

Summerville Primary School – An Academy School
Achieving through care, challenge and creativity
Attendance and Punctuality Policy
Statutory Policy



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Date of Approval: 20.03.2019
This policy will be reviewed by the LPP Committee every 3 years.
Date for Review: March 2022
Signature <i>C. Hirstidge</i> Date
Head Teacher
Signature Date
Chair of Governors

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For a child to reach their full educational achievement an excellent level of school attendance is essential.

Summerville is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel safe, valued and welcome. Parents, carers and children play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which s/he is entitled. Parents, carers, staff and governors share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children if they are fit and healthy to do so. We expect no unauthorised absence and a minimum attendance of 96% after any authorised absence. Every opportunity will be used to convey to parents, carers and their children the importance of regular and punctual attendance and we believe a principal factor of promoting excellent attendance is having a positive attitude towards school and learning.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital all children are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is exceptional or unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Poor attendance and punctuality is disruptive to both children and staff. Children with attendance levels of 90% and below are classified by the DoF as Persistently Absent. Poor or non-attendance will be addressed with parents and carers. The school acknowledge that each case may be different and consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention may be required. In all cases, early intervention is essential to prevent attendance from worsening. It is therefore essential that parents and carers keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance. The school may issue letters to parents clearly defining their child's attendance levels, concerns and the school's requirements. It is hoped that a quick response and an improvement in attendance will be seen thus preventing the need for the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) to become involved.

Summerville aims to:

- Provide a safe, caring and happy learning environment
- Raise achievement through the promotion of excellent attendance
- To create a culture in which excellent attendance is valued
- Continually strive to improve the attendance and punctuality of all children
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including children, parents, carers, staff and governors
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents, carers and children
- Promote effective partnerships with the Attendance Improvement Officer and with other services or agencies as necessary

Excellent attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically

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- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

Responsibilities of the School:

- The school will ensure they provide a safe and caring learning environment where all children feel valued
- **To make parents aware of this policy**
- To ensure a legal register is taken at designated times during the school day (am and pm)
- To ensure accurate records of attendance and punctuality are maintained daily
- To clearly distinguish between absences which are authorised and those which are unauthorised (it is the decision of the Headteacher as to whether an absence will be authorised)
- To encourage excellent attendance and punctuality and ensure school staff set positive examples in this regard
- To investigate all unexplained or unjustified absences and follow up poor attendance and punctuality
- To keep parents and carers informed of their child's attendance and punctuality record and work with parents and carers should either give cause for concern
- To monitor attendance and punctuality levels and report to the school governors on a termly basis
- To liaise with the AIO regarding attendance and punctuality issues relating to individual children

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Parents and Carers have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure all children of statutory school age attend school on a regular* and full-time basis and to ensure good punctuality at school. **(Children become statutory school age the term following their 5th birthday).**

- Ensure their child attends school regularly*, punctually, dressed in Summerville uniform, equipped and ready for learning having had appropriate rest, sleep and eaten breakfast each morning
- Impress upon their child the importance of attending school regularly* and following the school's positive behaviour for learning policy
- Ensure holidays are never taken in term time
- Avoid arranging non-urgent medical appointments during school hours/term time
- Inform the school daily, of absence and communicate the reason for their child's absence by telephone, email, letter or in person to the school office
- Confirm, in writing the reason for their child's absence when they return
- Maintain regular communication with the school about any concerns or issues which may lead to poor or non-attendance
- Ensure the school office is notified immediately of any change to contact details
- Take an active interest in their child's school life and work

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Responsibilities of Pupils

All pupils are expected to:

- Attend every day unless they are genuinely ill or have an authorised absence
- Attend regularly*, on time, dressed in school uniform
- Be ready to learn

Responsibilities of the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)

The AIO fulfils the statutory duty of the Local Authority in enforcing regular* school attendance and provides the school with the following services:

- Regular consultation visits meeting with the school's attendance team to identify children experiencing attendance difficulties
- Pre-referral work, which may include telephoning or writing to parents and carers about their child's absences or lateness
- Attending meetings with parents and carers to emphasise the need for improved attendance and the possibility that, if this does not occur, the AIO will become involved which could result in legal action

Registration/Lateness

When pupils arrive late, they miss out on essential information and instructions given at the beginning of the day. This can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. Children may also feel awkward arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled. Furthermore, when one pupil arrives late, it disrupts the entire class and the teacher – everyone's education is compromised.

At Summerville the classroom doors are opened at 8.50am and a known adult will greet the children into the classroom. Summerville encourage all parents to arrive with their child between 8.45am-8.50am. This enables the children to settle and be ready to learn at 8.55am when the registers will be taken. **Electronic registers are completed using / to represent children who are present and N for children who are absent.** If a child arrives after 9.00am, parents or carers are required to sign their child in at the school office in the late book and s/he will be marked in the register as late. **The accurate symbols used to distinguish between different types of absence are entered by the School Admin team when the reason for absence is identified. This makes it clear when an absence has been authorised or is unauthorised. Notes can be added to further explain absences.**

In line with the DofE guidelines registration closes at 9.30am (30 minutes after the start of the school day). Between 9.00am and 9.30am, a child will be marked as late in the registers, but counted as present.

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as an authorised absence and marked accordingly in the registers if the school receive a satisfactory explanation for the absence; this is subject to the Headteachers authorisation. However, if a pupil arrives after the register has closed and the parent or carer fails to provide a satisfactory explanation for the absence, s/he will be marked as an unauthorised absence. In both cases the pupil will be shown to be present on school premises.

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A further register is taken at 1.00/1.15pm and the same principles apply as to that of morning registers.

If a child is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised medical mark in the register. Parents or Carers should provide the school with evidence of their child's medical appointment e.g. letter, appointment card, sight of text.

Parents and Carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of punctual time keeping and how this might be achieved, if no improvement is seen, the AIO will be informed.

Parents and Carers must collect their child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected children to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies.

Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Parents and carers should contact the school by **9.00am** if they know their child will be absent informing the school fully of the reasons for the child's absence. The school cannot accept a reason for absence as 'unwell'; the reasons needs to be specific. Parents or carers can contact the school by:

- Telephoning the school and speaking to a member of office staff or by leaving a message on the absence line
- E-mail the school – admin@summerville.herts.sch.uk
- Visiting the school office in person
- Text message using the Schoolcomms system

Parents and carers of absent children, whose absence has not been reported to the school, will receive a telephone call or a text message requesting a specific reason for their child's absence and are expected to respond.

Parents and carers should not give messages to teachers to pass on to the attendance team, it is the responsibility of parents and carers to contact the school via one of the above methods.

The school advise that if you have medical evidence supporting an absence, a copy should be provided to the school for their child's records. This could be a letter from your child's GP or appointment letter, copy of a prescription or sight of prescribed medication.

Please remember that parental illness, going shopping, visiting family, not wanting to go to school, alleged bullying (speak to the school immediately to resolve the issue), birthdays, death of a pet, inclement weather if the school is open are not acceptable reasons for absence and will not be authorised.

The school will authorise an absence for a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs, moving to a new house, professional examinations such a music or dance and a close family bereavement, the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity such as **school directed e.g. school visits, sporting events or Individual activities e.g. music**

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exams, special tuition, the pupil is attending a school visit or the pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion, all of which must be authorised by the Headteacher.

The responsibility for authorising absences rests with the Headteacher. Written or verbal communication by parents or carers does not by itself constitute authorisation. The school may or may not accept the reason offered as valid.

Following up Absence

The school follows up all absences for which no reason has been provided; if a specific reason has not been provided for an absence which is authorised by the headteacher, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Persistence Absence (PA)

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance rate falls below 90% at any time of the school year, **for whatever reason**. Absence of this level will considerably reduce a child's educational prospects and the parents and carers fullest support and co-operation will be needed to improve this. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90%, the school will alert parents and carers to this in writing and/or invite them to a meeting to discuss a plan for improvement. PA children will also be monitored by the school's AIO.

Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. If there are exceptional circumstances behind a request, these should be discussed with the Headteacher.

There is no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the vast majority of cases, holiday will not be authorised unless they can be defined as exceptional. Parents and carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the school office and school website in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent reaches the thresholds set down in Hertfordshire's County Council Code of Conduct, parents and carers can be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents and carers to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Leaving and Returning to School during the School day

When pupils leave, or return to school during the school day they must do so via the school office. Parents and carers must sign their child in and out of school in the in/out log. In the event of an

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evacuation, the signing in/out log will be checked along with the attendance registers to ensure all children are accounted for.

Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parents/carers request.

This includes:

- parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, hair appointments, birthdays, to look after siblings, parent organisation/appointments, family holidays, unexplained absences, the school is dissatisfied with the explanation of absence or a pupil is away from school for a period of time longer than that authorised by the school.

The school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new or additional information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents and carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Under the Education Act 1996, Section 444, parents and carers whose children are of statutory school age and fail to respond to requests by the school to send their child to school regularly or who take unauthorised holidays during term time may be issued with a fixed penalty notice.

- Fixed Penalty Notices will apply to any parent or carer who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child of statutory school age who is registered at a state school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.
- The Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued via the Local Authority (LA) upon consultation with the school and the Headteacher.
- A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued when a child has had **15** unauthorised sessions (registers are taken twice a day and a session is counted as a morning or afternoon) in the current and/or previous term.
- The Fixed Penalty will be £60 per parent if paid within 21 days or £120 per parent if paid within 28 days. If the Fixed Penalty Fine is not paid within 28 days the LA will implement legal proceedings.
- Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.
- The Attendance Improvement Team regard Fixed Penalty Notices as an effective part of improving attendance and discouraging unauthorised absence.

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Summencroft follow Hertfordshire’s procedures for issuing Fixed Penalty Notices, further information can be found at:

<http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/attendance.shtml>

Promoting Attendance and Rewards

Summencroft recognise and encourage excellent attendance and punctuality by:

- Noticing and giving positive comments to children
- Recognition during assemblies and in the classroom

Related Policies

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018**
- **DofE – School Attendance**
- **HfL: School Admin: Pupil Welfare: Attendance**
- **Behaviour for Learning Policy**
- **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**
- **Anti-bullying Charter**
- **Equality and Diversity Policy**
- **SEN Policy and Local Offer**

***The Supreme Court Ruling – Isle of Wight v Platt, 6th April 2017**

The Supreme Court considered the definition of what was meant in law by the phrase ‘fails to attend regularly’ and concluded unanimously that in section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996, that the word ‘regularly’ means ‘in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school’. This decision emphasises the importance of parents ensuring their child attends school on time, each and every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable or exceptional and authorised by the headteacher.

Therefore, when reading the Summencroft Attendance and Punctuality Policy the words ‘regular/regularly*’ are defined as per the above statement.

Interpretation

Any reference to a statute, statutory guidance and any other document shall be construed as a reference to that statute as amended or re-enacted and to the current edition or replacement of that statutory guidance or other document.

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