

SHIELD ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL



Attendance Policy (PARENTS AND CARERS)

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| Author/Person Responsible | Headteacher/Chair of Governors |
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| Review Group | Full Governing Body |
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| Related Policies | Safeguarding and Child Protection |
| Chair of Governor's Signature | <i>Simon Quarrie</i> |

1. Rationale

Regular attendance and excellent punctuality are the foundations for academic achievement and personal development. They establish a responsible attitude towards the opportunities available at school and underpin the basis for the world of work. Attendance and punctuality are strongly linked to students' well-being and safety. Regular attendance demonstrates a commitment to learning and the school community please ensure that you and your child/children support our school rules about attendance.

2. Guiding Principles

We are committed to ensuring that all students benefit from the opportunities available at Shield Road Primary School. Our expectation is that all students arrive on time and attend regularly that is - every day that the school is open unless there is an unavoidable reason for not doing so. We explain about different types of absence in this policy, and we will actively promote this ethos throughout the school community and encourage our students to achieve this. Where this expectation is not met, we will identify and address the barriers that prevent this.

3. Responsibilities

The school's legal responsibilities in regards to attendance are to:

- Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.

The Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that registered students of school age attend school regularly and punctually and that they receive an education suitable for their aptitude and ability.

The school have a legal responsibility for maintaining school registers and taking the register twice a day. The school also has a responsibility for reporting absence to the Local Authority (LA). We also have safeguarding responsibility and duty of care to all our students.

Student responsibilities – we encourage our students to become independent young people including taking responsibility for their attendance and punctuality when this is age appropriate.

Staff will encourage good habits by:

- Ensuring that registers are marked accurately and promptly every day.

- Differentiating appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence – a letter from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence – only the Head Teacher can decide whether the parents' explanation justifies authorising the absence.
- Responding to absenteeism firmly and consistently with care.
- Contacting parents when the school is concerned about a pupil's absences and making a record of this.
- Consulting with the School Attendance Officer and the Head Teachers if a pupil's attendance gives any cause for concern.
- Acknowledging good or improved attendance of individual pupils.

Education Welfare Service

- The Education Welfare Service (South Glos LA), may liaise with the School Attendance Team and where necessary, parents when there is a concern around attendance.
- The service will aim to encourage attendance, to resolve any underlying problems, to discuss appropriate strategies and incentives with all concerned parties.
- The Education Welfare Service has the right to inspect registers in schools on a regular basis as well as to contact parents of children who have poor attendance.
- They can also pursue further investigations for pupils who have poor attendance through frequent or continual illness – usually via the school nurse or social services.
- From September 2024 Schools must provide specific pupil information on request to the Secretary of State.

Parent responsibilities

As a parent, you have a legal responsibility to make sure your child gets a full-time education. The Department for Education's statutory guidance, Working Together To Improve School Attendance, outlines the responsibilities of all stake holders, including parents. They are listed below:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.

4. Attendance

- We expect our students to attend school **on time** every day for the whole day that the school is open unless there is an unavoidable reason for not doing so e.g. illness.
- We will celebrate students who achieve our expectations of a high level of attendance and those who have shown sustained improvement.
- We will share attendance information with parents/carers and students focusing on the link between attendance and achievement at each parents' evening and in each child's end of year report.
- We will promote high attendance and punctuality through assemblies, class discussion; reinforcing the link between attendance and achievement.
- The school will communicate attendance matters to parents/carers via text; telephone; email; letter and through the school's website and newsletter.

- If we do not receive a reason for absence on Day 1 then a text will be sent. If we still have not heard of a reason for the absence then a follow up phone call will be made.

5. Registration

There are two sessions in each school day, the morning session and the afternoon session. Registers are taken at the following times:

- *8.50am morning registration*
- *1.05pm afternoon registration*

Children are expected to be in school for the whole of each day. Children taken out of school early at the end of the school day will miss their attendance mark for the whole of the afternoon session (see below section 6 for absence reasons) the registration mark will be U (unauthorised).

6. Absence from school

There are only two categories of absence from school:

- Authorised – approved
- Unauthorised – not approved

Only the Head can approve absence from school. That is the law.

Absence will be recorded using the code recommended by the Department for Education Guidance on School Attendance. (See *Appendix B* for link to *School Attendance Guidance*)

Requests for absence in term time must be submitted in writing (or e-mail) at least two weeks in advance to the Headteacher who will treat every request on an individual basis and respond accordingly. The rules about what type of absence is acceptable is set out below

Authorised (approved) absence – types of authorised absence that may be approved: -

- Leave of absence - for bereavement, funeral
- Medical absence for appointments at Hospital or the Orthodontic. (Non- urgent routine check-up appointments will not be authorised, school expects these appointments to be made outside of school hours and or in the 12 weeks of school holidays). When attending hospital and orthodontic appointments students are expected to be absent for the minimal amount of time and not absent for the whole day.
- Illness (doctors notes may be requested from the Headteacher)
- Religious observance - one day to participate in an organised religious event
- If a student is excluded from school for a behaviour related incident, this is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised (not approved) absence – types of absence that will not be approved

- Absence due to birthday, shopping for uniform, looking after family members, attending medical appointments of siblings.
- Routine eye, dental or medical appointments.
- Holidays in term time.
- Late arrival to school after the register has closed has to be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless there is an exceptional reason (which must be agreed by the Headteacher).

Unauthorised absence can lead to parents /carers being fined/issued with a fixed term penalty notice by the Local Authority (LA).

All absence – authorised and unauthorised – will be analysed and subject to challenge to ensure that any concern regarding frequency, pattern or validity is acted upon swiftly to ensure safeguarding responsibilities are met.

Parents/Carers are expected to contact the school on the first day of absence by 8.30am and each day thereafter informing the school of the reason for absence and the expected date of return to school. Parents must contact school by 8.30am each morning of an absence.

Safeguarding

All unexplained absence from school will be followed up each day by the school contacting parents/carers. If no response is obtained, contact will be made with people listed as emergency contact numbers to ascertain a student's whereabouts and safety. Parents/Carers are required to provide the school with three emergency contact numbers. Where no response is received a referral may be made to the Access and Response Team (ART), the Police or the school's Education Welfare Officer.

Removal from Roll

There are strict grounds as to when a school may remove a student from the admissions register. These are outlined in Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and the school must notify the Local Authority.

7. How our policy works in practice

Punctuality

- Students who arrive late to registration are recorded as L (late before registration closes). Registration takes place from 8.50am. **Students should be in school for the start of Registration at 8.50am. If your child arrives at school between from 9.00am they will be recorded as late (L).**
- Frequent late arrival will be challenged by the school and letters sent to parents. Persistent late arrival will result in parents and students being asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher/Education Welfare Officer/or delegate.
- **If a student arrives after the register has closed at 9.30am they will be recorded as U (unauthorised late arrival.)** Unauthorised sessions can result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the LA.

Illness

- Students are likely to experience bouts of illness from time to time. Some students will be managing chronic or more serious medical conditions that impact on their attendance. We have a duty to support students in these circumstances to ensure they do not miss out on education.
- When a student is identified as having frequent absence for reasons of minor illness, a meeting will be arranged to discuss this with the Head teacher/Education Welfare Officer /or delegate to consider whether an individual health care plan is appropriate.

8. Penalty Notices from the Local Authority

National framework for Penalty Notices 2024

Taking effect from August 2024, the Department for Education have introduced [a national framework for the issuing of penalty notices](#).

This is to ensure consistency across England. This means that all local authorities must follow the same rules. Addressing absence from school is a key priority of the government and local authority. Missing school limits a pupil's attainment, disrupts school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime. There are instances where parents may face penalty notice for their child's unauthorised absence from school. The two most common scenarios for referral for a penalty notice are listed below:

Scenario 1 – Unauthorised leave of absence during term time (unauthorised holiday – G code)

An unauthorised leave of absence for holiday of 10 sessions (5 days).

Notice to Improve relating to unauthorised leave of absence for holidays, will not be issued.

Under the new statutory guidance, headteachers can no longer authorise holidays during term time. Headteachers are only able to grant leave of absence from school in exceptional circumstances. Each application for leave of absence will be considered on its own merit. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. Any request for a leave of absence must be made in writing to the Headteacher at least two weeks before the planned event.

Scenario 2 – A total of 10 sessions in 10 weeks

A total of 10 sessions of any unauthorised absence in a 10 week period

****1 session = a morning or an afternoon so 10 sessions = 5 days in total****

Under the new national framework, all schools will be required to consider a referral for issuing a penalty notice fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for

unauthorised reasons (this includes no reason) in a 10 week period.

For pupils that meet this criteria, parents will be given a Notice to Improve. If no improvement is seen within 6 weeks, a penalty notice will be issued.

From August 2024, the penalty notice fine for school absences across the country will be **£160 per parent per pupil. This is reduced to £80 per parent per pupil if paid within 28 days.**

Please note that this can also be applied to adults who have parental responsibilities for the pupil such as a step-parent, for example.

If a person with parental responsibility receives a second fine within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160 with no option to pay the reduced rate.

Penalty notice fine will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. Please note that if a parent was convicted following legal proceedings, this would appear on a DBS.

It is important to note, that none of this money is received by school. Money raised via fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.

Example below:

Two parent family with two children miss 5 days of school for an unauthorised term-time leave of absence for a holiday:

Parent 1 – 2 x £160 = £320

Parent 2 – 2 x £160 = £320

Total for family = £640

Formal guidance informing this policy

- ❖ [Education Act 1996 which states if any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.](#)
- ❖ [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 amended DFE 2016](#)
- ❖ [Parental responsibility measures – regarding Penalty Notices \(Fines\) DFE January 2017](#)

- ❖ [Working Together to Safeguard Children DFE July 2019](#)
- ❖ [Keeping children safe in education. DFE Sept 2024](#)
- ❖ [Supporting pupils in education with medical conditions 2015](#)
- ❖ [Children missing education – DFE September 2016 \(further information: \[southglos.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-education/behaviour-and-attendance/children-missing-education\]\(https://southglos.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-education/behaviour-and-attendance/children-missing-education\)\)](#)
- ❖ [Working Together to Improve Attendance – DFE September 2024](#)
- ❖ [SOUTH GLOS COUNCIL local code of conduct with regards to issuing of Education Penalty Notices](#)
- ❖ [School policy for Managing Medical Needs](#)
- ❖ [Fines for parents taking children out of school: what you need to know](#)

Appendix A - What you need to know if your child is absent (unauthorised) during term time – from September 2024 onwards

Unauthorised absences will be monitored on a rolling 3-year basis (including between schools and different local authority areas).

Penalty Notices can be issued when there have been 10 unauthorised absences (1 school day = 2 sessions, 5 school days = 10 sessions). The threshold can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence within 10 school weeks. Penalty Notices are issued for any term-time or irregular absences that are unauthorised (for example, a 5-day term-time holiday) - whether these absences are taken consecutively or cumulatively over a period of 10 school weeks.

1st Penalty notice

The first Penalty Notice is issued for term time absences or irregular absences, the amount will be:

- **£80** per parent, per child (if paid within 21 days of issue)
- **£160** per parent, per child (if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of issue)

| No. of parents | No. of children | Fine amount up to 21 days | Fine amount after 21 days but within 28 days |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1 | 1 | £80 | £160 |
| 1 | 2 | £160 | £320 |
| 2 | 3 | £480 | £960 |

2nd Penalty notice

The second Penalty Notice is issued for term time absences or irregular absences, issued to the **same parent** for the **same child**, the amount will be:

- **£160** per parent, per child (if paid within 28 days). This is a flat rate. **There is no discount for early payment.**

| No. of parents | No. of children | Fine amount up to 21 days | Fine amount up to 28 days |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | Not applicable | £160 |
| 1 | 2 | Not applicable | £320 |
| 2 | 3 | Not applicable | £960 |

Further offences

The third time an offence is committed for unauthorised term time or irregular absences **within 3 years** by the same parent for the same child (including those from other schools or Local Authorities) may result in an automatic request for Prosecution.

Education Act: 1996: It is your responsibility as the parent/carer to ensure your child's school attendance is on a regular basis and if you fail to do this without good cause, you are liable to prosecution. If found guilty of this offence you could be liable to, amongst other things, a fine of up to £2500 and/or a custodial sentence of up to 3 months.

- ❖ [SOUTH GLOS COUNCIL local code of conduct with regards to issuing of Education Penalty Notices](#)