



ATTENDANCE POLICY

ALIGNED TO MARLWOOD CLUSTER ATTENDANCE POLICY

Required Review Frequency	FGB to determine – annually
Next Review Due:	November 2022
Committee Responsible:	Curriculum & Standards Committee, then FGB for approval
Document Location	School

Version	Approved By	Date of Approval	Key Changes
1.2	FGB	27/11/2019	Reviewed, no changes required
1.3	FGB	01/12/2021	Reviewed with EWO guidance

RATIONALE

We want to do our best for all our children and believe that regular attendance at school is vital for children as it promotes good learning, positive attitudes and maintains continuity in their education and in their friendships.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by a parent.

PURPOSES

To ensure that parents/carers understand their duties to make sure that their children are present at school, for the morning and afternoon sessions, on the days that the school is open for pupils; except where circumstances are deemed to constitute an authorised absence.

To ensure that teachers and other school staff are aware of the distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence and the procedures for recording and reporting such occurrences.

To enable action to be taken quickly where unexplained absence or regular lateness occurs.

To ensure that officers of the Local Education Authority are informed where necessary so that they can fulfil their statutory obligations.

STATUTORY DUTY OF SCHOOLS

The Education Act requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive full time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. In addition, schools have a statutory duty to set an annual attendance target.

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED OR UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of the absence is always required.

AUTHORISED ABSENCES

- Illness or other unavoidable causes of absence
- Medical appointments
- Special circumstances such as bereavement, attending funerals, etc.
- The pupil is ill or unavoidably prevented from attending.
- The absence occurs so that the pupil could take place in a religious observance set apart by the religious body to which the parent/carer belongs
- The school at which the child is registered is not within walking distance of the child's home and no suitable transport, boarding accommodation arrangements or alternative school placement have been made by the LA
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents/carers
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion (whether a special occasion is exceptional is determined by the Headteacher). *Family birthdays/ gatherings or holidays are not considered exceptional special occasions.*

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

These are mornings or afternoons away from school where no reason is given - the school should be informed on the first day of any absence and the reason and expected length of absence given - or in circumstances such as the following:

- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation given.
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings.
- The pupil is shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions.
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday.

It is generally not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, day trips etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency or for medical appointments which cannot be arranged out of school time.

LATENESS

A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her own continuity of learning but also that of other pupils. Pupils who arrive late (after register closure at 9:20am) should report to the office to record their presence in school. The school will investigate persistent lateness and work with the parents to set targets for improvements.

MONITORING REGISTERS

Attendance registers are monitored on a regular basis. Where this falls below 95% and is cause for concern, the school will investigate further. In accordance with local authority guidance, should attendance fall below 90% and is cause for concern, the EWO, Education Welfare Officer will be contacted to promote attendance in conjunction with the school. When the attendance falls below 90% we will arrange an attendance meeting with the Head Teacher to discuss any issues or barriers to the child's attendance, unless there is a medical reason for the absence.

PROCEDURES

Children should be in school at the start of the school day by 9am.

Any children arriving after this time will need to report to the office to be signed in. These children will be given a late mark in the register.

Those children who arrive after 9.20am, when registers close, will be given an absence mark (marked with a 'U' code), unless there has been prior information provided or a medical appointment.

The school day ends at 3.30pm

FIRST DAY CALLS

All parents are asked to call the office to inform the school of an absence of any description. In the event of an absence that the school has not been informed about, the school will call home to

ascertain the health, well-being and location of the child. If after 3 days the school is still unsure about the reasons for this absence further investigations will be started to ensure that the school is meeting its duty of care to the child.

TERM TIME ABSENCE

Leave of Absence (Including holidays in term time)

Schools are prohibited from authorising any leave in term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

We aim to work in partnership with parents, and we know that there are sometimes exceptional circumstances which mean absence may be required during term time. If a child requires exceptional circumstances leave, parent/carers must first ask permission from the head teacher, by completing and returning the 'request for authorisation for absence during term time' form. Parent/carers will be asked not to make arrangements or commitments for their child's absence before authorisation has been given.

Requests for exceptional circumstances leave will only be considered two weeks before the date of leave to enable the head teacher to consider:

- How much education the child has already missed through illness or arriving late
- What learning the child will miss at school
- The child's level of attainment.

No leave will be authorised retrospectively

In particular, no holiday absence will be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. a forces family who cannot holiday together at any other point in the year.

Where a leave of absence has not been authorised, should the parent/carer still choose to take the child out of school this will be marked on the register as an 'Unauthorised Absence', and may incur a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If parents do decide to take unauthorised term time absence we ask that they contact the main office to inform the school in writing of the child's absence.

Health and Attendance

Where illness is a clear reason for a pattern of absence with supporting information (for example prescription information, medical appointment cards, information from other health professionals) we will put in place an Individual Health Care Plan in line with the South Gloucestershire Council Medical Needs Policy.

<https://find-information-for-adults-children-families.southglos.gov.uk/kb5/southglos/directory/advice.page?id=Sp7puUlj3Ek>

Where there are occasional absences for medical reasons (especially for minor ailments) there is no requirement for medical supporting information. For repeat absences we will follow government guidance and agree to absences where there is appropriate medical supporting information.

Where a parent/ carer maintains that absences are regularly the result of ill-health, yet no evidence of has been provided, the school may choose not to authorise such absences unless there medical evidence is provided.

4. Penalty Notices (See appendix B)

A Penalty Notice may be issued to a parent/carer or other person (see below) if more than 10 sessions of absence are recorded in any 7 week period (there are 2 sessions per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon) and-

- a) the parent/carer/other person has not informed the school of the absence; or
- b) the leave was not authorised; or

c) the child did not return on an agreed date (where a date for return has been agreed).

A Penalty Notice may also be issued if the child is persistently late (i.e. arriving at school after registers have closed).

A Notice may be issued where 10 sessions of absence or lateness are recorded in a 7-week period, but different circumstances arise for the sessions (for example, if one session was unauthorised leave, and the child was late for another five sessions, this would amount to six sessions for the purposes of considering whether to issue a Penalty Notice).

Any person with day-to-day care of the child may be issued with a Notice; this could include grandparents, step-parents and partners.

Where a Penalty Notice is issued, the person to whom it is given will have to pay a fine (see below for an explanation of the amount of fine to be paid).

Where all or almost all unauthorised absence marks are U coded (including late after registration) we will first seek to engage with parents/carer and pupil.

Other than for holidays in term time, the decision regarding the issue of a Penalty Notice will be taken as part of the legal process between the school and local authority (i.e. at Attendance Panels and Reviews). But if U code absences persist, we will request a Penalty Notice in line with the LA Code of Conduct.

Holidays during term time

In cases where parents or carers take their child on holiday during term time without permission, we will follow the Code of Conduct and request that a Penalty Notice is issued by the local authority where appropriate. Unauthorised Holidays in term time will automatically result in the school requesting a Fixed Penalty Notice on the 11th missed session (6th day of absence).

How much is the fine?

The fine is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice.

This rises to £120 if paid after 21 days, but within 28 days of receipt (see appendix B for details of what happens if the fine is not paid after 28 days).

- For example a two parent family taking 2 children out of school for an unauthorised holiday would be liable for a total of-
 - £240 if paid within 21 days or
 - £480 if paid between 21 and 28 days.
- The payment must be made in full – part payments will not be accepted – and details of how to pay are printed on the Penalty Notice.

For more information on this issue please read the South Gloucestershire parental guidance on Penalty Notices at the following link:

<http://www.southglos.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/behaviour-and-attendance/school-attendance/authorised-and-unauthorised-absence-from-school/>

Parental Engagement regarding attendance:

We believe regular attendance is so important in ensuring best outcomes for our pupils that we will review our attendance performance each term. We will regularly look at the pupils who have a pattern of absence. Where a child has a pattern of Broken Weeks we will contact parents and may arrange to meet and review progress. There is clear national evidence that children who are on Free School Meals attend less than pupils as a whole. We will ensure that support to ensure attendance of

all pupils who are on FSM is prioritised. The school will discuss attendance concerns with parents at the earliest opportunity as working in partnership is the most effective way to improve attendance.

Appendix 1 shows the action that will be taken to engage with parents, initially through informal discussions or a standard awareness raising letter, then through more formal School Attendance Meetings and School Attendance Panel meeting.

5. Removal from Roll

There are strict grounds as to when schools may remove pupils from their admissions register. These are outlined in Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006. Regulation 12(6) states that when a school has decided to delete a pupil's name from their admission roll they must notify their Local Authority as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

If the pupil has left the school without explanation and there are concerns about the pupil's welfare we will contact the local Access and Response Team immediately.

If there are concerns that a pupil may be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or radicalisation we will contact the Access and Response Team immediately.

If the school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure will establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Once the school has confirmation that the child has started at the new school, they will update SIMS. Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed.

If the school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has "disappeared" the matter will be drawn without delay to the attention of the Access and Response Team. Please see further information in Children Missing Education Policy <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-education/behaviour-and-attendance/children-missing-education/>

Appendix 1 shows the action that will be taken to engage with parents, initially through informal discussions or a standard awareness raising letter, then through more formal School Attendance Meetings and School Attendance Panel meeting, where:

- there are five broken or incomplete weeks in each old-style term (Autumn, Spring, Summer)
A broken week is one where there is at least one late or absence mark in the register;
- attendance is below 95% over a term;
- there have been repeat late or U code marks with or without other attendance concerns.

MONITORING

The governors will review this policy every two years.

Appendix 1 - STAGES OF PARENTAL CONTACT:

STAGE	THRESHOLD	CONTACT/ ACTION
Stage 1	<p>Where there are no prior concerns regarding attendance in previous academic year:</p> <p><i>Attendance less than 95% with no clear, valid explanation (e.g. single illness).</i></p>	<p>Children with less than 95% attendance are discussed at EWO meeting with Head teacher and EWO officer. These children will be discussed in detail and monitored throughout the remainder of the term and beyond.</p>
Stage 2	<p><i>Attendance less than 95% with no clear, valid explanation (e.g. single illness) and there are signs that the attendance is not improving.</i></p>	<p>Where there are concerns over children's attendance and there doesn't seem to be a clear improvement, a school attendance letter will be sent to parents to remind them of expectations around attendance.</p>
Stage 3	<p><i>Attendance less than 90% with no clear, valid explanation (e.g. single illness).</i></p> <p><i>Continued broken weeks AND/ OR insufficient improvement in attendance since last letter being sent.</i></p>	<p>School Attendance Meeting' held with parents & HT/DHT to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss impact of missed learning • investigate reasons for absence and solutions • set attendance targets • consider creation of Individual Health care plan • notify parents of possible Fixed Penalty Notice • set review period
Stage 4	<p><i>Continued broken weeks AND/ OR insufficient improvement in attendance since School Attendance Meeting.</i></p>	<p>Further School Attendance Meeting with HT and/or Education Welfare Officer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss impact of missed learning • investigate reasons for absence and solutions • explain final, short review period before start of legal process (Attendance Panel Meeting). • notify parents of possible Fixed Penalty Notice. <p>Attendance Panel Meeting Held.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise parent/carer that a panel meeting will take place. • School Attendance Panel meeting takes place (Letter sent to arrange) • Parents warned about possible legal action if attendance doesn't improve.
Stage 5	<p><i>If no improvement after 4 weeks of Attendance</i></p>	<p>Attendance Panel review chaired by</p>

	<i>Panel Meeting.</i>	LA representative. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• LA considers beginning legal process for non-attendance.
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APPENDIX B

South Gloucestershire Council Penalty Notices - Information for Parents and Carers

What is a Penalty Notice?

Penalty Notices were introduced under Section 23(1) of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to address unauthorised absence from school. It is a fine issued by South Gloucestershire Council to parents/carers of a child who has failed to attend school regularly and whose absence is unauthorised.

It does not require the parent to attend court but is an alternative to prosecution in the magistrates' court. Parents/carers who pay the fine in full within the time limits cannot later be prosecuted for the offence to which the Penalty Notice relates (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

Why have Penalty Notices been introduced?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority of the government and local authority because missing school may limit a pupil's attainment, disrupt school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

When might a Penalty Notice be issued?

A Penalty Notice may be issued to a parent/carer or other person responsible for a child if more than 10 sessions of absence are recorded in any 7 week period (there are 2 sessions per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon) and-

- a) the parent/carer/other person has not informed the school of the absence; or
- b) the leave was not authorised; or
- c) the child did not return on an agreed date (where a date for return has been agreed).

A Notice may be issued where 10 sessions of absence or lateness are recorded in a 7 week period, but different circumstances arise for the sessions (for example, if one session was unauthorised leave, and the child was late for another five sessions, this would amount to six sessions for the purposes of considering whether to issue a Penalty Notice).

How much is the fine?

The fine is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice; rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

For example a two - parent family taking 2 children out of school for an unauthorised holiday would be liable for a total of £240 if paid within 21 days or £480 between 21 and 28 days.

The payment must be made in full – part payments will not be accepted - details of how to pay are printed on the Penalty Notice.

What can you do to avoid receiving a Penalty Notice?

- ensure your child attends school every day and on time
- make sure your child knows that they cannot have odd days off school - 'Every Lesson Counts'
- speak to the class teacher or tutor if your child is beginning to miss occasional days
- don't take family holidays in term time.

Is there an appeal process?

There is no right of appeal against the Penalty Notice but if you believe it to be incorrectly issued to you, you should contact the Senior Education Officer immediately (number below).

What happens if I do not pay?

If you have not paid the Penalty Notice in full before the 28 days allowed, the authority may commence legal proceedings in the magistrates' court for the original offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

If proven, this could result in a fine of up to £1000 under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 or (depending on the extent to which you knew about the non-attendance and failed to prevent it) up to £2500 and/or three months imprisonment under Section 444(1A), and the imposition of a Parenting Order or other sanctions at the Magistrates' disposal. You are strongly urged to seek legal advice if you are considering not paying the Penalty Notice.

Further information and advice

Department for Education - School attendance: Statutory guidance and advice:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance>

www.childrenslegalcentre.com 0808 802 0008

www.adviceguide.org.uk 08444 111 444

www.aceed.org.uk 0300 0115 142

Amanda Lowe - Senior Education Officer

Tel: 01454 863403

Email: amanda.lowe@southglos.gov.uk

South Gloucestershire Council –
Department for Children, Adults & Health
PO Box 298
Education, Learning & Skills
Civic Centre, High Street
Kingswood
Bristol,
BS15 0DQ