

South Molton Community Primary School

Attendance Policy

Adopted: Summer 2016

Review date: June 2022

Renewal date: May 2024

1. Aim

The aim of this attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to as much as possible.

South Molton Community Primary School takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils, and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support.

This policy is supported by our policies on **safeguarding**, **bullying** and **behaviour**.

2. Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable —

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age —

- (a) when he attains the age of five, if he attains that age on a prescribed day, and
- (b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his attaining that age.

[Normally referred to as the start of the term following their 5th birthday]

A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year —

- (a) if he attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- (b) if he attains that age on that day, or
- (c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his attaining that age.

[Normally referred to as the last Friday in June in the school year in which they obtain the age of 16 years]

- report to the governing body each term for attendance records, data and provision

- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings
- ensure that the local authority is informed in a timely manner if pupils cease to attend.
- Promote good attendance through assembly activities such as attendance trophy, 100% termly and year certificates and an attendance class chart in the hall.

Teachers and support staff

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is recorded daily
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- encourage and support their children's aspirations
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school (**see section 4**), and include an expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the Headteacher (**see section 4.6**)

4. Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and if possible let them know what date they expect the child to return. For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a written note from the parent/carer of the child.

4.2 Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents will need to make a phone call to alert the school on each day of absence. When the child returns to school they should bring a note from their parent explaining the absence – this is for the school records.

For prolonged absence due to illness, parents may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

4.3 Medical or dental appointments

Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

4.4 Authorised absences

There may be some instances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement.

4.5 Exclusion

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence.

4.6 Absence in exceptional circumstances

Parents should make every effort to ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. The Headteacher has the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If the Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. Requests for leave of this type must be made in writing to the Headteacher in advance of the leave being taken and by using the required form. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration.

Retrospective applications will not be considered and this time taken will be processed as unauthorised absence. All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing, and will outline the details of when the child is expected to return to school. Parents should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

When deciding whether to authorise absence, the Headteacher will consider if there are exceptional circumstances and if so, may then also take the following into account:

- If a child's attendance is below 96% or they are significantly behind their peers decline all but half or full day absence for medical.
- If a child's attendance is below 90% and/or they are significantly behind their peers and unauthorised absences are taken the FGB should consider all options open to the school, including fixed penalty notices.
- If this is in the autumn term the head teacher can use discretion as to whether this would impact on the attendance figure for that child over the entire year.
- If absence in any way affects school work of vital importance, exams or assessments, then this will be unauthorised.

- If attendance is above 96% the head teacher can use discretion to authorise exceptional circumstances and:
- Parents will be expected to ensure children continue with their home learning, reading at home at least three times a week, as well as completing a project or diary whilst away to present when returning to school.

If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents may be issued with a penalty notice.

4.7 Religious observance

South Molton Community Primary School recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times when on a single day.

Parents will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

4.8 Late arrival

Registration begins at 9.00am. Pupils who arrive after this time but within the registration period will be marked late. **The registration period ends at 9.30am.**

Pupils who arrive after the registration period has started should go straight to the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised. It is vital that pupils sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for.

Persistent lateness may result in disciplinary action.

5. School action: following up absences

Class registers are passed to the school office at the end of the registration period. Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the office staff will contact the parent or carer to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

Where students have been away for either short or long term, the school will support that child when they re-enter school to help them catch up on any work that they have missed.

5.1 Escalation Procedures

Letters are given to parents / carers if their child / children's attendance falls below 90%. The Educational Welfare Officer is informed if attendance hasn't improved after a period of time; this could result in legal action being taken.