



# Spaldwick Primary School

## Attendance Policy

Person Responsible: Headteacher, Governors  
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## Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Spaldwick Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at our schools and this policy is made available to all parents and carers of pupils via our school website. If you would like a printed copy, speak to the school admin team.

Although parents and carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the staff and Governors at our schools work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

## Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and Governors in our schools are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

**We expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.**

### Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and children of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with children, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all children realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which children feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in children a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

### We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and children.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.

- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, children, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting children who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold

## Definitions

### Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences reported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## Procedures

Our schools will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.

- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and children.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents and carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents and carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time. A Penalty Notice may be issued in this event.
- To work with parents to improve individual children attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the DfE where requested.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents and carers.
- Recording conversations had with parents and carers about absences on Arbor.
- Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.

### **Headteacher**

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the EWO service.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO.

- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

### **Administration staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Absence comment is completed on Arbor.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents and carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher.

### **Parents**

Parents and Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter, copy of prescription or medication packaging with child's name)
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

### **Local Governing Committee**

The governing committee is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school.
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **Registration**

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The electronic attendance register must be completed by the class teacher (or cover person taking the class).

All attendance records are documented using Arbor. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Our school starts at 8.50am and we expect all children to be in class by this time. Registers are marked at 8.50am and close at 9.00am. If your child arrives after 8.50am they will be given a 'L' code. Your child will receive an unauthorised late mark if they arrive after the register is closed. Your child will be given a 'U' code (unauthorised late) in line with regulations, and this may mean that you face legal action if they persist. When your child is late, they miss the start of the day, they can miss work, and this will impact on their learning. Late arrivals also disrupt lessons for other children in the class, which is not fair on them or your child.

## Lateness

	Spaldwick Primary School
Arrival at School	8.50am
Registration Close (use of 'L' code starts)	8.50-9.00am
'U' code starts	9.00 am

A record is also kept of the number of minutes a pupil is late, this is documented on Arbor. On entry to the school, it is the responsibility of the parent to sign the child in using the electronic sign-in system at the front desk, giving a reason for the child arriving late to school.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## Absences

Parents and carers should contact the school on the first (and each subsequent) day of their child's absence. When parents and carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised electronically using Arbor. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence, we will seek an explanation from parents and carers. If an explanation is not forthcoming, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

### **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those children who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent, and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. This is to ensure school knows where the child and that they are safe.

If your child is going to be absent from school, you must contact the school on the first day and subsequent days of absence and inform the school the reason for the absence (unless it is a diagnosed medical condition and evidence is on file).

You can do this in several ways:

- Telephone
- Calling into the school and speaking to a staff member.
- **We do not accept email notifications of absence.**

**If your child is absent and you do not contact us, we may, under our safeguarding policy:**

- Telephone you on the first day and every following day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Contact emergency numbers held on Arbor.
- Undertake a home visit if no contact is received from you by 10am.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with us.
- Call 101 (Police) and request a safe and well check if all other attempts to contact you fail to get a response.
- Invite you to discuss the absences with us.
- Take legal action if there are persistent absences, which may be in the form of penalty notices issued to each parent and carer for each child or legal action through the courts.

### **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send resources home, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services for advice.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

### **Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

## **Parental Request for Absence from School during term time**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of headteachers to authorise absence of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional and unavoidable circumstances exist. Parents must complete an application for 'leave of absence form- exceptional circumstances' if their child is to be absent from school for any other reason than illness. Please refer to this form for further information.

## **Flexi-schooling**

All flexi-schooling requests will be considered on an individual basis. Where flexi-schooling is introduced, it will be reviewed fortnightly with the aim to increase hours rapidly until the child is attending school full time

## **Penalty Notice**

If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices may only be served in accordance with the County Council's code of conduct.

The amount of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 per parent per child if paid after 21 days and before 28 days. Should a parent or carer on whom a notice is served fail to pay the fine in full within the specified time he/she will be liable to prosecution in a Magistrates court where on conviction a sentence of a fine up to £2,500 or up to three months in prison may be imposed.

## **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

**The schools expect attendance at school to be 100% unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.**

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent and carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

The Educational Welfare Service has the power to issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.



## **Monitoring Attendance**

Our office staff has the responsibility for ensuring that all the attendance data is accurately recorded on the Arbor attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

### **Absence Letters - informing parents of a child's poor attendance.**

**Absence Letter 1** – will be sent to the parents and carers of any child who has recorded an attendance rate of less than 94%, since the beginning of the Autumn Term.

**Absence Letter 2** – will be sent when attendance has not improved satisfactorily in the six weeks after letter 1.

A meeting will be held to discuss the child's poor attendance and a further target will be set to be monitored weekly. If the target is not met satisfactorily, the school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Office.

**Absence Letter 3** – will be sent out if during the monitoring period there is still poor attendance. The Education Welfare Office may become involved.

**Letter 3**- referral to Education Welfare Officer.

**Late Letter** – lateness will be monitored alongside attendance and where a child is deemed to be missing a significant amount of learning time due to lateness, a late letter will be issued to parents and carers.

**Suspected Holiday Letter** – if we consider children might have been on holiday a suspected holiday letter will be sent to parents.