



'Where Children Come First'

Attendance Policy

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1.Introduction and Statutory framework

Shepton Mallet Community Infants' School & Nursery aims to maximise attendance rates and secure high levels of punctuality in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them. If allowed to remain unchecked persistent absence and lateness can significantly impact on a pupil's progress and achievement. Our partnerships with parents are play a vital role in ensuring that this is achieved.

In line with the 1996 Education Act, we expect all children on roll to attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We will endeavour to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to create a happy and rewarding environment for all children so the children want to come. We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

We recognise that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. At all times, parents are encouraged to take an active role in the school life and to share and support their children's learning. Though our home-school agreement, parents agree to ensuring their child's the regular and punctual attendance. As part of our annual written reports to parents, the children's attendance records are shared.

2.Monitoring and Reviewing Attendance

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil. Regular checks on attendance are carried out by all class teachers. The Attendance Registers are marked twice each day, at the start of the morning session and again in the afternoon. Registers are checked by the School Administrator. All absences and persistent lateness are investigated. When the register closes, the School Administrator checks the messages. If a pupil is absent and the school has not been contacted, then she will text or telephone parents to check on why a pupil is not in school.

Attendance data is held electronically on a separate SIMS Management Information System, accessible by the Headteacher and School Administrator who are able to conduct spot checks on individual children and provide comprehensive attendance records.

The Headteacher monitors the attendance of pupils each week. Attendance below 96% is considered a cause for concern.

When attendance falls below 96% (whether authorised or unauthorised) school may issue a letter explaining to parents the issues with the pupil's attendance and requesting improvement to be made.

If attendance drops to 90% a 2nd letter may be written informing parents/carers and the head may invite the parents to meeting to discuss ways of improving attendance.

The School will refer a pupil to the Attendance team if a child's attendance drops below 90% and there is no satisfactory explanation for this drop in attendance.

Returns of school data are made annually to the DfE and benchmark data exists to compare our school within local and national contexts.

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and Governors at the first Full Governors' meeting of the school year. Targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years.

3.Punctuality and lateness

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start at the start of the school day . The Headteacher monitors lateness of pupils as punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is of extreme importance therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

Children go into at school from 8.45. There is no supervision on site for children before this time and the school is not legally responsible for them.

Registration is at 8.55 am and again at 1.00pm. Registers will close at ten minutes after registration times. A pupil that arrives after this time will be marked as 'late' unless the school have previously acknowledged the reason for their late arrival into school.

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will make verbal contact with parents/carers. If the concerns persist, the Headteacher will write to the parents/carers. If there is no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer. In the event of persistent lateness, the school will make a formal referral to the Education Welfare Service.

4.Authorised and unauthorised attendance

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents, and it is a statutory requirement for the Headteacher to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised. Wherever reasonably possible, we expect parents to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time. If this is not possible please give as much written notice as possible with a copy of the appointment slip.

If a child is absent from school for whatever reason the parent must inform the school in person, in writing or by telephone as soon as possible. The normal routine is to telephone the school on the first morning of absence. Such calls are always logged and the class teacher informed.

If there is concern about the amount of school a child is missing through illness parents will be asked for medical evidence and no further absences will be authorised until proof of illness is provided.

6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more of illness will require medical evidence. Absences will not be authorised until this has been received.

Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school receives no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given.

10 consecutive sessions (5 days) or more unauthorised absence will result in school requesting the Education Welfare Officer to issue an immediate Penalty notice (fine).

10 or more unauthorised absences within a 12 week period will result in school referring the child's attendance to the Education Welfare Officer. This will result in either a Parenting contract meeting, or warning of a Penalty notice being issued.

5. Leave of Absence

The Government issued regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- Head teachers **shall not grant any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application. Exceptional circumstances being defined as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave
- Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice if the child is absent from school during that period
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Somerset County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Shepton Mallet Community Infants' School & Nursery understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but this does NOT count as an exceptional circumstance. Leave which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a wedding that is not immediate family
- Family birthdays

6. Why attendance matters:

Less than 5 days absence = 98%+ attendance

- 14 days absence (approx.) = 93.5% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 90% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 88% attendance
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If a child achieves 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 40 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

At Shepton Mallet Community Infants' School & Nursery the staff and Governors endeavour to support parent in the responsibility of attendance by:-

- an environment in which pupils feel welcomed and valued. The school's ethos demonstrates that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken
- making every effort to match learning tasks to pupils' needs
- collating attendance data termly and analysing it in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice
- parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, the school website, parents' evenings etc) of the importance of good attendance
- the Headteacher will make a termly report to governors on attendance
- the Headteacher and SENCo may liaise with other agencies when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing difficulties

7.Role of the Attendance Governor

The attendance governor will act alongside the Headteacher to monitor the attendance of all children and vulnerable groups (Pupil Premium, FSM, SEN etc) and ensure that this policy is being followed.

8.Role of Education Welfare Officer

On those occasions when a pattern of poor attendance or lateness is developing the Headteacher will work directly with the family to seek solutions. Should the problem drop below 85% then a referral to the Education Welfare Officer will follow. The function of the EWO at this stage is the Compliance / Enforcement part of the service which delivers the Local Authorities statutory response where attendance has fallen below 90%.

9. Data Analysis

The school collects and stores attendance data using the management information systems (SIMs). The school provides attendance data to the DFE, using SIMs to send data about the school census. The figures returned are then published by the DFE as part of the annual publication of school statistics.

The school uses the attendance data to identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and to track the attendance of individual pupils. Where attendance is a concern, the school will use data to analyse attendance by year group, classes, groups of pupils for example ethnicity or gender. The school uses attendance data to identify the main causes of absences within the school and to take action to address and improve those areas. The school will use data to monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.