

Attendance Policy 2023-2024

Parents can access this policy via the academy website or request a copy from the main office.

Academy Commitment

At Southmere Primary Academy we are committed to the improvement and sustainability of excellent attendance, and therefore are proactive in tackling poor attendance. Our aim is to achieve and maintain a whole school target of at least 97% and to reduce persistent absence. The academy will work in partnership with parents and extended services in improving attendance and therefore raising achievement for all our children.

Aims and Objectives

- To achieve and maintain a target of 97% whole school attendance.
- To reduce persistent absence.
- To ensure excellence and enjoyment for every child by providing a safe environment and a relevant curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all our pupils.
- To offer a range of extra-curricular activities that children really want to attend.
- To tackle poor attendance rigorously with a consistent and transparent approach so being firm and fair.
- To support families where attendance is poor by removing any barriers that may attribute to poor attendance.
- To raise aspirations and expectations for our children and their families so changing cultural attitudes in the long term.
- To stop all holidays in term time for the purposes of holidays including visiting relatives for whatever reason.
- To safeguard all our children where there are safety concerns such as a children missing in education by working positively with external agencies such as the ESW service and Children's Social Care.

Partnership with Parents/Carers

As an academy attendance is a high priority. We have an attendance officer who focuses on maintaining excellent attendance across the academy alongside the Head of Academy.

Southmere Primary Academy works hard to provide a relevant and enjoyable curriculum including extra-curricular activities. Despite this, children's attendance is usually dictated by their parents/carers. Therefore, our work with parents/carers is crucial in achieving outstanding attendance for all pupils. The academy sends out regular information about attendance. This includes information on how the academy can support families in overcoming any barriers to attendance, information about holidays in term time and Fixed Penalty Notices. Where there are concerns about a child's attendance, parents/carers are involved from the very beginning in working to improve the situation. The academy has a positive approach to attendance that is constantly reviewed and shared with all staff.

Expectations and Daily Routines

What is good attendance and why is it important to us?

At Southmere Primary Academy good attendance means attending 97% of all school days on time by 8.30am. It is important to us because we want to make sure that every child meets their full academic potential, be safe, healthy and successful children.

Attendance below 97% will mean that children are at a disadvantage and will not keep up with the learning that is taking place in class. Children who are persistently absent from school are more likely than others to underperform and to leave school with few or no qualifications. They are more likely to be unemployed, to experience social isolation, to suffer mental illness and to become homeless. Poor attendance is also associated with vulnerability, exploitation, and crime. We also link attendance to safeguarding, we need to make sure that children are safe. Children not attending 97% of the time are also considered at risk.

Parents and carers are expected to ensure that their children attend school in line with national expectations of 97%. This means that children should not have more than 4 days off over an academic year.

The school day starts at 8.30 am. Staff are available at every gate and every door to welcome children and families in to school every day and at every home time. The school gates are closed at 8.40am, any child arriving after this time is required to sign in late at the office and provide a reason for lack of punctuality.

Classroom interventions start at 8.30am so it is imperative that children do not miss this start regularly as this will affect the progress they make. The registers close at 9.00am and child not present will be marked as absent.

Parents/carers must call the office by 9am on the morning of their child's absence to state the reason for the absence. If phone lines are engaged there is a voice message service available and attendance staff will call parents/carers back to discuss the reason for absence. Failure to notify school of any absence will result in the absence being unauthorised and attendance staff completing a home visit in line with our safeguarding duty of care.

Attendance Staff

Senior Leader for Attendance: Head of Academy-Mrs R Binns

Attendance Officer: Mrs V Hindle

Office administrator: Mrs S Priestley

Parents/carers should contact the attendance staff with their queries or concerns regarding attendance.

Southmere Academy contact details:

Tel: 01274 422040

email: infor@smpa.org.uk

What are our daily attendance routines?

Each morning at 9am, attendance staff will identify the children who are not present, and a reason has not been provided by parents/carers. Attendance staff will then begin calling families to gather information.

If the reason for absence provided is not considered satisfactory then attendance staff will mark the child's absence as unauthorised. Attendance staff are authorised to decide whether a reason is deemed as satisfactory based on what they already know about a child/family, if required attendance staff will seek further advice from the Head of Academy where necessary.

Other reasons for unauthorised absence will include not attending school for the whole day when a child has a medical/dental appointment, or if the child has a record of poor attendance due to minor ailments. Children can attend school with minor ailments, if parents/carers are unsure, they can discuss this with attendance staff. All absence reasons will be discussed in detail with parents to ensure that the academy is firstly supporting the family to get their child back in to school as soon as possible by removing any barriers and secondly by providing support through any external agencies that may be identified.

First Day Absence/Home visits

Parents/carers are required to ring before 9am if their child is going to be absent that day. If a phone call has not been received by 9am, the attendance officer will ring home. If they are unable to speak to a parent/carer or get a satisfactory reason for the absence, they will make an unannounced home visit without delay to ensure the child is safe. Home visits will also be made where there are general safeguarding concerns, queries about a persistently absent child or just to confirm that a child is too unwell to attend.

If a child is absent for more than two days and there are no historical or current safeguarding concerns, we will conduct a home visit on the third day of absence to offer support to the family.

Religious Observance

The school may allow authorised absence for religious observance per occasion. This is at the Head of Academy's discretion.

Dentist and Medical Appointments

Parents are asked not to take children out of school for dental and medical appointments, with the exception of emergency or consultant appointments. If children are taken out for these urgent appointments the main office will need to see a letter or an appointment card. The office team will contact an Attendance Officer or the Head of Academy immediately if a parent/carer asks to take their children out of school for non-urgent appointments. Non-urgent appointments made in school time will be unauthorised.

Children should not be taken out of school due to appointments for parents/carers. If you are struggling to collect or drop children off at the normal times due to personal appointment, school may be able to support the children to stay in school, with a later collection time. Please note that children's attendance will be marked as unauthorised in these circumstances.

Rewards.

There are a range of rewards in place to promote excellent attendance.

	Individual	Class
Daily	Children whose attendance is being monitored with an Attendance Stamp Book receive a stamp or tick in their book	There is a whole class reward of colouring in a letter from the Academy Name, when this is complete children can choose from the bank of rewards
Weekly	Children whose attendance is being monitored with an Attendance Stamp Book receive a prize from the Treasure Chest if they have achieved 5 days in a week.	There is a weekly class reward for the class with the highest attendance in EYFS/KS1 and KS2. Each child in the winning class will earn an extra 20 Dojo Points to spend at the Swap Shop and receive the Attendance Best Class Bear who has Hot Chocolate and biscuits in his backpack.
Half-term rewards	Children who achieve 100% attendance in a half term will receive a certificate and a prize from the Treasure Chest. There are prize draws to receive a shopping voucher: 100% = £20 Improved to 96% = £10 Improved to 90% = £5	There is a half termly class reward for the highest attendance in EYFS/KS1 and KS2. Each child in the winning class will earn an extra 50 Dojo Points to spend at the Swap Shop and receive Attendance Best Class Buns.
End of year rewards	Children who achieve 100% attendance in a school year will receive a certificate and a prize. They will also be entered into the prize draw to win a bike. One each in EYFS/KS1 and one in KS2. There are prize draws for shopping vouchers: Improved to 96% = £10 Improved to 90% = £5	There is a class reward for the class with the highest attendance in EYFS/KS1 and KS2. Each child in the winning class will earn an extra 100 Dojo Points to spend at the Swap Shop and choose a prize from the bank of rewards.

Bank of Rewards includes:

Non-uniform day
Extra playtime

Games session
Cartoons and popcorn session
Tablet games session

Poor Attendance Incentives

To encourage children with attendance that is below what is expected there is a clear strategy of support. We aim to address all of the underlying reasons for low attendance and will build committed, trusting relationships between families and school.

We will:

- open a line of communication with families through text messages and phone calls
- invite families into school to meet attendance staff to discuss what interests and motivates their child
- build a relationship with families through home visits, regular check-ins and consistency
- avoid taking a penalty-based approach until all other avenues have been exhausted
- acknowledge and empathise with family's situations and circumstances
- set up support for any problems that the family feel are a priority

Targeted children will receive a booklet and it will be stamped each day they attend with support from the classroom staff. Target children who achieve a full week of attendance will receive a prize from the Treasure Chest. There will be a programme of attendance support sessions for pupils to understand their own concerns and thoughts about attendance. Attendance staff will ensure that children's thoughts are communicated back to classroom staff.

Data and Monitoring

How will we track the attendance of children?

If a pupil's attendance/absence drops below the school's expected level of attendance (i.e. 97% or 3 separate instances of absence) the following procedure will be applied:

Stage 1

Letter 1 Letter 1 acts as a low-level warning letter to remind parents/carers of the impact of poor attendance and puts attendance into context whilst offering support

Letter 2 (for use should unauthorised absence continue following the issuing of letter 1) reinforces positives of regular attendance, offers support, highlights that attendance is being monitored, whilst warning of possible consequences i.e. Penalty Notices

Letter 3 (for use should unauthorised absence still continue and parent/carer has failed to engage with the school) Parent/carer is invited to attend meeting with School Attendance Contact to discuss reasons for absence and to consider possible support measures. If attendance continues to be of concern and there is not enough evidence of improvement then school will begin the Stage 2 process

Stage 2

At Stage 2 there will be 2 types of action: Enforcement Action or Early Help Action

Engagement at Stage 2 will support the identification of any unmet needs through an Early Help Assessment in collaboration with the family. Relevant sources of support will then be actioned. If unmet needs are not identified at Stage 2 then Enforcement Action will commence.

Enforcement Letter 1 An enforcement letter 1 will be sent to families asking them to engage with the attendance process, a monitoring period of 3 weeks will be set.

Enforcement Letter 2 After 3 weeks if there is no improvement or there has been failure to engage with the attendance process enforcement letter 2 will be issued along with an attendance plan including targets that will be monitored.

Attendance Panel Meeting After the further monitoring period parents/carers will be invited to attend an Attendance Panel meeting with the Head Teacher and Attendance Officer.

Home Visit Failure to attend the meeting will result in a home visit to engage the family. If contact cannot be made an enforcement letter detailing the intention to request a penalty notice will be issued.

Stage 3 When all attempts to engage with the family at intervention stages 1 and 2 have failed, and the criteria has been met, the school can refer to the Education Safeguarding Team to undertake a criminal investigation in line with the Criminal Investigation Process

Escalation of Procedures

Unauthorised absence

Children should be brought to school with minor illnesses. If you are unsure, you should bring your child to school and if they deteriorate and are seriously unwell, we will call you without delay to collect them.

Note, if children have a pattern of short absences for minor illnesses, it is our right to list the illness as unauthorised, as unless children are seriously unwell, they should be in school. Frequent, short-term illnesses can lead to significant periods of absence and this has a serious impact on children's well-being, attainment and life chances.

Persistent Absence

The school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority at Stage 2 (detailed above)

Children who attend school for less than 90% of the time are known nationally as persistently absent pupils. Where a child becomes persistently absent (90% or below) then we can issue proceedings to support an improvement in attendance. This can include meetings and supportive strategies such as children attending breakfast club or we can issue warning letters and fines.

If we feel that a child is at risk of becoming persistently absent, then the school will implement supportive strategies such as meetings to support families, so they do not become persistently absent. We will implement these strategies when a child falls below 95% attendance.

Holidays in Term Time

The school does not authorise any Holiday in Term Time for any reason or length of time, including

visiting relatives. We strongly discourage this. The school enforces Bradford Local Authorities policy updated March 2023 in relation to unauthorised leave during term time which could result in legal proceedings.

- If a parent/carer does request a holiday, they must meet with the Head of Academy **prior to the holiday being booked**. The attendance officer and class teacher may also attend. They will explain clearly that the absence will be unauthorised and that they are in danger of losing their child/ren's place at school, being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice or legal proceedings through the magistrate's court.
- We do advise families to notify school of any intention to take holiday in term time, without notification we will presume holiday has been taken and still apply the policy.
- Legal proceedings (Bradford policy) for a continuous period of unauthorised leave of 20 days or more, or 2 or more proceedings of unauthorised leave totalling 10 school days or more within a 12 month period
- If the holiday extends over twenty school days a CME Referral (Child Missing Education) will be made to the Local Authority.
- Parents/carers will receive written confirmation that the holiday is unauthorised prior to the absence when possible.
- Verbal confirmation will always be given prior to the absence and recorded on the Holiday in Term Time form.
- A letter will also be sent after the child has returned to school to explain the next steps of the process
- The Head of Academy and Attendance Officer will also meet with the parents/carers post-holiday to discuss with them how the absence has affected their child's attendance percentage and learning. Class teachers may also be present for this meeting.

Engagement of External Support Services

In order to safeguard all pupils and their families the school will be proactive in liaising openly and professionally with all external agencies with the aim of protecting a child and their family and improving attendance outcomes. These agencies include New Communities and Travellers Service, Admission Team, Education Social Work Service, Children's Social Care, Police Service, School Nursing Team and the Hospital and Home Teaching Service.

Children Missing from Education

The school follows guidance from the DfE regarding Children Missing Education. Where children on roll do not attend and the school has made enquiries through phone calls and home visits, we will refer the case to the CME Team. The CME team will advise school when it is safe to take a child off roll.

Pupil Information

As in all aspects of school data and pupil information the Delta's Data Protection Policy is adhered to. Southmere Primary Academy will aim to keep up to date and accurate information in order to keep

children safe and provide appropriate care for them. The school requires accurate and up to date information regarding:

- Names and contact details of persons with whom the child normally lives
- Names and addresses of all persons with parental responsibility

- Emergency contact details
- Details of any persons authorised to collect the child from school
- Any relevant court orders in place including those which affect any person's access to the child
- A child who is or has been on a Child Protection Plan/Family Support Plan.
- Name and contact detail of GP
- Any other factors which may impact on the safety and welfare of the child

Children not collected

The following procedure is followed when children are not collected by an appropriate adult at the end of the school day or extra-curricular activity.

- If not collected at 3.15pm children are kept safe with their Class teacher/Learning Support Assistant until 3.30pm.
- At 3.30pm the children are safely escorted by one of the above adults to the main office
- and a member of staff supervises the children until they are collected by an appropriate adult. The academy office staff will be alerted and will contact parents/carers to collect them as soon as possible. Other emergency contact numbers will be rung if parents/carers cannot be reached until an appropriate adult can collect them.
- If no contact is made, two members of staff will escort the child home, leave them with their parents/carers or another appropriate adult and ask for up to date contact numbers.
- If there is no suitable person at home the staff will return to the academy with the child and Children's Social Care/Police will be contacted so that appropriate actions can be taken.
- The same procedures will be followed if a child is not collected after a school visit or extra-curricular activity.
- Children who go home alone at the end of the school day must have written consent from a parent/carer. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to update this permission if they wish to do so via the academy office.

Children Leaving Academy Premises without Permission

Every effort is made to ensure that the academy site is as safe and secure as possible and that children are supervised appropriately at all times. In the event that a child is reported missing the following procedures will be followed.

- A thorough search of the academy site and immediate locality is made by all available staff.
- Admin staff to check if they have been signed out.
- A senior leader is informed.
- Admin staff will ring the child's contact numbers so they are fully informed and also to check whether or not the child is at home.
- If the child has not been located after these actions the police will be notified.

Roles and Responsibilities

To support children and families in maintaining good attendance the whole school community has a

responsibility to promote good attendance.

This includes:

Parents and carers

Children

Attendance Staff

Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants

Senior Leadership Team

All staff will follow the agreed systems and culture as set out in this policy. Parents and carers in sending their child to Southmere Primary Academy agree to the details set out in this policy.

Our responsibility as a school is in line with Ofsted attendance guidance 2022. In our work to promote and maintain good attendance, to support children and families we will **'Listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate'**.

Policy updated : September 2023