

SPEEN CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Issued: October 2022

Next Review: October 2025

THEN CHRIST WILL MAKE HIS HOME IN YOUR HEARTS
AS YOU TRUST IN HIM. YOUR ROOTS WILL GROW
DOWN INTO GOD'S LOVE AND KEEP YOU STRONG.

- EPHESIANS 3:17 (NLT)

1. Introduction and background

A pupil's absence has a serious impact on his/her attainment and progress. Speen CE Infant School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards of pupil attainment and preparation for a future work career. Any absence leads to missed learning and may cause difficulties with social relationships.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may also affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental/carers responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

2. Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in for eg our newsletter, end of term assemblies etc
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance. (This is set in conjunction with the Local Authority.)
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance at our end of term assemblies.

3. Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always requested from parents.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a permitted reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, religious observance, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" is authorised. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- absences which have never been properly explained
- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- truancy before or during the school day
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been approved

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out as soon as possible between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then the school will work with that family to understand the root problem. The school can also utilise outside agencies to help with this if needed, such as a Family Worker, School Nurse or a Parental Support Adviser.

4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. National research for absence at this level is that this level of absence is doing considerable damage to any child's education. Full parental support and co-operation is needed to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given, thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents /carers immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. They are also monitored alongside academic tracking to see to what extent their absence is affecting their attainment.

Under local authority guidance, all our PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through the School Nurse or County Attendance Team Officer.

5. Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent, the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence and before 10am. The school will also require a letter or email to office@speen-cofe.bucks.sch.uk on the child's return, explaining the reason why the child was not at school.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you by 10am. We must ensure that they are at home with you.
- Contact you formally in writing if the absence in the preceding half term falls below 95%;
- Ask you to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absences persist;

Monitoring:

Following local authority guidance, every week each child's attendance record for the half term is looked at to identify absences of 5 or more sessions (2.5 days - not necessarily consecutive). It should be noted that both authorised and non-authorised absences make up this figure.

For each child identified, further analysis of the reasons for absence is undertaken.

If no extenuating circumstances for the absence can be found (eg a long term medical problem exists) a letter is issued to the parent/carer advising them of the % attendance rate for their child and requesting immediate improvement.

If no improvement is forthcoming over the next 5 weeks, a second letter is issued requesting a meeting with parents to discuss the child's attendance. At this stage the County Attendance Team Officer becomes involved and more intense monitoring commences.

6. The County Attendance Team Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the County Attendance Team Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Penalty notices came into force on 1st September 2013 and can be given in certain circumstances to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. This charge may also apply to parents requesting holiday leave if it causes attendance to fall below 90%. The charge is £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the County Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

7. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons for other pupils, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage poor time keeping in their future professional lives. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. We look to parents to model good punctuality to their children. Staff will always be at school on time, ready for your children.

How we manage lateness:

Registers are marked by 8.45am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in school by that time.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Similarly, afternoon registers are closed 30minutes after their normal marking time of 1.00 pm.

It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent/guardian outside the normal hours are signed in or out from the office. The signing in/out register in the office is used in the case of fire as an appendix to class registers.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be notified in writing by the Headteacher, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

8. Holidays in Term Time:

There is no automatic entitlement in law, to time off in school time to go on holiday. Whilst recognising that parents have a right to request leave of absence for holidays taken in term time, this leave will be unauthorised except in very exceptional circumstances (see appendix 1).

In addition, leave for holidays will never be authorised during any period of school testing where dates are issued in advance ie KS1 SATs in May and Year 1 and 2 Phonics in June.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of any that might be agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice (see Paragraph 6 above).

9. Summary

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality, to show us where improvements need to be made. The school is monitored by the local authority and Ofsted for its attendance data. The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their child has maximum punctual attendance.

Our target is to achieve 100% attendance because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and future working lives. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Appendix 1 – Is my request for absence likely to be granted?

There is no automatic entitlement in law, to any time off in school time. Whilst recognising that parents have a right to request leave of absence taken in term time, this leave will be unauthorised except in very exceptional circumstances. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By 'unavoidable' this is an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Background

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the notional threshold of ten school days. The amendments made clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. The regulations also stated that headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted for 'exceptional circumstances'.

Guidance on authorised absence in schools

1. The decision to authorise absence is at the school leadership's discretion based on their policy (circumstances vary from school to school as there are no absolute rules on this subject).
2. Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The head teacher will rightly prioritise attendance. **The default school policy is that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.**
3. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it will not be authorised.
4. Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is not considered an exceptional circumstance.
5. Absences to visit family members or attend family weddings are not generally granted during term time as they can be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
6. Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
7. Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.
8. Absences for important religious observances may be taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations to a maximum of two days per year, rather than regular or recurring events.
9. Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time. This may also apply in certain circumstances to those families who are unable to take annual leave in school holidays due to the nature of their work.
10. Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
11. A student's previous record of attendance will be taken into account when making decisions.



APPENDIX 2
Regulation 8 – Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995

**PLEASE NOTE: PARENTS ARE EXPECTED TO TAKE
FAMILY HOLIDAYS DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS**

Name of School: Speen CE Infant School	
Proposed Dates of Absence	From _____ To: _____
I request permission for my child/ren to be granted Leave of Absence for the above dates.	
Name(s): _____	Class: _____
Please give details and reasons for the proposed absence:	
Details of any other siblings at other schools who you will be asking for leave of absence for:	
Sibling 1 name:	School:
Sibling 2 name:	School:
Sibling 3 name:	School:
Signature of Parent/Guardian _____	Date: _____
The completed form should be submitted to the Headteacher <u>not less than one month before the proposed period of absence</u> . The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist (see policy). Permission will never be granted for holiday leave of absence during assessment or examination periods.	
<i>Having a good education will help to give your child the best possible start in life. If your child is absent for any period, he or she may miss essential elements of their learning programme.</i>	

Name of Pupil/s: _____

Speen CE Infant School does / does not give permission for the above named pupil/s to be absent from school on _____ (date/s) in accordance with the school's policy.

Signature: _____
(Headteacher)

Date: _____