



## SANDHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL

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### Attendance Policy

**“At Sandhurst Schools we believe in excellent progress for all in a safe and caring environment.”**

This policy reflects the vision and aims of **Sandhurst Primary School** by:

- Encouraging staff, parents/carers and children to maximise the learning experience in order for every child to flourish and reach their potential.
- Providing clear procedures for parents/carers relating to school attendance.

#### **What the law says about School Attendance:**

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full-time education. Section 444(1a) of the Education Act 1996 says, “If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, without reasonable justification, then his (her) parent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted”.

Children are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in any single academic year (September – July). Any exceptions to this can only be taken with the full agreement of the Head of School.

This policy is informed by DFE Circular 11/91 “The education (pupil registration) (England). Regulations 2006 and Education Act 1996 section 444, the “School Attendance – Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence, “DFE 1994 – Paragraph 21, page 4 which reminds us that:

“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 (telephone call, written letter) in relation to a particular absence; does not, by itself, oblige the school to accept it.”

There is an expectation that over the course of an academic year a child’s attendance will be 96% or more. Absence that falls below 85% is categorised by the government as persistent absence. Parents \* must ensure that their child is able to attend school for the whole academic year by making medical appointments out of school time wherever possible, avoid booking any holidays during term time and avoid encouraging their child to stay at home for unjustifiable reasons.

## Principles

Consistent daily, punctual and full-time attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent, late or removed from school before the end of the school day.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is in school and therefore permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carer.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school, but it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives them the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either "Authorised" or "Unauthorised". This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and/or for which no approved leave has been given. Unauthorised absence and persistent lateness is reported to the Local Authority's Attendance and Welfare Officer.

These include but are not limited to:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences, which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school late.
- Children who are unnecessarily collected from school before the end of the school day.

The law was amended in September 2013 and schools are not permitted to approve any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Every application for absence will be assessed individually. For attendance at a wedding or funeral consideration will be given to reasonable travelling time/arrangements to attend (depending on the location) in addition to the day of the event. The school does not expect to receive requests for attendance at family weddings or funerals that occur immediately before or after a school holiday period. The school may request to see documentary evidence to confirm/verify any requested absence. All requests for absence must be submitted a minimum of two weeks before the absence is required except in an emergency. If the absence is not authorised and the child is not in school on the days for which absence was requested the parent(s) may be liable to a fine or prosecution. The regulations regarding the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices (fines) in relation to unauthorised absences have also been amended by the same legislation. Under the amended regulations the amount of the **Fixed Penalty Notice will be £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid within 28 days.**

Parents are requested to inform the school if the child has an infectious disease confirmed. Some diseases are notifiable and the school must report them to the Health Protection Agency. The school will also inform other parents so that they can check for similar symptoms. After a stomach upset (diarrhoea) or

vomiting, children should be kept at home for 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting to avoid a recurrence at school and possibly infecting other children. If a child has head lice the school should be advised and the child treated but as treatment is normally applied in the evening, the child should not be absent from school.

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with staff (such as the Head of School, Learning Mentor, AHT – Raising Attainment, Pupil Administrator) in resolving any attendance problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way the school may refer the child to the AWO (Attendance and Welfare Officer) from the LA (Local Authority). The AWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

We are passionate in our belief that lateness is unsettling for a child and disruptive for the class. Children who are unavoidably late must be taken to the office to give the reason for lateness, get a registration mark and be marked in for a dinner.

### **Procedures for Parents**

- Parents/Carers need to make contact with the school office by 9.30am on the first day of the child's absence with a reason for absence.
- The telephone call must then be followed up by a letter or email explaining the child's absence when they return to school.
- If a child has a medical appointment, the school must be provided with a copy of the appointment card/letter for school records.
- Complete and return the Absence request forms available from the school office.

### **Procedures for the School**

- If a child is absent and no reason has been given, the school will make contact with the parent to establish the reason for the child's absence.
- The school produces a regular attendance report which identifies irregular attendance or persistent absence, lateness and holidays taken. These are shared with the AWO and the Attendance Team at the LA.
- Attendance is monitored to ensure that there are no safeguarding concerns. Particular attention is therefore given to the attendance of children who are considered to be vulnerable or potentially vulnerable or disadvantaged.
- School will monitor the lateness, attendance and intra-day/early leaving registers at frequent intervals and take further relevant action for children who persistently appear in the records.
- Record and monitor details of children removed from school early or during the school day in conjunction with the stated reasons.
- If the child arrives after the beginning of the school day or the afternoon session s/he will be registered with a late mark, this will become an unauthorised absence after 9:30am.
- If a child is absent for more than 20 days consecutively without authorisation the child's name may be removed from the register, they will be reported as missing to the local authority and their place offered to another child.

## **What we do to promote good attendance and punctuality**

The school will take the following action to promote good attendance and minimise lateness:

- The school employs a learning mentor who monitor attendance and where necessary support families to get their children to school.
- The school has an attendance owl (Infants), which is given to the class with the best punctuality and attendance. Attendance is reported weekly and a display is updated weekly. This helps to reinforce to the children the importance of regular attendance at school.
- The school provides information to parents about their child's attendance in written form at parents' evening and end of year reports.

## **Attendance/Lateness Targets**

The LA sets targets for acceptable attendance and the school is called to account by the LA if these are not met. The school target currently stands at 97%

The people responsible for managing attendance at Sandhurst are:

Mrs Akkara  
Mrs Dove (Headteacher)

## **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance, equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. The staff are all committed to working with parents to ensure a high level of attendance.

## **COVID-19**

Different arrangements currently are in place for the current pandemic. If a child is self-isolating, has COVID-19 or lives with someone who does these are coded separately and calculated differently. School monitors this carefully and reports to the LA and Department for Education.

Reviewed September 2020

Next review September 2023