



Sledmere Primary School

Attendance Policy

September 2020

“Regular attendance at school is crucial in raising standards of education and in ensuring every child can meet their full potential. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The government expects:

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Schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.
- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled, and act early to address patterns of absence.

1. What the Law says about School Attendance:

All children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full-time education. Section 444 (1a) of the Education Act 1996 says: *“If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, without reasonable justification, then his/her parent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted”.*

Children are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in any single academic year (September-July).

The school expects all children to attend every day that the school is open and on time for registration. Absence that falls below 90% is categorised by the Government as persistent absence.

Attendance and the School’s Safeguarding Responsibilities

The school has a statutory safeguarding responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils who are absent from school. Therefore, parents and carers must inform the school if their child is absent and give the reason for the absence. It is imperative that parents/carers keep the school informed of any changes to their contact details, including changes to mobile phone numbers. Parents / carers must provide the details of at least two people who can be contacted in an emergency.

2. Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

Parents / Carers must ensure that their child is able to attend school for the whole academic year by ensuring their child attends school unless there is a reason for the absence which has been approved by the school.

a) Illness

If a parent or carer considers their child has an illness which may warrant them remaining at home, then they must consider first of all whether they feel that their child would still be able to take part in the majority, if not all, of the school’s activities. In this case, they should still send their child to school. Should the child become unwell during the day and/or if the school feels that they are no longer able to participate in school activities, the school will contact parents to collect their child.

If parents feel that their child cannot take part in the school’s activities and would be better remaining at home, then they must contact the school as soon as possible on the first and any subsequent days of absence before 9:20 am. Failure to do so constitutes a breach of this policy. The person ringing will be asked to identify themselves and clearly give the reason for the absence. This information will be recorded on our information management system, Cloud School, and our Senior Leadership Team will be informed.

b) Medical Appointments

Medical appointments must be made out of school time wherever possible. If a child has a medical appointment, then parents/carers must contact the school prior to the appointment to arrange for the child to be collected/returned to school as close to the appointment time as possible. This must be approved by a member of our Senior Leadership Team.

Siblings should not be taken out of school to attend siblings' appointments. A copy of the appointment time/letter may be requested.

c) Punctuality

Punctuality is very important for a child's well-being. If parents/carers know their child will be late for school they must contact the school as soon as possible to tell them that the child will arrive late and provide the reason for the lateness. This information will be recorded and our Senior Leadership Team will be informed. Parents/carers must make every effort to get the child to school as soon as possible.

d) Difficulty Getting a Child to School

If parents/carers are having difficulty getting their child to attend school they must notify the school office immediately about the concerns and our Senior Leadership Team will be informed. The school will make every effort to meet with parents and attempt to rectify the problem.

e) Collecting Children

Children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day. If a parent/carer knows that they will be late collecting their child from school, the school must be informed. If not collected by 3.20pm, the child will go to the School Office to wait whilst staff attempt to contact the parent or carer.

If a child is not collected on time, and parents/carers cannot be contacted the matter may be referred to Children's Services. If parents or carers are persistently late in collecting children, the matter may be escalated to Early Help.

3. Responsibilities of the School, Staff and Pupils

The Staff:

- **Must** recognise that the class register is an important legal document, which must be completed promptly at the beginning of each morning session and at the beginning of the afternoon session: 9.00 am in the morning and **as soon as possible after the start of the afternoon session.**
- **Must** complete the class fire drill register at the beginning of each morning session and at the beginning of the afternoon session.

The morning register must be taken at 9.00 am.

The afternoon register must be taken as soon as possible after the start of the afternoon session.

The School must:

- Keep regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance registers.
- Ensure that parents/carers are aware of the times for the beginning of each session, school term dates and other INSET days when a pupil is not expected to attend school
- Notify the parents of any immediate school closure e.g. due to bad weather
- Respond to requests for attendance data from the Education Investigation Service, Local Authority, Department for Education, OFSTED
- Present attendance data regularly to the Governing Body and parents
- Notify parents as early as possible where their child's attendance is a cause for concern
- Notify the Education Investigation Service of individual children whose attendance is a cause for concern
- Work alongside parents to improve attendance
- Children must not be sent home at any time of the day without permission from our Senior Leadership Team
- Reward excellent attendance, linking high attendance with high achievement

The Pupil must:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately dressed and prepared for the school day

4. Absence

a) Leave of Absence

Leave of absence can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are those which are “rare, significant, unavoidable and short”.

Any request for ‘leave’ must be put in writing stating exceptional circumstances. This must be received by the Head of School no later than **15 school days before** the proposed leave is due to take place. In making an application for leave, the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides must make the case that their child will need to be treated differently from the norm. Each request must meet specific ‘exceptional circumstances’ which would not be expected to be repeated within an academic year, or to occur regularly throughout a child’s school life.

b) Leave of Absence for Holiday

Leave taken without a formal request being made to the Head of School will remain unauthorised even if the parent enters a request on returning from the leave.

Sledmere Primary School does not authorise leave in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and this is supported with evidence.

c) Lateness

The school opens at 8.40 am so that the school day begins with the children ready to work in the classroom at 8.50 am. Start of day activities run from 8.50 until the start of formal lessons at 9.00 am. The afternoon session begins at 12.45 pm for Key Stage 2 and at 1.00 pm for Early Years and Key Stage 1. A child who arrives after this time but before the registers closes will be marked ‘late’ and must sign in at the office. Registers close 30 minutes after the start of the morning session and 5 minutes after the start of the afternoon session. Children arriving after the close of the registers are coded as ‘unauthorised late’.

Lateness has an impact on a child's learning. If a child is persistently late (five times within the academic year) parents/carers will be expected to meet with the Head of School to discuss punctuality.

d) Absence Due to Illness

Children who are genuinely poorly are not expected to attend school and an authorised code will be used. However, where the child’s repeated absence due to illness is becoming a concern or reaches 7 days in any school year the school may request evidence to inform a decision to authorise any further absence. The Head of School may ask the parent to provide information to demonstrate that the child is too unwell to return/attend school e.g. prescriptions, appointment cards/letters.

The Head of School may decide to remove the right to the authorised absence due to illness and record any absence as ‘unauthorised’. The Head of School will notify the parent of this decision in writing. In order to avoid this, it is essential that parents inform the school of any health concerns that may be affecting their child’s ability to attend school regularly.

e) Other reasons for extended absence and requests for leave in term time

a) Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

All staff are trained and made aware about possible reasons for extended absence from school. One of these could be Female genital mutilation (FGM), which is a form of child abuse common to some African, Asian and Middle Eastern communities in the UK. The age at which girls are subject to FGM varies greatly from shortly after birth to any time up to adulthood. Victims are usually aged between four and ten, primary school age. It is illegal in the UK to subject a child to female genital mutilation (FGM) or to take a child abroad to undergo the procedure – Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

Any information or concern that a child is at immediate risk of or has undergone FGM or forced marriage will result in a child protection referral under school procedures to the Designated Senior Person in the first instance and then to Children’s Social Care Services and/or the Child Protection Team, West Midlands Police Service. Records of all incidents will be kept following the same procedure as for all other child protection concerns in school in line with current policy.

Please note that teachers and members of staff with teaching responsibilities have a specific legal duty to act with regards to concerns about female genital mutilation and must personally report to the police a disclosure that FGM has been carried out, in addition to liaising with the DSL/Children’s social care.

b) Children Missing in Education (CME)

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of Safeguarding. Missing school can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children. This is why we will always follow up with parents/carers when pupils are not at school.

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) the school has:

- Staff who understand what to do when children do not attend regularly
- Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for pupils who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions).
- Procedures to inform the local authority when we plan to take pupils off-roll when they:
 - leave school to be home educated
 - move away from the school's location
 - are permanently excluded

We will ensure that pupils who are expected to attend the school, but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority. When a pupil leaves the school, we will record the name of the pupil's new school and their expected start date.

Where children have poor attendance or are regularly missing then the school works in close liaison with the Local Authority CME officer, admissions team and DSPP.

Further information can be found in 'Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities' – September 2016

5. School Closures

The academic year is 190 days. Schools are also required to have an additional 5 days that are used for staff training; often called INSET (In Service Training) Days. These days are not part of the 190 days which is every child's free entitlement and schools endeavour to schedule these to minimise inconvenience to parents and carers.

The Head of School will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, e.g. election days or severe weather, the school may have to close. The Head of School must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person who uses the school site, pupils, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors. If at any point, to use the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Head of School must close part or all of the school.

If a decision is made to close part or all of the school, the Head of School will endeavour to inform parents of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place. If the Head of School decides to close part or all of the school, then the register for those pupils affected is closed for the day and coded as an enforced school closure. This does not affect a child's attendance record.

Parents should always assume that the school will remain open during term time unless they hear otherwise.

6. Penalty Notices

1) Parents/Carers can be issued with Penalty Notices if a pupil who has been excluded contravenes the details set out in the Exclusion Letter as to their whereabouts during the first 6 days of exclusion.

2) Parents may be issued with a penalty fine or prosecuted over unauthorised absence sessions. This can include an unauthorised leave of absence or any other sessions of unauthorised absence.

7. Education Investigation Service (EIS)

The Education Investigation Service (EIS) is responsible for ensuring that parents meet their legal obligations in respect of their child's education and in doing so they may issue penalty fines, or take legal proceedings to ensure that you do so.

The Head of School and Governing Body of our school have a responsibility to inform the EIS when a child's attendance becomes a matter of concern and to support the EIS in the actions that they may take.

Investigation Service:
Education Investigation Service
Directorate of Children's Services
Priory Road
Dudley
West Midlands
DY1 1HJ 01384 814317

For further information, see

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/learning-and-school/education-investigation-service/>

Date of ratification: Next meeting of Sledmere Governing Body

Date of next review: May 2021