



Sandford St. Martin's
P R I M A R Y S C H O O L

Attendance Policy 2023-24

Our mission statement: Learn Love Laugh

Safeguarding

If there are any Safeguarding issues that arise from the implementation of this policy, then they should be dealt with in accordance with the School's Safeguarding policy. Any safeguarding concerns should be referred directly to the School by telephone or in person for the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead along with any concerns relating to the Prevent Strategy.

Equality

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Equality Policy. The general equality duty requires that, in the exercise of their functions, schools must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010. This school endeavours to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations for all.

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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- To minimise the disruption caused by late arrivals or non-attendance to the quality of the education and provisions for all pupils

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

1.1 Targets

Our target attendance has been set in conjunction with the Governors and with reference to the DfE's aim of reducing unauthorised absence.

Year	2021/22	2022/23
Attendance Target	92.3%	97%

2 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.

3 Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring, reviewing and challenging attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis. Teachers record absence as an N code and attendance and correct codes are added by the school office. Class teachers are responsible for working with parents to ensure improved attendance for identified pupils. Class teachers are responsible for reporting any concerns about patterns of absence to the Deputy Headteacher, office staff and on My Concern when it is considered a Safeguarding issue.

3.5 Office staff

Office staff are expected to check absence lines, emails and take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. Office staff are expected to contact parents when absence has not been reported as per the policy guidelines.

3.6 Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.

3.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Reception and Key Stage 1 (year 1 and 2) pupils must arrive in school by 8.45 on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45.

Key stage 2 (year 3,4,5 and 6) pupils must arrive in school by 8.55 on each school day. The register will be taken at 8.55.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00 or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 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.

Advance notification of appointments should be made to the office only, either by telephone or email.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 5.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Reception and Key Stage 1 (year 1 and 2) pupils must arrive in school by 8.45 on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45, a "late" mark will be entered from 8.45-8.55, from 8.55 onwards an "Unauthorized" mark will be made.

Key stage 2 (year 3,4,5 and 6) pupils must arrive in school by 8.55 on each school day. The register will be taken at 8.55, a "late" mark will be entered from 8.55-9.05, from 9.05 onwards an "Unauthorized" mark will be made.

4.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

We will call parents/carers on the first day by 9.30am for absences not reported. If we do not get a response, we follow Safeguarding Policy for missing children.

4.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance reports are issued to parents annually as part of pupils end of year Reports. Parents are able to request attendance records for their children at any point in the year from the school office.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or available from the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can issue a fine, or penalty notice, to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. A penalty notice may be issued if any of the following criteria can be evidenced:

- 3 or more consecutive school days of unauthorised absence are recorded during the first 10 days from the date on which the school reopens at the start of a new academic year in September;
- 5 or more consecutive days of unauthorised leave are recorded AND where the attendance level in the 10 school weeks immediately preceding the unauthorised leave falls below 90%;
- Where a parent fails to make an application for leave during term time AND where a pupil has 5 or more consecutive days of unauthorised absence recorded. N.B. previous attendance patterns will not be considered in such cases.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.

~~The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:~~

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

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Sandford St Martin's Primary uses a variety of strategies to encourage attendance including:

- Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
- Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports.
- Pupil awareness of the importance of good attendance in helping them to access their right to education will be discussed regularly in class.
- In a termly award assembly the class with the highest percentage of attendance is celebrated.
- Regular class attendance is reported in school newsletters.
- Weekly certificates will be given to each class reporting position for whole school attendance that week.
- Pupils who achieve 100% attendance each term will be presented with a certificate during the end of term assembly.

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- • Parents of children whose attendance falls below 95% (within any half term) will be notified by letter informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending
- • Children with attendance below the level outlined above will be monitored until their attendance returns to a satisfactory level of at least 95%
- • Where there is still a concern six weeks after the first letter parents will be invited by letter to a meeting to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the pupil from attending. An individual action plan, developed between the Head Teacher/leadership team, parents and pupil may be set up to support better attendance.
- • If the parent/s do not attend the meeting or after such a meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve a formal referral to the Local Authority Attendance team will be made.
- • Parents should be aware that we have been advised that:

- “Dorset Council Children’s Services Directorate fully supports schools in expecting parents and carers to make sure that children and young people attend school on a regular basis. Any time away from school can have a significant impact on educational attainment, success in later life and longer-term health and well-being.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum bi-annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement
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
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
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
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
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

Code	Definition	Scenario
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

Appendix 2 - LEAVE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES REQUEST FORM



LEAVE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES REQUEST FORM

Before you fill in this form please read the information below very carefully. You should then complete the form, **sign and date parts A and B**, and return the whole form to the Head Teacher via the school office.

It is essential that children and young people form good habits of regular attendance at school from an early age and that good attendance is maintained throughout their school career. It is a legal requirement that all children should attend their educational provision and it is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure that their children attend school.

Unauthorised Leave in Term Time

We most strongly advise that you do not take pupils out of school for holidays in term time. There are only 190 statutory school days, which leaves 175 days for holidays and there must be **exceptional reasons** for a pupil to be authorised as absent from school. The school is obliged to operate under Dorset Council Attendance Policy.

In accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, a Penalty Notice can be issued in exceptional circumstances, for example where a parent takes a child on holiday during term time without the school authorising the absence. In such circumstances, a minimum of 10 half day sessions of unauthorised absence will apply before a Penalty Notice may be issued by Dorset Council. The authorised person may issue a Penalty Notice without first issuing a formal warning to the parent as would otherwise be required. However, s/he should still be satisfied that the parent was informed beforehand that, in some exceptional circumstances e.g. term time holiday, unauthorised absence could lead to a Penalty Notice being issued without further warning.

Who can receive a Penalty Notice?

A penalty notice may be issued if any of the following criteria can be evidenced:

- 3 or more consecutive school days of unauthorised absence are recorded during the first 10 days from the date on which the school reopens at the start of a new academic year in September;
- 5 or more consecutive days of unauthorised leave are recorded AND where the attendance level in the 10 school weeks immediately preceding the unauthorised leave falls below 90%;
- Where a parent fails to make an application for leave during term time AND where a pupil has 5 or more consecutive days of unauthorised absence recorded. N.B. previous attendance patterns will not be considered in such cases.
- Any Penalty Notice issued must be addressed to one parent but a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent/carer liable for the offence or offences. An authorised person has discretion when deciding whether to issue one or more parents of a child with a Penalty Notice. This is to enable account to be taken of the specific circumstances in individual cases.

Why good attendance is important:

In recent years, much research has been carried out on the effects that poor attendance can have on children's progress at school and how well they achieve in life. Taking pupils out of school in term time means that they miss out on crucial learning and it puts pressure on them to catch up. Statistical evidence shows that reduced attendance correlates with lower grades in national tests and examinations.

Now 90% attendance might sound quite good, but what it really means is...

- Your child is absent for lessons for the equivalent of one-half day every week
- In one year, 4 whole weeks of lessons are missed
- Continued attendance at 90% over 5 years means your child has missed half a school year.

The following are some of the problems which often result from poor attendance:

- Your child has difficulty in keeping up with his or her work
- Teachers may not find it possible to give the extra time needed to help your child catch up
- Your child's absence can disrupt the learning of others in the class

- Your child misses a critical early stage in learning, without which further development of knowledge and skill is severely hindered.

We are therefore informing parents/carers that, should you wish to take your child out of school for any leave of absence, holidays or otherwise, requests **will not** be routinely granted. It is essential that any requests for leave of absence are discussed with your child's Headteacher prior to the request being made. Any absence which has not been authorised by your child's school will be recorded as 'unauthorised' and this has the potential to impact on your child's overall absence figure and could result in legal action.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

PART A (To be retained by the office)

I ask permission for the pupil(s) named below to have leave of absence from school for an exceptional circumstance for the period shown. I understand that if permission is not granted any absence will be deemed unauthorised and the parent(s)/carer(s) of the child could be issued with a Penalty Notice if the leave is unauthorised and fits the criteria as explained on page 1.

Name of pupil(s): Class:

.....Class:

Leave of absence dates: From.....to..... inclusive

Please Outline the Reason for Absence Below: *If you prefer to give your reasons privately and in confidence, as well as in writing, please make an appointment to speak to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.*

Signature: Parent/Carer:Date.....

Office use only: absence authorised/ absence unauthorised/ referred to DCC.

PART B (To be signed by the parent/guardian and retained by the school office)

I accept that the school may not be able to make up any work my child has/children have missed during any absence.

Signature: Parent/Carer:Date.....

PART C (To be returned to the parent/carer)

Dear Parent/Carer of Class:

(Delete as appropriate) • Leave is not granted for the period requested in line with the Government's changes to school attendance regulations and Dorset County Council's Attendance Policy. • Leave is granted for exceptional circumstances as detailed by the parent/carer.

Headteacher: Date:



Attendance Policy	
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