

# Shield Row Primary School



## Attendance Policy

## Attendance Policy

### Our Statement

Shield Row Primary School recognises the importance of good attendance and aims to ensure all our pupils receive a full-time education to enhance and maximise opportunities for every pupil to realise their true potential.

Regular attendance and punctuality are prerequisites to a good education and are therefore a priority to us. Shield Row Primary School is committed to providing a full and inclusive educational experience for all pupils.

For our pupils to reach their full potential we need strong and consistent support from parents. In practice this means ensuring pupils attend regularly, on time and in a suitable condition to learn. Irregular attendance will place the child at an educational disadvantage. Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

**There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem.**

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the partnership between school and home is vitally important. All pastoral care staff will work with pupils and their families/carers to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually. Our school will challenge the behaviour and attitudes of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. To achieve this we will maintain an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual advice, information and support.

### School Attendance – The Statutory Framework

- Education Act 1944 – Establishes the duty of parents to ensure regular attendance of pupils.
- Pupil Registration Regulations 1995 (amended) gives school discretionary powers to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term time.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997 (amended) provides the new registration categories of Approved Educational Activity. (Amended Regulation 3(2), (3), (5) of the Education Regulations 1995).
- Education Act 1996 places a legal obligation on the Local Authority to provide education suitable to a child's age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs they may have and also Section 444 states that "The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law".

- Education Act 2002 (Section 53) enables an overall absence target to be set, covering authorised and unauthorised absence, supporting school improvement and raising community awareness of the issue (September 2003).
- The 2007 Penalty Notice Regulation set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school, or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion.
- Amendments to the 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. From 1 September 2013 parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows LAs to act faster on prosecution.

### **Registration**

There is a legal requirement upon schools to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. The Education Regulation 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised.

Both staff and pupils should see that taking of registers as an integral part of the school day, as was indeed intended by law. Particular attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers.

Our attendance registers are digital – each member of staff uses a network laptop computer connected to our Management Information Systems (MIS).

In accordance with current legislation, each class in school has an attendance register. It is school policy that registers are completed by 9:05 am in the morning and 1:25 pm in the afternoon.

**It is our policy to record a late mark for all children who arrive at school after class registration has taken place.**

We believe that pupils arriving late seriously disrupt their own learning and that of others. Our policy is to encourage punctuality. Five minutes will be allocated for registration purposes at the beginning of each session. Children will be recorded as being late once registration has taken place. Any child who arrives at school later than 9:05 will be marked as late and asked to provide a reason for this.

### **Absence**

It is the parent's responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence. We would like to receive notification as soon as the child is absent from school. If parents do not contact school on the first day of their child's absence the parents may be contacted to ascertain reasons for the absence and offer advice and support where appropriate. It is important for contact with parents early in the absence to ensure that parents are fully aware that the school is concerned about their lack of attendance.

Parents can contact school and speak to the Office Manager or member of staff who answers the telephone, leave a message on the answer phone or alert school through email or Parent Mail to inform school of their child's absence. In all cases please ensure the child's name is given, year group, class teacher and reason for the absence. Absences should be followed up with medical proof where possible. In some schools parentally-condoned unauthorised absence is a serious problem. This can be every bit as damaging as the more traditional forms of truancy. Whilst this is not a significant problem for our school, staff should be aware of and vigilant to avoid it becoming so.

Only the school within the context of the law, can approve absence – not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (personal contact or telephone) in relation to a particular absence, this action does not of itself oblige the school to accept it as a valid reason for absence. If after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or where no explanation is forthcoming at all, the absence will be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally condoned unjustified absence appears to be problem in relation to a particular pupil, the school will intervene at an early stage, following Stage 1 of the Staged Intervention Model for improving school attendance in County Durham.

An excessive amount of unauthorised absence can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection. We must be alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence. We may authorise absence retrospectively where we are satisfied as to the explanation offered.

Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided will be treated as unauthorised.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 provides that no offence is committed where a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness. If we are satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence will be treated as authorised. If a pupil has a long-term absence due to illness or a medical condition, we will provide work to be completed at home (where appropriate) or will seek to provide home or hospital tuition.

Where we have reason to doubt the validity of an explanation offered in respect of a particular absence, further information will be requested by either the teacher or Office Manager from the child's parents. If the school continues to be dissatisfied then the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

Where there is doubt about the authenticity attributed to illness, the school can refer the matter to the School Doctor / School Nurse to arrange a special medical or make direct contact with the pupil's GP.

Leave for medical or dental appointments will be given (i.e. the absence will be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parent (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or on production of an appointment card. To minimise absence from school, parents are requested to return children to school after medical

and dental appointments if they are well enough to be at school (i.e. following dental “check-ups” or routine appointments).

Office staff and the Headteacher will monitor absence through the use of SIMs Attendance Manager. Teachers are not required to do global analysis of attendance but will be directed to monitor individual pupils identified by the analysis.

The Education Act 2002 enables us to set an overall absence target, covering authorised and unauthorised absence.

### **Reporting of Absence Procedure**

Parents/carers are expected to telephone school, see the Office Manager, class teacher or send a note on the first day of their child’s absence. This will allow the Office Manager/class teacher to interpret the category of absence. If information is not received, the school will contact the parent/carer to discover the cause of the absence. If the family is not on the telephone a letter will be sent.

The Office Manager will keep details of notes, telephone messages and verbal explanations using the daily absence logs. Any written notes handed to class teachers about the absence of pupils in their class must be sent to the main office immediately. Before contacting a parent regarding a child’s absence the office staff will check the answering machine for messages and then contact the parent.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the 10 day threshold. **The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence Form which they may obtain from the Office or via the school website if they intend to remove their child from school for any purpose. It should be completed and returned to the Office Manager before the absence. If the decision is made that the absence can be authorised, a letter of agreement will be sent out to the parents, which also reminds them that it is up to the school to authorise the absence. If the decision is made that the absence cannot be authorised (unauthorised absence), parents will be contacted and invited to speak to the Headteacher.

**Unless there are exceptional circumstances, holidays during term time will not be authorised.**

Any requests that are declined should be reported to the Attendance and Family Inclusion Practitioners, whom in turn will send a penalty notice warning letter to the parents. A penalty notice can be issued to parents for taking their child out of school for the purpose of a holiday, if the absence is not authorised by the Headteacher. The penalty notice would be issued by Durham County Council following consultation with the Attendance and Family Inclusion Practitioners.

Where a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment, school need take no action beyond recording the fact that (for the purpose of emergency evacuation) the pupil although registered, is not physically registered, in not physically present. The child should be signed out of school at the main entrance. The class teacher should update their fire register.

Similarly, the school must note the presence of a pupil (again for purposes of emergency evacuation) who was not there when the register was being taken but arrives later and will be entered on the digital register by the Office Manager.

### **Categorising Absence**

Our policy deals in in general with the categories of absence and cannot cover every eventuality. It will be necessary on occasion to exercise reasonable discretion when investigating some absences. However, the following key points must be remembered:

- Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school;
- Whilst it is right that schools should recognise that individual pupils and families have problems the aim should always be to expect regular attendance;
- Lateness should be actively discouraged;
- Where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming (for whatever reason) or cannot be sought by the school, the absence must be treated as unauthorised and the register completed accordingly;
- We are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered;
- Explanations such as minding the house, looking after other children or shopping trips within school hours will not be acceptable reasons for absence;
- Parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that, as of right, schools will agree to family holidays during term time. Each application will need to be considered on its merits;
- Even where absence is authorised, we should be alerted to emerging patterns of absence, which may seriously disrupt continuity of learning;
- In promoting regular attendance, we will work in partnership with appropriate Local Authority and external agency personnel.

### **Late Arrivals**

**It is our policy to actively discourage late arrival. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather or occasional public transport difficulties), we may keep registers open for a reasonable period.**

For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line will be taken on late arrivals. To do otherwise undermines the whole purpose of registration and may serve to encourage other pupils to arrive late. **Particular attention will be paid to emerging patterns of late arrival.**

Anyone arriving late must report to the School Office. The child's name and class will be entered into the SIMS Register, along with the number of minutes late and the reason for this.

In responding to lateness, we will of course need to take account of individual circumstances of each case. In some instances enquiries may reveal that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances. The school will seek an early meeting with parents of those pupils who persistently fail to

arrive on time without a valid reason and look at ways to improve attendance and punctuality in future. If the parents do not have any valid reason for the child's persistent lateness the school will monitor the situation. If no improvement is noted as a result of the monitoring plan, the Attendance and Family Inclusion Practitioners will be notified.

Attendance registers close at 9:05, after this time pupils must enter school via the main office and report to staff there. They will be marked into the MIS system as 'late.'

### **Covid -19 Adjustments**

For the start of the autumn term, September 2020, classes will have staggered start times. All children will still be expected to be in school by 9am. Registration will be at 9 am and lessons will start promptly at 9:05 am.

If any child in school becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), parents will be contacted immediately and they will be sent home. Parents will be advised to follow '**stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection**', which sets out that they must self-isolate for at least 10 days and should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19). Other members of their household (including any siblings) should **self-isolate for 14 days** from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

If your child displays corona virus like symptoms, do not send them to school, follow '**stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection**'.

Parents will need to inform school of the test results, whether positive or not. Where a test is positive, Parents/Carers will be asked to provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with by NHS Test and Trace. If the test is negative and the child no longer has symptoms similar to corona virus, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. They could still have another virus such as cold or flu, in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until they are better.

Remote education will be made available to pupils not attending school. (see remote learning plan)

### **Staged Intervention Model for improving school attendance in County Durham**

*(See Appendix A for a copy of this model)*

#### **Stage 1 – School Led Intervention**

At this level addressing attendance issues lies with the school.

All parents are asked to contact the main office to notify school of the reasons for absence. Where phone calls/messages have been received, the reasons for absence are written on the daily logs and SIMS updated accordingly. Once the morning register has closed, any child whose parent has not contacted school to inform the reasons for absence will be contacted, initially by Truancy call. This will also be followed up with a phone call where these have not been responded to. Emergency contact numbers will also be used to follow up reasons for absence. Where feasible a home visit may be made, by two members of staff, however, this is not always practicable.

Attendance is closely monitored by Miss Cooke (Headteacher) and Ms Bainbridge (Office Manager). In the first instance pupils whose attendance is causing concern at 90% or below, will be contacted by our attendance team and invited to a meeting to discuss their child's attendance and factors which may be contributing to or causing the absence. A range of strategies will be discussed and targets set to improve the attendance. Where appropriate, school can support and refer to external agencies to access relevant support for wider issues that may be experienced. For example a team around the family may be appropriate and school can initiate and lead this process.

### **Stage 2 – Referral to Attendance Improvement Team or One Point Targeted Intervention**

Where school led interventions are having no impact on improving attendance (under 90%), then the school will either refer to the Attendance Improvement Team or One Point.

In some cases it may be necessary to complete an Early Help Assessment (EHA) which is then referred to First Contact. Following this referral a member of the One Point or Families First Team may be allocated to engage with the family.

### **Referral to the Attendance Team or One Point**

Referrals will be made in the following circumstances:

- Absence is regular and/or repeated and therefore affecting the child's education.
- When a pupil has been absent for two consecutive weeks and the absence is unauthorised the child can be referred to One Point as 'missing'.
- The intervention by school has failed to secure a pupil's regular attendance.

Referrals can only be made through members of the Safeguarding team – Miss Cooke, Mrs Henderson, Miss Shield, Mrs Tyrrell-Scott. If a teacher has cause for concern regarding the attendance or punctuality of one of their pupils they should notify one of the named members of staff at the earliest possible opportunity. A referral form will be completed for each pupil. Information regarding school interventions will also be shared with One Point as evidence.

Progress reports on referrals will be given to the school at regular intervals by One Point or the allocated lead worker. When making a referral to the One Point, it is important that the following information is included:

- Parents/pupils attitudes towards school;
- Parental reasons for non-attendance;
- Action taken by school to resolve any identified problems;



- Information regarding any special educational needs the pupil may have, academic attainments and support being provided by the school;
- Information regarding potential aggression from the parents.

### **Stage 3 – Statutory Intervention**

If there is no progress, improvement or a deterioration then the case will move to Stage 3 and statutory intervention which can ultimately lead to prosecution and court.

### **Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality**

As well as taking appropriate action against parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their children, we will take steps to reward good attendance and punctuality at Shield Row Primary School.

Experience and research suggest that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on work they have missed, therefore children should see education as a reward.

Good attendance is rewarded and celebrated through the following:-

#### **Weekly**

The class with the highest attendance receive a weekly Attendance certificate and a treat dictated by the school's Classopoly board game. Treats are things like: an extra breaktime, popcorn during ERIC time, games session in the hall, etc.

#### **Termly**

All children are sent home a letter and traffic light coded registration certificate. Green 95%+, amber 90%+ and red if below 90%

#### **Annually**

98%+ attendance receive an Attendance Certificate and special letter home

### **Improving Punctuality**

When children are regularly late for school or a clear pattern is emerging over a period of time, the class teacher will bring this to the attention of the Miss Cooke. School will arrange an appointment to discuss this with the parents/carers. If unauthorised lateness persists, it may be necessary for the Headteacher to register the child as a Cause for Concern and invite the parent/carer to come into school to discuss targets set for their child. If this causes no improvement, or if the improvement is short lived, then a member of the Safeguarding Team will bring it to the attention of One Point (following the Staged Intervention Model).

Digital registers will be completed as quickly as possible, preceding both daily sessions. Only ten minutes of the school day have been allocated for the registration procedure. Registers will be closed by office staff fifteen minutes after the start of each morning and afternoon sessions.

A list of symbols used for demarcating AUTHORISED absence is included as Appendix 2 in this document. Only school can authorise an absence. If an absence does not fit one of the categories listed, it is likely to be UNAUTHORISED e.g. shopping, birthday, minding the house. Check with the Headteacher if unsure.

Parents removing their child from school during a session will be required to explain to the Main Office the reasons for this removal.

Any regular authorised absence or any notes or occurrences which give cause for concern should be brought to the attention of the Headteacher who may decide to pursue or refer the problem to One Point.

### **Attendance Targets**

Shield Row Primary School recognises the importance of good attendance and aims to ensure that all pupils achieve and maintain high standards of attendance and punctuality. Regular attendance and punctuality are prerequisites to a good education and are therefore a priority to us.

To enable Shield Row Primary School to achieve these targets, the following systems have been developed to provide detailed, robust data on school attendance.

- The Headteacher will regularly report to the Governors.
- Pupils are rewarded for good attendance
- Good and improved attendance is celebrated throughout the school.
- Information for parents on the importance of attendance and punctuality is regularly sent home to parents of pupils who demonstrate an attendance or punctuality concern.
- Attendance of vulnerable groups is monitored termly and shared with governors to ensure the special needs of specific groups are being met.

Date of Revised Policy: October 2020

Date of Next Review: October 2021

## Appendix 1

### Staged Intervention Model for improving school attendance in County Durham

Schools and the Local Authority have key roles to play in the identification and assessment of the underlying causes of non-attendance and, in ensuring the provision of well-coordinated, proportionate and planned responses delivered through close partnership working. Levels of need (Level 2, 3 or 4) to be continually assessed. Refer to First Contact Service if there are any Safeguarding concerns.

School Led Intervention		Lead Agency	Support Agency(s)	Statutory Intervention - Enforcement Options						
STAGE 1	Contact with parents and child to identify issues at the earliest opportunity	Schools	School Toolkit	Problem	Enforcement Action	How to refer				
	Initial letter to parents where attendance is becoming a concern.			Unauthorised holiday in term time - 7 days of more UA in a minimum of 12 rolling school weeks.	FIXED PENALTY NOTICE / other appropriate enforcement action	Send AIT referral form to: <a href="mailto:ait@durham.gov.uk">ait@durham.gov.uk</a>				
	Request medical evidence from parent where validity of illness is in doubt.									
	Complete school led interventions – proportionate to the level of need which would normally include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School meeting with parent. Dialogue about what help they need to support improved attendance, target setting so child / parent clear about outcomes to be achieved.</li> <li>Personalised timetable.</li> <li>Complete EHA and nominate to a Team Around the School (Secondary Schools ) to access group based interventions</li> <li>Schools to refer into parenting programmes such as Family Nurturing/Strengthening Families or for any other group based intervention via First Contact Service using the EHA, 03000 267979</li> <li>Undertaking single assessment and developing TAF</li> </ul>						General unauthorised absences - 5 days or more in any period up to a maximum of 12 rolling school weeks.	FORMAL WARNING	Send AIT referral form or early help assessment and TAF minutes together with evidence of interventions tried and up to date registration certificate to <a href="mailto:ait@durham.gov.uk">ait@durham.gov.uk</a>	
	Where children are missing from school and no contact has been made by parents. School to attempt to contact home using a variety of methods available such as ringing at different times, using emergency contact details and home visits (where staffing permits). <a href="#">(LINK)</a>									Further Unauthorised absences following a formal warning where there are at least 7 days of general unauthorised absence (at least 2 further days of UA following the warning) and attendance is below 90%
One Point Targeted Intervention	Lead Agency	Support Agency(s)	The Attendance Improvement Team will:							
Where school led interventions are not improving school attendance where there is unauthorised absence and have no other issues complete/update EHA via First Contact Service 03000 267979. The request for support will be allocated to an Attendance and Inclusion Family Practitioner and stage 2 will commence.	One Point Service or other most appropriate agency	Schools & other partners as identified by Team Around Family or School	GENERAL:							
One Point practitioner to start engaging with the family to determine level of need. If on engagement earlier intervention is deemed appropriate then One Point to support this, examples could include signposting and referral to agencies/VCS, mediation support, home/school liaison. However, if multiple issues are identified and/or further investigation is deemed necessary the below steps are to be commenced.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide advice to schools - attendance legality / coding matters.</li> <li>Provide training to schools and relevant agencies regarding legality issues, policies and guidance from the DfE, regarding attendance.</li> <li>Aid staff / school induction of attendance officers, school staff and A&amp;FPs regarding legality and policy issues.</li> <li>Provide targeted support to schools to help reduce Persistent Absence which may include the use of the fast track model.</li> </ul>							
One Point practitioner to commence proportionate single assessment and follow procedures and guidance - <a href="http://www.durham-lsrb.org.uk/categories/professionals">http://www.durham-lsrb.org.uk/categories/professionals</a>			INDIVIDUAL CASES:							
Continue working on single assessment with completion of tools such as home conditions checklist, alcohol screening tool, TOPSE etc.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check incoming referrals and make suggestions for appropriate enforcement action.</li> <li>Issue formal warnings on behalf of the Local Authority.</li> <li>Chair Attendance Planning Meetings where it is deemed that a parent contract would be beneficial. This may be via the AIO attending a TAF meeting where TAF is in place.</li> <li>Chair Formal Interviews – the Local Authority’s offence investigation mechanism for school attendance offences</li> <li>Hold regular panel meetings to decide on appropriate enforcement action using the Code for Crown Prosecutors. Initiate the enforcement action</li> <li>Gather witness statements and draw up prosecution paperwork. Present LA’s cases in Magistrates Court.</li> <li>Act as LA’s responsible officer on parenting orders.</li> </ul>							
Identify the barriers to school attendance and agree a Family Plan, ensure aligned to Family Outcome Framework clear about offers of support and likely sanctions if attendance does not improve										
Provide direct help and support –interventions to support the child, family and school which address issues impacting on poor school attendance										
Implement Team Around the Family within 25 days from allocation including involvement of school										
Ensure contact log and multi-agency chronology is kept up to date- covered in SA procedures										
Hold TAF meetings in school/home where appropriate to improve children’s attendance. Ensure any school planning meeting are in line with Single Assessment Procedures. If no progress made or deterioration in situation, LP to lead discussion at TAF to reach joint decision if escalation required.										