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INTRODUCTION

Regular attendance at school is essential for the effective education of all pupils; there is a clear link between good attendance and good progress. It is important that a high level of attendance is maintained. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes in school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

AIMS

- To maximise the attendance of all children thus supporting high levels of attainment and achievement.
- To provide an environment which encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those at the school.
- To monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty.
- To analyse attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice.
- To work closely with, and make full use of the support from the wider community, including the Education Welfare Service, school nurse, Parent Support Advisor and multi-agency teams.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Our Attendance Policy is available on the school website. Reminders about holidays in term time, absence due to illness and term dates are published in newsletters.

REGULATIONS

Parents / carers of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act (1996) to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full time basis; children reach statutory school age the term after their fifth birthday. Children are required to attend school for 190/365 days per year. (In very exceptional circumstances, a temporary part-time timetable can be agreed to meet a pupil's individual needs.)

Term dates are published in advance by the Local Authority and can be found on www.swindon.gov.uk. The school selects an additional 5 days for training, called Teacher Development Days. The school notifies families of term dates and the training days.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following people have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

Governors

- To set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy.

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Head Teacher

- To monitor individual pupil, group and whole school attendance and punctuality.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of policy and practice.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to agree annual attendance targets.
- To communicate with parents/carers regarding significant concerns about their child's attendance.
- To arrange meetings with parents/carers whose children have poor attendance to discuss support and set attendance targets.
- To work in partnership with outside agencies, as appropriate, when attendance and/or punctuality is an issue.

Class Teacher

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class.
- To record the reasons for absence given to them.
- To communicate with parents regarding their child's absences.
- To raise any concerns about a child's absence with admin staff or the head teacher.
- To respond promptly to any query raised following analysis of registers by admin staff.
- To organise work to be sent home for children in their class who are expected to be absent for an extended period.

Admin staff

- To input attendance data using the school's data management system.
- To monitor and track attendance patterns for all children and prepare relevant attendance reports for the head teacher and Education Welfare Officer as appropriate.
- To contact any parent who has not informed the school as to why their child is absent on the first day of absence.
- To ensure that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child at the end of each week.
- To make a judgement, in conjunction with the head teacher, whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Parent Support Advisor

- Following a referral from the school, to work with families to improve pupils' attendance rates.

Education Welfare Officer / Legal Lead for Attendance

- Following a referral from the school, to work with families to improve pupils' attendance rates.
- To support the school in securing good attendance through regular contact and monitoring individual children's attendance.
- To enforce the law regarding school attendance.

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Medical personnel

- Specialist staff and the school nurse may be involved in ensuring the best possible attendance by a child with a severe medical condition. A 'Care Plan' is likely to be needed and on-going communication between the family, school and appropriate medical personnel is essential.

ADMINISTRATION

Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Registers are saved electronically to the school's data management system (SIMS) after the closure of each registration period.

Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Failure to complete a register accurately leaves the school vulnerable to complaint from parents or carers and creates a risk if an emergency evacuation has to take place.

ABSENCE

Lateness

- Pupils should arrive at school between 8.40 a.m. when the gates open and 8.50 a.m. when the school day begins and the register is taken. The gates are locked at 8.55 a.m.
- Pupils arriving after the register has been closed at 8.55 a.m. will be considered as late. 'L' will be recorded.
- Pupils arriving after 8.55 a.m. must report to the School Office so that their attendance can be recorded as late, 'L'.
- Pupils arriving after 9.25 a.m. will be officially absent for the morning session. This will be considered an unauthorised absence, recorded as 'U', unless a satisfactory reason is given, for example a pre-notified or emergency doctor's appointment.

Illness and unexpected absence

- Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide the reason for the absence and to give an update on each subsequent day of absence.
- In the case of gastric illnesses, parents are asked to keep their child away from school until they have been clear of sickness/ diarrhoea for a full 48 hours
- Office staff will contact parents on the first day of absence if a reason for absence has not been given.
- If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, the head teacher will be informed.

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Medical (including dental) appointments

- Whenever possible, parents/carers are encouraged to make medical appointments out of school hours.
- Parents must inform the school when their child needs to attend a medical appointment. These absences will be authorised. Parents/carers may be requested to provide written confirmation or evidence of these appointments.
- When appointments must be in term time, parents are encouraged to ensure their child attends school for as much of the day as possible e.g. returning to school after the appointment. Children must be signed in and out via the office.

Holidays during term time

- Holidays should be taken during the school holiday periods.
- Schools must comply with DfE requirements and may authorise term time holidays only if there are **exceptional** circumstances which indicate that it is appropriate to do so. It is for the Head Teacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school.
- Applications to take a holiday or an occasional special day during term time will be considered on an individual basis and should be applied for using the request for absence form obtained from the school office.

Child Performers

Parents of a child performer may seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. A Local Authority licence must be obtained. Head Teachers should be sympathetic to requests that are supported by a licence as long as the school is satisfied that this will not have a negative effect on a child's education.

Other absences

Other requests for absence from school will be considered on an individual basis and a decision will be made as to whether the absence can be authorised and which absence code is appropriate. A request for absence form should be completed as explained above. Other absences which may be authorised, in cases where the school is notified in advance by the parent/ carer, include:

- Days for religious observance
- External examinations e.g. dancing
- Educational events e.g. swimming in a gala
- Visiting a new school
- Significant family events such as funeral of close family member.

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that leave has been granted before taking a child out of school for a holiday or other absence. This is especially important where a request is made late, giving the school insufficient time to consider the request and respond in writing.

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Persistent absenteeism

Attendance rates are continuously monitored and analysis takes place each month. The admin staff, teaching staff and head teacher discuss outcomes at regular intervals. Swindon Borough Council considers attendance between 90 and 95% to be irregular attendance. We recognise that a child is classed as being a persistent absentee when their attendance falls below 90%. Where there are concerns that a child is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee we will arrange for a joint problem solving meeting to be held with the head teacher and parents/carers.

Children missing education

We fulfill our duty to inform the Local Authority of any pupil who has been admitted to another school ^{1*} and is going to be deleted from our admission register, who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent for a period of 10 school days or more. If a Looked After Child or a child subject to a Child Protection plan goes missing, we will refer them to social services within 48 hours. We also consider making a referral for any children being withdrawn from school with the intent to be electively home educated where there are safeguarding concerns. We recognise that 'Child missing from education' and 'Child missing from home or care' have been added to the list of specific safeguarding issues schools must be vigilant about.

CONSEQUENCES OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

If an absence is not authorised and the child does not attend school, the parent has committed a criminal offence. The school may instruct the Local Authority to prosecute a parent for the offence. A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority. This entails a fine of £60 per parent per child, payable within 21 days. Failure to pay this in time will result in the fine rising to £120 per parent per child. A penalty notice is issued in circumstances where it is appropriate to prosecute but the parents are given the opportunity to pay a penalty so as to avoid prosecution and having a criminal conviction registered against them. If there are factors that mean it is not appropriate to issue a penalty notice, for examples, when previous Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued, the Local Authority can prosecute for the offence.

REPORTING TO PARENTS AND CARERS

- All absences, both authorised and unauthorised will be reported to the parent/carer towards the end of the academic year with their child's annual report. During the year, parents may request information about their child's attendance; they will receive a printout of their child's attendance and may check that the information provided is accurate.
- In order to give parents/carers information about the impact of absence from school upon their education, attendance posters/ information provided by Swindon Borough Council will be used alongside this policy.

¹ *There are only exceptional circumstances in which a child can be deleted from our admission register before he/she has been admitted to a new school.

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REWARDS

- Good attendance is expected and encouraged and all children who have 100% attendance at the end of the school year will receive a reward for attendance in our last assembly of the year.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Attendance data will be analysed monthly to identify patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with: unusual patterns of absence; Monday and/or Friday absences; lateness; periods of extended absence; unauthorised absences. The attendance of Pupil Premium children will be compared with that of all pupils. The circumstances of all children with attendance below 90% will be considered. If concerns are raised by analysis of attendance information, parent discussions will occur, either through telephone calls to the parents/carers by the head teacher and/or formal letters stating the attendance of the child and the nature of the concern.

The Governors will set an annual attendance target and review this annually. This policy will be reviewed regularly in accordance with the school policy review cycle.