



# Sheepscombe Primary School



## Attendance and Absence Policy

This policy was adopted at a meeting of:	FGB
Held on:	January 2020
Date to be reviewed	October 2021
Signed on behalf of the Governors:	<i>E Skinner</i>
Name of signatory:	Mrs Elisabeth Skinner
Signed by Head teacher	<i>V Barron</i>
Name of Head Teacher	Mrs Vicky Barron



Sheepscombe Primary School fully recognises its responsibility for safeguarding children and the importance of raising awareness of child protection issues. We discharge our responsibility with the attitude that 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. Any actions we take will be in the best interests of the child and compliant with the relevant statutory guidance.

**Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) - Vicky Barron (Headteacher)**

**Deputy DSL's - Tracey Lane and Caroline Powell**

**Safeguarding Governor - Lynsey Willis**

**Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board (GSCB) procedures**

**[www.gscb.org.uk](http://www.gscb.org.uk)**

**This policy should be read in conjunction with:**

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

<http://www.sheepscombeschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Safeguarding-Policy.pdf>

Home-School Agreement



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## 1. Introduction

The school staff, alongside Gloucestershire Local Authority, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance, and there is a large body of research evidence to support this. The School is committed to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted upon promptly.

## 2. Definitions of absence

**Authorised absence:** When a child has been away from school relating to a 'one-off isolated situation' or 'an exceptional reason' and the school has received notification via an absence request form (attached) from a parent or guardian, **or** if a child has been unwell and the parent has written a note or telephoned the school to explain the absence. The school's criteria for authorising absences is for the following reasons - illness, non-routine medical/dental appointments, religious observance, educational visits and other unavoidable cause. The Head Teacher makes the final decision to authorise an absence.

**Unauthorised absence:** When a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. This includes children who arrive after the registration period has closed (9.15am) or where illness is not considered to be the reason.

**Only the school can classify an absence as authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised**

**Late:** A child arrives after the registration period (8.50-9.00am) but before the time when registers close at 9.15

## 3. Attendance targets

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are approved by governors. The targets are challenging yet realistic and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools and nationally, when setting its own targets.

Parent receive termly updates as to their child's attendance. These are colour coded and where there are concerns meetings are set up between the Head teacher and the parents or carers of the child.

## 4. Expectations regarding attendance

**We expect that all pupils will:**

- **Attend school every day the school is open** unless there is an acceptable reason for an authorised absence. This is a reason that meets the school's criteria for authorising



absences, e.g. illness, non-routine medical/dental appointments, religious observance, educational visits and other unavoidable cause

- Arrive and leave school punctually;
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day.

**We expect that all parents/carers who have day-to-day responsibility for the children will:**

- Recognise that attendance is their responsibility
- Ensure the child attends school every day that school is open unless there is an acceptable reason for an authorised absence
- Be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- Ensure that they contact the school whenever the child/children is unable to attend school;
- Contact the school before 9.15a.m on the first day of the child's absence and repeat this each consecutive day until they return;
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school;
- Notify the school immediately of any change of address or contact details, especially mobile telephones;
- Notify the school of any family circumstances that might have an adverse effect on the child.

**Our school staff will:**

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily (morning and afternoon);
- Monitor every pupil's attendance - this may include groups of pupils eg. FSM, Ethnicity
- Contact parents by 9.45a.m. when a pupil fails to attend, where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- Call the next person on the child's contact list after 9.45a.m if no contact can be made after three attempts
- Follow up all unexplained absences;
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's or parents'/carers' concerns on attendance;
- Make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the Local Authority expectations with regard to regular school attendance
- Arrange informal meetings with parents to discuss attendance where school has an initial concern
- Send out letters to parents of children for whom attendance is a concern detailing the concern and the child's current attendance
- Refer irregular and unjustified patterns of attendance to the Inclusion team
- Set up an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) with an Inclusion officer where no progress is being made over time
- Issue formal notices as a last resort



- Follow the legal route for attendance

## **5. Encouraging Attendance**

Sheepscombe Primary School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment;
- By responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils;
- By marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration. Registration is taken at 8.50am and closes at 9.15am. Therefore if a child arrives after registration (8.50-9.00) but before 9.15am they will receive a late mark in the register. Pupils who arrive at school after the close of the register (after 9.15am) will have an unauthorised absence for the morning session.
- By publishing and displaying attendance statistics in the school newsletter;
- By implementing strategies to try to remove any barriers to regular attendance, and provided evidence of impact.
- By monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Inclusion Team if the irregular attendance or lateness continues.
- By considering the use of the Graduated Pathway to support children and families prior to instigating any more formal proceedings

## **6. Procedures for notifying us of your child's absence from school:**

- Please inform the school early in the morning on the first day that your child is ill and repeat this on each subsequent day until your child returns to school.
- If your child is away from school for a medical appointment we ask that if possible you notify school before the day, again in order that a record of this absence is made. If however you are unable to do this, we ask that you telephone on the morning of the appointment. We will also need to know the approximate time of return.
- When returning to school after an appointment we ask that you accompany your child into school to inform us that they have returned (rather than letting them arrive on their own) and fill in the late book in the Office.
- If a child needs to leave early for an appointment please collect them from school, as no child will be able to leave the premises without being accompanied by an adult.
- If your child is away from school for any other reason (e.g. holiday/family outing) then a term time absence form must be completed.
- If we have no notification of a child being absent and in the unlikely event that they have not arrived at school once the register has been taken, we will then telephone the parents or emergency contact in the order they appear in the pupil's contacts list.
- If we are unable to make contact with anyone on the contact list we will have no alternative but to immediately inform the authorities. This is for everyone's safety.



## **7. School Organisation**

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff will make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving clear and consistent messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the School has the following responsibilities:

**Head Teacher, Governors and designated member of school staff with overall responsibility for attendance to:**

- Adopt the whole policy;
- Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided;
- Initiate a procedure for contacting parents on the first day of absence;
- Meet regularly with parents where attendance is a concern
- Consult and liaise closely with the Inclusion Team on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay;
- Monitor and evaluate attendance via the School's Moving On Plan for Attendance
- Designate a Governor with specific responsibility for overseeing Attendance
- Authorise or unauthorise the attendance following the guidance set out in this policy
- Set up Attendance Improvement (AIM) meetings where there are serious concerns, following the Gloucestershire Guidance <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/17823/attendance-improvement-meetings-guidance-aim-final-290917.pdf> Before inviting parents to an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM), the school will have warned in writing of the risk of prosecution. The reason(s) for absence will have been explored by the school through formal or informal meetings possibly including offsite visits. The school will have also explored and tried a range of strategies to improve attendance.

**Class teachers:**

- To complete registers accurately and punctually morning and afternoon;
- To report any unexplained non-attendance by reporting it to the School Business Manager or head Teacher who will follow it up;
- To record accurately all absences in the register;
- To inform the Head Teacher and School Business Manager who are in charge of overall attendance of any concerns.

## **8. All absence during term time**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and subsequent Amendments set out the circumstances in which schools may grant a pupil leave of absence.

The regulation on leave of absence applies to all special schools and maintained schools. Schools have a discretionary power to grant a pupil time off school during the term in exceptional circumstances. However, schools are not restricted to granting time off in



those circumstances; they can also do so if they believe there are extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify the leave.

All applications for leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent(s), carer (s) or corporate parent that the pupil normally resides with, or on the day the illness first occurs, leading to a non-attendance at school.

The school is able to: refuse the whole period requested by a pupil's parents; grant part of the period and refuse the remainder; or grant the whole of the period requested. Any leave of absence granted by a school must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code. Periods that are refused must be recorded as unauthorised.

All requests should be treated on a case by case basis within the school's published attendance policies which should give it the flexibility to respond to difficult circumstances whilst discouraging unnecessary absence.

Persistent absence is regarded as any child with an attendance of 90% or below. Extra support, guidance and monitoring will be given to any child whose attendance falls below this figure, including a referral to the Inclusion Team, if necessary. Children whose attendance falls within this category will expect absence requests to be treated less favourably.

The issues that the school takes into account when considering whether to authorise any absence includes:

- the amount of time requested;
- age of the pupil;
- the pupil's general absence/attendance record;
- proximity of SATs and public examinations;
- evidence of medical conditions;
- pupil's ability to catch up the work;
- pupil's educational needs;
- general welfare of the pupil;
- circumstances of the request,
- purpose of the leave;
- frequency of the activity;
- when the request was made.

### **9. Absence in cases of sickness or if the child is unwell**

If a child is sick, unwell and unable to attend school, then the parent is to ring school before 9.15am on the first day of illness and on each subsequent day of non-attendance.

The decision whether to send their child to school lies with the parent. However, the decision whether to authorise any absence lies with the Headteacher, or delegated person. When deciding whether to authorise the absence in these cases, the Headteacher will take into account:



- age of the pupil;
- the pupil's general absence/attendance record;
- evidence provided by a medical professional of medical conditions ;
- frequency and length of absence, and other illnesses/absences, and the absence history of similar conditions/illnesses;
- Whether the child is a persistent absentee or not.

### **10. Absence in cases of holiday requests**

The School will respond to all requests for authorised absence from holiday requests and other absences using the school designated form. Parents will be asked to complete information indicating the requested dates of absence and the reasons for this. The parents are expected to contact the school if anything delays the pupil returning when expected.

The form will also include space for the school to indicate its decision and what action will be taken if permission has been refused and the parents keep their child away.

**A decision to authorise absence for a holiday will only be made in exceptional circumstances** and may include:

- for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education; and
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- restricted work commitments.

The LA recommends that holidays, which are taken for the following reasons, should not be authorised:

- availability of cheap holidays;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

If the local code of practice allows, parents can be given a penalty notice or prosecuted for periods of unauthorised holidays. See Local Authority Advice.

Further information is available from:

Gloucestershire Guidance for attendance

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/18446/pdf-attendance-guidance-for-schools-updated-311017.pdf>

### **11. Home Visits**



Home visits may be made by members of staff where attendance or a child's whereabouts is a Cause for Concern. This is at the discretion of the school, and may be for attendance or child welfare reasons. If home visits are carried out, two members of staff will undertake these home visits at all times.

## **12. Children Missing in Education**

Definition:

A Child Missing in Education (CME) is defined as a child or young person of compulsory education age who is: not attending school; not placed in alternative provision by an LA; and who is not receiving a suitable education elsewhere. This definition also includes children who are receiving an education, but one that is not suitable; this could include children who are not receiving full-time education suitable to their needs, e.g. age, ability, aptitude, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Children go missing from education for a number of reasons including:

- they don't start school at the appropriate time and so they do not enter the educational system
- they are removed by their parents
- behaviour and/or attendance difficulties
- they cease to attend, due to exclusion, illness or bullying
- they fail to find a suitable school place after moving to a new area
- the family move home regularly
- problems at home

The law requires all children between the ages of 5 and 16 to be in full time education.

### **Parents' responsibilities**

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education. Some parents may elect to educate their children at home and may withdraw them from school at any time to do so, unless they are subject to a School Attendance Order.

Where a parent notifies the school in writing that they are home educating, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform the local authority. However, where parents orally indicate that they intend to withdraw their child to be home educated, the school should consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. Children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans or statements of special educational needs (SEN) can be home educated. Where the EHC plan or statement sets out SEN provision that the child should receive at home, the local authority is under a duty to arrange that provision. Where the EHC plan or statement names a school or type of school as the place where the child should receive his or her education but the parent chooses to home educate their child, the local authority must assure itself that the provision being made by the parent is suitable. In such cases, the local authority must review the plan or statement annually to assure itself that the



provision set out in it continues to be appropriate and that the child's SEN continue to be met.

### **School Responsibilities**

Children missing from education can mean either a child being unenrolled or a child on extended absence. The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school may contact the Local Authority who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

School have a legal duty to inform the appropriate LA if:

- A child is absent for 10 days following on from a period of approved leave
- A child is absent for 10 consecutive days without approved leave
- A child fails to attend school regularly
- A child is deleted from the register when the next school is not known

Parents should be aware that Gloucestershire County Council reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their child/children to school on a regular basis.

With due regard for Children Missing Education (September 2018), Sheepscombe Primary School will notify local authorities when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the 15 grounds listed in the regulations (Annex A).

These 15 grounds continue to include:

- When the family has apparently moved away
- When the child has been certified as medically unfit to attend
- When the child is in custody for more than four months
- When the child has been permanently excluded
- The child has been taken out of school to be home educated

This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points and/or when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by us. When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority will include contact details as well as the reason for removal. We will also notify local authorities within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point and/or at the start of the first year of education normally provided by us.



We will obtain written confirmation from parents/carers if and when we find out that one of our pupils is being removed to be educated outside of the school system. A copy of this will be forwarded to the appropriate Local Authority.

### 13. Safeguarding:

There are significant risks for children who regularly go missing from education. All children, regardless of circumstance, are entitled to full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any SEN they may have.

Procedures are in place to identify and respond to this, particularly those who are repeatedly missing or where there is an emerging pattern (see above).

With due regard for Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2019), Sheepscombe Primary School acknowledges the importance of information sharing between schools and appropriate Local Authorities to help identify children missing education and help protect children from potential harm.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect (including CSE, FGM, travelling to conflict zones and forced marriage) and staff must be alert to any possible signs or indicators.

We will review information from the government's 'missing children and adults strategy' and 'children missing education' guidance when appropriate and applicable. Please see the Safeguarding and other relevant policies for further information.

### Appendix

This information is attached as an appendix

#### TERM TIME SCHOOL LEAVE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS at SHEEPSCOMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by, whenever possible, taking your holidays during school holidays.

Please note: "Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday during term time" - DfE Circular 10/99

THE FACTS	THE LAW
We recognise that it is often expensive to take a holiday during school breaks and that is why some parents may ask for term-time leave for their child. However, it is important that parents carefully consider the implications of taking their child out of school during term time.	The law does not say that parents have an automatic right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time.
Research suggests that children who are taken out of	However, in exceptional circumstances school may authorise, in advance, a request



school may never catch up on work they have missed. This can affect progress and self esteem and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.

Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.

**WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER**

There are times during a school year when a child may experience particular problems because of term-time leave such as:

- Closeness to regular tests, assessments & SATs
- At the beginning of a new school term

If the school refuses a request for term-time leave and the child is taken out of school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence

for a period of leave. The length of leave authorised is at the decision of the headteacher. The request for leave must come from a parent with whom the child normally resides.

If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.

Please contact your child's Headteacher if you wish to discuss this issue. Children should attend school for 190 days each year, and every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time. We hope that when you have read this leaflet you will consider that your child's education is too important to take holidays during term time.