



SAUNCEY WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

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| Responsible Committee | School Improvement Committee |
| Reviewed | March 2024 |
| Ratified | 19th March 2025 |
| Next review date | March 2026 |

Our Mission

‘With care, support and friendship the Sauncey Wood family mission is to work with our community to welcome, educate and enrich every child, providing a personalised and excellent education where children are actively encouraged to challenge themselves and others to achieve their full potential.’

Sauncey Wood Primary School believes that children cannot learn to their full potential if they are absent from school. Therefore, we aim to ensure that all our children and young people take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and will strive to raise standards by promoting the regular attendance and punctuality of our pupils. We believe the foundation of securing good attendance is that our school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where our pupils will want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Aims and Objectives

- To demonstrate that improving attendance is everyone’s business and embed a ‘support first’ approach.
- To develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance and is an integral part of the school’s ethos.
- To work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 199 of the 1993 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. As per paragraph 17 of ‘Working together to improve school attendance’, we are required to ‘have a clear school attendance policy which all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents understand’.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

Attendance registers

The rules governing the maintenance of registers, including removal from roll, are contained in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Roles and Responsibilities

Maintaining good punctual attendance at Sauncey Wood Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents and staff. The Governors take a particularly strong view about poor attendance and lateness.

We expect all children on roll to attend every day that the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage children to attend. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward children whose attendance is good and make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Role of the Governing Body

- Ensure an effective whole school culture of high attendance is underpinned by clear expectations, procedures and responsibilities.
- Offer a clear vision for high attendance, underpinned by high expectations and core values, which are communicated to and understood by staff, pupils and families.
- Have a clear, written school attendance policy.
- Regularly review and understand attendance data, discussing and challenging trends and helping school leaders to focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it the most within school.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Make sure staff, pupils and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe.
- Expect good attendance and punctuality from all members of the school community and make sure that pupils understand its importance.
- Convey clear messages about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes. Empower staff to take responsibility for attendance.
- Recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement. Make sure it is resourced appropriately (including through effective use of pupil premium funding) to create, build and maintain systems and performance.
- Make sure staff receive training/professional development and support to deploy attendance systems effectively.

Role of the Headteacher

The Head is responsible for:

- Having a clear, written school attendance policy based on the expectations set out in this model policy and ensuring the implementation of this policy – ensuring compliance with DfE Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities – Working together to improve School Attendance – September 2022 - Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Ensuring every member of staff knows and understands their responsibilities for safeguarding and how this links with poor school attendance – ensuring compliance with Keeping children Safe in Education 2022, Statutory guidance for schools and colleges – September 2022 - Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Developing good support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND). Ensuring compliance with Statutory Guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England December 2015 - Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions - Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Ensuring every member of staff knows and understands their responsibilities for attendance.
- Ensuring accurate completion of admission and attendance registers.
- Ensuring staff are actively working to maximise attendance rates, both in relation to individual pupils and the pupil body as a whole.
- Having clear processes in place to address persistent and severe absence - pupils who are severely absent may be at risk of CCE/CSE/grooming etc. and this cohort must be made the top priority for action and support. Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Often severely absent pupils have additional needs and therefore it is vital that schools ensure all appropriate services are informed and aware of the pupil's absence so suitable support can be considered, and education provided/accessed.

- Ensuring that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness.
- Monitoring and analysing data and trends.
- Reporting to the Governing Body and Trusts the attendance figures and progress to achieving the set targets.
- Reminding parents of their commitment to this policy.
- Building and modelling respectful relationships with staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Making sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- Open and honest communication with staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Liaising with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.
- Sharing information on and working collaboratively with other schools in the area, LA's and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming severe or persistent.
- Ensuring the school attendance policy is applied fairly and consistently and recognises the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. Schools should consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Ensuring all staff members:
 - Treat pupils with dignity
 - Build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
 - Take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence, handling confidential information sensitively
 - Understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils, particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity.
 - Communicate effectively with families regarding pupils' attendance and well-being
 - Deliver clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to new pupils and families through prospectus and admission/transition events
 - Use physical presence to reinforce routines and expectations on arrival and departure
 - Regularly communicate expectations for attendance and punctuality and school performance through regular channels of communication with staff, pupils and parents
 - Establish and monitor implementation of rewards for attendance and punctuality and sanctions for absence and lateness.
- Monitoring implementation of policy and practice, for example through form time, drop in, shadow late gate, planner checks
- Engaging community businesses, partners and residents to promote attendance and report non-attendance.
- Monitoring of whole school data regularly to identify reasons for absence, patterns, attendance of particular groups and the impact of interventions
- Establishing and ensuring implementation and robust monitoring of arrangements to identify, report and support children missing education (CME) or at risk of becoming CME
- Ensuring compliance with guidance regarding Children Missing Education - see Herts Grid <https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance/children-missing-from-education>
- Engaging pupils in consultation on attendance policy, practice, rewards and sanctions.

Role of Teaching Staff

Teachers are responsible for:

- Ensuring the effective whole school culture of high attendance is underpinned by setting an example of punctuality and good attendance.
- Implementing the policy and ensuring it is applied fairly and consistently.
- Ensuring that the registers are taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and are accurate and up to-date;
 - Reviewing class and individual attendance patterns;
 - Informing the school attendance champion/line manager of any concerns;
- Emphasising with pupils the importance of punctuality and good attendance.
- Reminding parents of their commitment to this policy.
- Building respectful relationships with staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Making sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- Communicating openly and honestly with staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Holding regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Liaising with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.
- Modelling respectful relationships and appropriate communication for staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture. All staff members should:
 - treat pupils with dignity
 - build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
 - take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence handling confidential information sensitively
 - understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils, particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity
 - communicate effectively with families regarding pupils' attendance and well-being
- Rehearse and reinforce attendance and punctuality expectations continually
- Emphasise the importance of attendance and its impact on attainment
- Promote the next lesson and the sequence of the lesson to motivate pupils to be in the classroom
- Promote rewards and celebrate progress but continue to outline sanctions
- Apply rewards and sanctions consistently
- Follow up on absence and lateness with pupils to identify barriers and reasons for absence
- Contact parents and carers regarding absence and punctuality
- Consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of pupils

Role of parents/ carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school every day school is open.

Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance.
- instilling in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- impressing upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct.
- informing the school on the first day of absence, by 9.30 (please amend as required) am at the latest.
- providing the school with an explanation for the absence.
- informing the school of any changes to their contact details.
- taking an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parent's evenings and other relevant meetings.
- working in partnership with the school to resolve issues and help the school to understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- proactively engage with the support offered by school to prevent the need for more formal support.
- If formal support is needed, proactively engage with this support to prevent the need for any legal intervention.
- booking any medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- only requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- treating staff with respect
- actively supporting the work of the school
- communicating as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence or require support

Pupils at risk of severe or persistent absence

- Welcome pupils back following an absence and provide good catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

This may include:

- lesson resources
- buddy support
- one to one input
- meet with pupils to discuss absence, patterns, barriers and problems
- establish action plans to remove barriers, provide additional support and set targets.
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This may include:

- lunchtime arrangements
- support with uniform, transport, wake up routines or emotional wellbeing
- lead daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support
- make regular contact with families to discuss progress
- consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups
- prepare supporting resources to ensure pupils can access learning when they return
- develop targeted intervention to address gaps and build pupils' confidence (including considering small group additional support)
- provide tailored praise and encouragement when pupils attend and arrive on time

Definitions

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has been notified by a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note, emails, rings the school or explains in person.

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

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and the parent/guardian. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

If a child is absent

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register and the School Secretary or Admin Support will contact the parent/guardian, usually by phone.

A note or email may be sent or a phone call made to the school prior to the day of absence when, for example, the child has a medical appointment.

Looked After Children are monitored closely by the LA, who ring the school daily to check attendance.

Requests for leave of absence

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the best progress possible. However, we do understand that there are exceptional circumstances where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child.

Under new regulations that came into force in September, 2013, parents/carers no longer have the right to request up to 10 days leave of absence for annual holiday, nor does the Headteacher have the discretion to grant this other than in the most "**exceptional circumstances**".

Parents must seek permission **BEFORE** booking a holiday and must give a reason, in writing, to the school as to the circumstances surrounding the need to take a leave of absence in term time. We naturally prefer parents to take their family holiday in the normal school holiday periods, but if legitimate exceptional circumstances do exist, the school will consider granting the leave of absence.

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- the pupil was absent with leave previously granted in writing by the Headteacher.
- the pupil was ill 'or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause'.
- the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- the pupil is the child of traveller parents and the conditions as stated in paragraph 47 of the guidance are met.
- there is a family bereavement.
- the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition.
- the pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit.
- the pupil is participating in an approved public performance.

There are various circumstances where leave of absence will **not** be granted

- During the SATs period for children in Year 6
- During the “settling in” period in September
- Overlapping with the beginning or end of term
- If there is clear evidence that the holiday was booked BEFORE permission was sought.

Long-term absence

When children have an illness that means that they will be away from school for over five days, the school will send material home in order to allow them to keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact our Attendance Improvement Officer so that arrangements can be made for that child.

Repeated unauthorised absences

The attendance level of every child in the school is monitored on a regular basis by the School Secretary, Headteacher and the Attendance Improvement Officer attached to the school. Parents are contacted if the child’s attendance rate is below 90% and if there are concerns over the reasons for the absence. If an unsatisfactory rate of attendance continues, the school may choose to make a formal referral to the Attendance Improvement Officer.

The LA reserves the right in conjunction with the school to consider taking legal action against any parent/guardian who repeatedly fails to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. Sauncey Wood Primary School offers an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate 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:

- A varied and flexible curriculum is offered to all pupils. Every effort is made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to the pupils' needs.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice.
- Parents are regularly reminded (via newsletters, the school brochure, parents' evenings, etc.) of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be re-integrated back into school upon their return.
- The Headteacher will make a report to the school’s governing board on attendance matters, at least annually.
- The Headteacher has regular meetings with the school's Attendance Improvement Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

The school encourages good attendance by:

- Using clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve, reward and incentivise attendance and address absences. Makes sure these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils.
- publicising good attendance during assemblies, newsletters and the termly report to the Governing Body.
- Keeping parents informed on a regular basis of their child’s attendance and absence record.
- Weekly class attendance is celebrated in our celebration assembly on a Friday with the class who have the highest attendance receiving an extra 10 minutes’ playtime the following week

Punctuality

The School gates open at 8.30 am. The doors open at 8.45 am.

- The register will be open for no longer than 15 minutes after the session begins.
- Pupils who arrive after the register has closed at 9.00 and parent/carers provides a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session.
- Pupils who arrive after the register has closed and parent fails to provide a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session (Code U).
- School may arrange a meeting with parents to discuss concerns so that the problem can be addressed.

Attendance targets

The school is required by law to set attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Headteacher and governors at the annual target setting meeting. The attendance targets are then agreed with the SEA. The targets are challenging yet realistic and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years and the LA target. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets. The school's current attendance target is 97%

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance and they will request an annual report from the Headteacher. The Governing Board also has the responsibility for this policy and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will, therefore, examine closely the information provided to them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The school will keep attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

Rates of attendance will be reported in the annual School Profile.

The office staff are responsible for monitoring attendance and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is a concern over a child's absence, they will contact the Headteacher immediately. If there is a longer term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Attendance Improvement Officer or equivalent.