

SEABURN DENE PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE



”...we always try to be that little bit better.”

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Policy Last Reviewed by Governors: 19th November 2024

Date ratified by governors: 19th November 2024

Date of next review: September 2026 or sooner

Attendance Policy

Parents or guardians of children of compulsory school age (5 to 16 years) have a legal obligation to ensure their child receives an appropriate education. This can be achieved through regular attendance at school or alternative arrangements, such as home education. If a child is registered at a school, the responsibility for ensuring regular attendance rests with the parent. Failure to meet this obligation may result in legal action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Under Education Law, the term *parent* includes:

- All biological parents, regardless of marital status.
- Any individual with parental responsibility for the child.
- Any individual who provides daily care for the child and resides with them.

It is important to note that a parent retains this responsibility even if they do not live in the same household as the child.

Regular school attendance is fundamental to raising educational standards and enabling all pupils to reach their full potential. Pupils must attend school consistently to benefit fully from their education. Missing lessons increases the risk of falling behind academically, and poor attendance is strongly associated with lower achievement in both primary and secondary education.

Attending school regularly is crucial for pupils to maximise their learning, develop their wellbeing, and enhance their future opportunities. For vulnerable pupils, consistent attendance provides a key protective factor, allowing for early identification of needs and timely support.

Expectations for Attendance at Seaburn Dene Primary School

At Seaburn Dene Primary School, we expect all pupils to attend school every day unless they are unwell or there are exceptional circumstances, in which case parents must seek and obtain prior approval for term-time leave from the headteacher (see Appendix 1).

Punctuality is essential, and children should arrive on time. School doors open at **8:45am** each morning.

Objectives

- To promote and achieve maximum attendance for all pupils, with a target of at least 96%.
- To create an environment that prioritises and encourages regular attendance and punctuality for all members of the school community.
- To monitor and provide support for pupils with attendance concerns, working in partnership with parents and carers to address and resolve any issues.
- To regularly analyse attendance data to guide and improve policy and practice.
- To collaborate effectively with the wider community, including the Education Welfare Service and multi-agency teams, to support and enhance attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following people have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

Local Governing Bodies (LGB)

- To monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy.

Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing the attendance policy throughout the school.
- Monitoring whole-school attendance data and reporting findings to the governing body.
- Supporting staff in tracking and managing the attendance of individual pupils.
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices when appropriate.

Class Teachers

- Maintaining accurate attendance records for each pupil in their class.
- Addressing any issues identified in the weekly register analysis conducted by office staff.
- Arranging for work to be sent home to pupils who are absent for an extended period due to illness.

Administrative Staff

- Receiving and recording absence calls from parents on the school system.
- Following up absences with first-day texts and calls.
- Reporting attendance concerns to the headteacher.
- Collaborating with Local Authority attendance officers and the school's Early Help worker to address persistent absenteeism.
- Organising calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance concerns.
- Advising the headteacher on when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

Local Authority Attendance Team

- To enforce the law regarding school attendance.

Parents / Carers

- Ensure regular and punctual school attendance.
- To inform the school by 9.00am if their child is sick or away from school for any reason. This is especially important as the school is legally required to report reasons for absence. The school will contact parents if no notification has been received and may contact the School's attendance officer or social care if there are concerns around a child's whereabouts.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- To inform the school in advance and show the school the appointment card/letter and if necessary speak to the Head Teacher, if there is an unavoidable medical appointment that a child has to attend.
- Where a child has to be collected during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by arrangement with the office staff. Children cannot be allowed to meet parents / carers off school property and they must be picked up by an adult.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for **exceptional** circumstances.
- Actively work with the school staff, attendance officer and relevant multi agency staff to solve any attendance issues as and when they occur.

Children subject to a Child Protection Plan

Where the school has concerns about a child's attendance, they will notify Children's services and report the concern to the identified person for the child immediately. If the family cannot be contacted that day a home visit will be made by the attendance officer at the earliest opportunity.

Administration

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 school 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 See appendix I for the DfE attendance codes.

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 school by 8:45am (Nursery) 8:50am (Years 1-6) on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:05am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:05pm and will be kept open until 1:15pm.

Unplanned Absence

Parents or carers must inform the school by telephone on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as possible (refer to section 7 for more details).

Absences due to illness will be recorded as authorised unless the school has legitimate concerns regarding the validity of the illness. In such cases, the school may request medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card, or other relevant documentation.

If the school is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Planned Absence

Medical or dental appointments will be recorded as authorised absences if parents or carers notify the school in advance. However, such absences will still impact the pupil's attendance percentage.

Parents and carers are encouraged to arrange medical or dental appointments outside school hours whenever possible. If this is not feasible, the pupil should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary.

For any other term-time absences, parents or carers must apply as far in advance as possible. Section 5 outlines the types of term-time absences the school can authorise.

Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- **Before the register closes** will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

- **After the register closes** will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

If punctuality issues persist, the school will contact parents or carers to discuss the reasons and offer support where needed. This may include strategies or interventions to improve punctuality.

Reporting to Parents

The school provides parents and carers with their child's attendance record in writing once per term and as part of the annual end-of-year report.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Approval for Term-Time Absence

Leave of absence during term time will only be granted by the headteacher in cases of *exceptional circumstances* and at their discretion.

Exceptional circumstances are defined as one-off events with fixed dates, such as the funeral or wedding of an immediate family member. Parents or carers may be asked to provide additional information about the event to support their request.

The school reviews each application for term-time absence on an individual basis, taking into account the specific details, circumstances, and context of the request.

Family holidays, regardless of duration, will not be authorised.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- **Illness and medical/dental appointments** (refer to sections 4.2 and 4.3 for details).
- **Religious observance** – where the day is designated exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If required, the school may request evidence to confirm this.

Reducing Persistent Absence

The school monitors attendance closely

Support is always available to both children and parents/carers. This includes wellbeing and nurturing sessions with a staff member, as well as support from our Pastoral Support Worker at home if needed. We can also request assistance from external professionals when necessary. Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school if they or their child need help with punctuality or attendance.

Legal Sanctions

The school or local authority may issue fines for the unauthorised absence of a child of compulsory school age.

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

The decision to issue a penalty notice may consider:

- The number of unauthorised absences in a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as term-time holidays taken without permission
- If an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a valid reason

If payment is not made within 28 days, the local authority may decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the penalty notice.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Excellent attendance is consistently encouraged by all staff within the classroom and as part of our school vision, “We always try to be that little bit better...”

The school celebrates and rewards good attendance weekly. Every Friday, the class with the highest attendance is awarded with a trophy and extra playtime. All children who achieve 100% attendance in a term will receive a dip in the Attendance Prize Box, and those with 100% attendance for the entire academic year will receive a special reward in July.

Attendance Monitoring

Seaburn Dene Primary School takes a proactive approach to monitoring attendance.

- Any child whose attendance falls below 96% or who has unauthorised absences will have their attendance monitored on a weekly basis until the end of the school year.
- Any pupil with attendance below 93% at the end of the school year will be closely monitored at the start of the new school year. Children whose attendance drops below 93% will be reviewed weekly by the Headteacher and Attendance Officer. The following procedures will apply:
 - The Headteacher will be informed of any circumstances, such as serious medical conditions, contributing to low attendance, and will consider this when initiating attendance procedures.
 - Should concerns about a child's attendance arise, a Parent Meeting may be arranged to discuss the issues and establish a contract/agreement to improve attendance (see Appendix 2).
 - If there are repeated patterns of irregular attendance, such as partial weeks, frequent absences on Mondays or Fridays, extended absences, or unauthorised absences, formal Non-Attendance proceedings will begin.
 - At any stage in this process, parents/carers may be informed that the school will no longer authorise a child's absence without legitimate medical documentation verifying the reason.

Non-Attendance Procedures

Stage 1

If a pupil's attendance drops below 93%, the school may send a concern letter to the parent/carer. The letter will be recorded by the school.

Stage 2

Pupils continue to have attendance of 93% or below and have made no improvement. A letter will be sent home setting a target for improvement over a four-week period.

Stage 3

If attendance remains a concern and the target is not met, a further face to face meeting with the Headteacher and a member of the Governing Body will be held. During this period, 100% attendance is required unless medical evidence can be provided.

Stage 4

If attendance continues to be a concern, a referral will be made to the City of Sunderland Attendance Team. The Attendance Team will review the situation and may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notice Regulations 2024 and Statutory Guidance

Schools must consider issuing a penalty notice (fine) if a pupil reaches the national threshold of 10 consecutive unauthorised absences (typically 5 days) within a rolling 10-week period.

- Support should be offered before making a referral if appropriate.
- If the threshold is met and a penalty notice is deemed necessary, the school will refer to the Local Authority according to their Code of Conduct.
- A penalty notice issued by the Local Authority is £160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days. If paid within 21 days, the fine is reduced to £80.
- If the threshold is met a second time within three years, a second penalty notice will be issued at a flat rate of £160, regardless of when it is paid.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued for the same child within three years. If the threshold is met again after this period, alternative actions, including possible prosecution, will be considered.

Building Positive Relationships

The school strives to maintain respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure engagement and trust. Open and honest communication will be maintained regarding school expectations, attendance, and performance, ensuring families understand their responsibilities. The school will also collaborate with external agencies to support pupils and families in addressing attendance concerns.

Parents or carers are expected to notify the school in the morning if their child will be absent due to illness (see section 4.2). If a pupil's absence becomes excessive in relation to the illness, the school will reach out to the parent/carer to discuss the reasons and offer support to help the pupil re-integrate back into school.

The threshold for persistent absence is set at 10%. If a pupil's overall absence rate reaches or exceeds 10%, they will be classified as a persistent absentee. Persistent absentees are monitored closely on a weekly basis and may receive a home attendance visit during their next period of absence.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at both the national and local authority levels through the Department for Education's school absence statistics. The school will compare its attendance data to the national average and share these findings with the governing board.

Attendance data is stored and tracked using SIMS. The Headteacher, School Administrators, and Early Help worker may use this data for internal purposes, such as:

- Monitoring individual pupil attendance
- Identifying groups of children whose absences may raise concerns
- Tracking and evaluating support for pupils in need of intervention.

This policy will be reviewed periodically, in line with any updates from the Department for Education (DfE) or whenever Seaburn Dene Primary School deems necessary.

Children missing from Education

Local authorities are legally required to identify children who are missing from education. When children or young people miss out on their right to education, it raises concerns not only about their academic progress and potential impact on their attainment but also about their safety and welfare. As a school, we actively encourage parents, carers, and staff to share any information they have about children who may be missing from education, to ensure their safety and to help them get registered at school or an alternative educational provision as soon as possible.

A child is considered to be missing from education if they are of compulsory school age (5-16 years old), are not enrolled in any school, and are not receiving suitable education elsewhere. Children can go missing from education for a variety of reasons, including:

- Not entering the educational system at the correct time
- Being withdrawn from school by their parents
- Missing school due to illness, exclusion, or refusal to attend
- Failing to secure a school place after moving to a new area

It is crucial to share any information regarding a child who may be missing from education so the school and attendance team can ensure appropriate provisions are made to safeguard the child's wellbeing. The school will follow the procedures outlined in Sunderland City Council's document *Locating Missing Pupils and the Removal of Pupils from Roll*.

Young Carers

We recognise the challenges faced by young carers and strive to identify them as early as possible during their time at the school. A compassionate and flexible approach will be taken to support young carers, with each case being considered individually. When appropriate, other agencies will be involved in supporting the pupil. The school, in collaboration with relevant authorities, will provide the

necessary support to help young carers maintain regular attendance and meet the school's expectations for consistent education.

Early Years attendance - children under 5

At Seaburn Dene Primary School we are lucky enough to be able to offer children as young as 3 years old a place in our education setting. Although attendance is not compulsory until the term after a child is 5 years old, the school considers attendance mandatory for all of its pupils. Early years attendance is monitored in line with older children and parents should expect to provide information about absence and maintain good attendance in line with the expectations set out in this policy.

Frequent absence from young pupils not only results in significant amounts of education being missed, but potentially educational opportunities for other children in the area who would have better attendance.

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	School 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
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Unauthorised Absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not

		approved by the school
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	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School 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 school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Inclusion Statement

At Seaburn Dene Primary School, we are committed to offering an inclusive curriculum to ensure the best possible progress for all of our pupils whatever their needs or abilities.

Pupils have Special Educational Needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. Pupils with a disability have special educational needs if they have any difficulty in accessing education and if they need any special educational provision to be made for them, which is anything that is additional to or different from what is normally available in schools in the area.

At Seaburn Dene Primary School we undertake the duties, including in relation to this policy:

- Not to treat disabled pupils less favourably for a reason which relates to their disability
- To take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage

- To do our best by all disabled members of our school community in relation to the requirements of this particular policy

Equality & Diversity Statement

Seaburn Dene Primary School fully recognises its duty to comply with equality and diversity legislation, and its Gender Equality Scheme sets out the school's aims in relation to equality and what it will do to ensure that equality is fully embedded in practice. The school fully acknowledges its responsibilities in terms of equality issues in relation to gender, age, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment, including in relation to this policy.

Seaburn Dene Primary School is firmly committed to equality and diversity, and when carrying out our functions, we shall have due regard to the need: to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Child Protection Policy.