance

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Exclusion/Suspension Policy;
- Equality Policy.

Relevant statutory guidance includes:

- Working together to improve school attendance – Department for Education, updated July 2026;
- Children Missing Education – Department for Education, updated September 2025;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – Department for Education, current edition;
- relevant legislation relating to school attendance, pupil registration and penalty notices;
- London Borough of Enfield attendance procedures and guidance.

Appendix 1 – Southbury's attendance approach at a glance

EVERY DAY MATTERS

Every child deserves the opportunity to attend school regularly and achieve their potential.

WE PROMOTE

Positive relationships → High expectations → Belonging → Good routines → Regular attendance

WE IDENTIFY

Monitor → Notice patterns → Talk to pupils → Talk to families → Understand barriers

WE SUPPORT

Early help → Attendance support → Individual plans → Multi-agency support

WE ESCALATE WHERE NECESSARY

Review → Formal intervention → Education Welfare Service → Notice to Improve → Legal intervention where appropriate

Our approach is always guided by the individual circumstances of the pupil and family, with the aim of improving attendance and ensuring that children are able to access their education safely and regularly.

Policy reviewed September 2026