

# SOKE EDUCATION TRUST

## Attendance Policy

Approved via Governorhub

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## ALDERMAN JACOBS PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

### Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

### Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

### Definitions

**Authorised** absence includes unavoidable or emergency medical appointments, genuine sickness, longer term illnesses – accompanied by medical report, religious observance, study leave, exclusions and interviews.

**Unauthorised** absence includes lateness after registration closes, shopping for Christmas or birthday, tiredness after a late return from holiday, attending events, non-emergency dentist/ optician visits, missing the bus, birthday treats.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The Governing Board**

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The school's local governance committee will monitor attendance when it meets bi-yearly.

### **The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **Assistant headteachers**

The Assistant headteachers are responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

### **The attendance/pastoral officer**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Give attendance a high profile at assemblies and school events
- Implement a system of rewards and sanctions, including giving praise to those who arrive on time
- Meet with parents to discuss attendance problems as soon as they are identified
- Work with the relevant Senior Leaders, SENDCO and Locality Team to create individual packages and reintegration plans, where appropriate
- Ensure work is provided for excluded students and long-term absentees.

The attendance officer is Mr Richard Isley and can be contacted via [office@ajs.education](mailto:office@ajs.education)

### **Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. Registers close at 9:00 am are returned to the school office by 9:10am

### **Administration staff**

Administration staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Monitor the attendance absence voicemail

### **Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day, on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9:00 am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### **Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) works closely with key staff to identify and resolve attendance issues.

### **School Attendance**

#### **Why regular attendance is so important:**

#### **Learning:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may also affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

#### **Safeguarding:**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have a regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18. Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding

the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Home visits may be carried out by the school if we have concerns or have not had contact from families regarding a child's absence.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

## **Recording attendance**

### **Attendance register**

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day and registers will be kept open until 9:30am

### **Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school on 01733 202403 and leaving details on the school's pupil absence voicemail.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical

evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance. If your child's attendance level has reached 95% or below, their absence through illness will not be authorised without medical evidence.

### **Planned absence**

If an unavoidable medical appointment is required during the school day, a form can be obtained from the school office. We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

### **Legal sanctions**

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may consider:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

### **Lateness and punctuality**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt the lesson, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as their progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

### **How we manage lateness**

- The school gates are open from 8:35 until 9:00am . Adults are on the playground to welcome the children into school from 8.40am. The school day starts at 8:45am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.
- Once the doors are closed all children entering late will need to enter via the main door and be signed in. Registers are marked at 8:55 am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.
- At 9:30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that will indicate that your child is in the school building, but will be marked with a 'U' code which is recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.
- If your child has a persistent late record of five or more lates in any month you will be notified by letter in order to try to resolve the problem, and equally if you are experiencing problems getting your child to school you should approach us for help. Children who have 8 lates in eight weeks will be referred to the Local

Authority who may issue a penalty notice.

Taking leave of absence will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence; we expect parents to support us by not taking children away in school time.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to take time off in term time to go on holiday.

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 make it clear that Heads of School may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are very exceptional circumstances.

All applications for term time leave of absence must be made in writing in advance by completing our Request for Term Time absence form. In deciding whether to authorise this leave, the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of absence.

- Absences may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- A pupil's overall attendance record will be taken into consideration, even when illness has affected this. Exceptional circumstance leave will not be granted if attendance has been under 95%

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school (with at least four weeks' notice) and/or different from that agreed by the school, will be classed as unauthorised and may lead to sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

Should absence be agreed and authorised, and a pupil fails to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed date this extra time will be recorded as unauthorised absence. Should a child fail to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date and there is no contact from the parents the school may remove the child's name from the school roll and inform the Local Authority. In these circumstances the parents would be responsible for ensuring that their child was registered at and attended another school. (In such circumstances parents would not be entitled to receive any assistance with regard to transport).

### **Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may complete a home visit and contact the police and/or social services.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call and/or email the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

### **Children missing from education**

A child going missing from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. These include children who:

- Are at risk of harm or neglect
- Are at risk of forced marriage or FGM
- Come from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller families

- Come from the families of service personnel
- Go missing or run away from home or care
- Are supervised by the youth justice system
- Cease to attend a school
- Come from new migrant families

We will follow our procedures for unexplained/unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named, and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points.

Staff will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being missing, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

*If a staff member suspects that a child is suffering from harm or neglect, we will follow local child protection procedures, including with respect to making reasonable enquiries. We will make an immediate referral to the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if the child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger.*

#### **Persistent absence (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling within an agreed period of time for whatever reason. Absence at this level may cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we will seek full parental support and co-operation to tackle this.

Absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is at risk of moving towards the PA level is given priority and parents will be informed in writing;

- Once a child's attendance is at 95% or below you will receive a letter from us to notify you of this and an offer of support for us to work together to resolve this
- Once a child's attendance is at 90% or below you will receive a further letter from us inviting you into school for a meeting. The Local Authority may be notified of your child's absence record
- If after 8 weeks from the date of the previous letter your child's absence has still not improved this will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Officer for review and possible issue of a Penalty Notice

PA pupils are tracked, monitored and supported through our pastoral system. Additional support may be obtained via a single referral or an Early Help Assessment

#### **Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be requested from the LA by the school:**

A Penalty notice can be issued if one of the following criteria can be met:

- Level of unauthorised absence leads to an unauthorised absence rate of 10% or more within a period of 8 school weeks (A maximum of 2 Penalty Notices may be issued in any academic year).
- A single unauthorised absence event of at least 3 consecutive school days (6 consecutive sessions).
- Persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed (5 or more in one month or 8 in eight weeks).

- Lack of adherence to the dates agreed for any authorised leave of absence without reasonable justification.
- Pupils identified in a public place whilst excluded from school (during the first five days of the exclusion period) without reasonable justification.

For further information regarding Penalty Notices please refer to the Cambridgeshire County Council website.

### **Absence Procedures:**

#### **If your child is absent you must:**

Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9am with an explanation of the absence either by;

- Tel: 01733 202403

or

- Call into the school office and report the absence to the main reception.

#### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you by 9:00am
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with us if necessary.
- Take legal action if there are persistent absences, which may be in the form of Penalty Notices issued to each parent/carer for each child by the Local Authority.

### **Analysing attendance**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote good school attendance.

### **Reporting Attendance**

Three times each year, we will provide a report which will include your child's attendance to date, for the academic year.

### **Links with other policies**

Behaviour

Safeguarding and Child Protection