



School Attendance Policy

Our Vision:

Achievement, Belonging, Celebration: valuing every child through fostering independence, inclusion, trust and support.

Our Mission:

Supporting our learners to develop holistic skills for life

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Rationale

New Siblands School believes that consistent high attendance at school enables pupils to learn the skills and acquire the knowledge they will need to allow them to achieve their potential, in order to live happy, healthy, fulfilling lives. Regular school attendance has a range of recognised benefits, including curriculum learning, understanding and empathising with others, personal social development and skills related to self-help and independence. Absence from school hinders development, thus preventing pupils from achieving their potential. We therefore have systems set up within to school to monitor attendance carefully and also work with outside agencies, such as Social Workers, Health teams, Local Authority officers and Education Welfare Officer, when required.

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Considering pupil personal circumstances, particularly those pupils with significant health needs

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.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) 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.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Local Governors

The Local Governing Body for the school is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Attendance Governor: Moira Lloyd

3.2 The Head Teacher is the strategic attendance lead

The Head Teacher Is Karl Hemmings

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Monitoring attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Analyses individual attendance figures 3 times per year (terms 2, 4 and 6) and acts in regard to individual pupils as required
- Reports attendance to the Local Governing Board 6 times per year (once per term)
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Safeguarding Team
- Works with outside agencies to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Co-ordinates the writing of individual attendance plans
- Advises the LA when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.3 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. Class teachers must report attendance concerns to the Head Teacher and Safeguarding Team. Class teachers may discuss attendance issues with parents or carers, for example through parents evenings or Annual Reviews.

3.4 Parents and Carers

Parents are responsible for:

- Making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education and attend that education with the ambition of 100% attendance.
- Phoning the school office to report an absence before 8.55am .
- Planned Absence (see section 4.3)
- Unplanned Absence (see section 4.2)
- Reiterating the importance of school attendance to their child
- Engaging with school staff to improve school attendance

3.5 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. The admin team send a spreadsheet listing absent pupils to members of SLT on a daily basis, along with queries or concern regarding those absences. This can include clarifying which code should be used for a particular absence.

The admin team are responsible for making calls to parents at the recommended time frames, as set out below.

- **Step 1** – 9.15am Phone call home to confirm reason for non-attendance. If no response by 10:00am, move to step 2.
- **Step 2** – 10.00am Phone call and text home to confirm non-attendance. If no response, phone 2nd and 3rd emergency contacts. Submit attendance/absence report to SLT. If no response by 11:00am, move to step 3.
- **Step 3** – 12.00pm Office staff to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead in order to contact transport or consider a home visit. If the pupil has a designated social worker, they may be informed at this point. If no response, move to step 4.
- **Step 4** – Due to the nature and vulnerability of our students, any child whose location is not known by the end of one day will be considered missing from education. The Safeguarding Team will then take further action, for example, contacting Social Worker (if the child has one), the LA, other agencies. A home visit may be considered at this point.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We use the Arbor Information Management System to record daily attendance.

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

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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

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 8:55am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1.15pm.

Any child arriving after 9.15am in the morning or 1.15pm in the afternoon will be marked as late, unless an individual attendance plan has been agreed with school leaders.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.55am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

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. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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. If this is the case, parents/carers will be permitted to provide any further evidence regarding the absence.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised, as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

REQUESTS FOR ABSENCE

These should be made:

- To the office by email (enquiries@newsiblands.org.uk) or telephone (01454 553002)
- Well in advance of the proposed absence, and well before any bookings are made.
- By the parent or carer "with whom the pupil normally resides". This covers the situation of children who are looked after or whose parents are separated or divorced, and who wish to go on holiday with the other parent or other relative. Anyone who does not have parental responsibility (PR) for a child should not be reporting absences, although the school recognises that pupils sometimes live with adults who are not their legal parents (e.g. step-parents). Absences must be reported by an adult and should not be reported by family members who are not parents or carers (e.g. siblings).
- In the case of children whose parents or carers live separately, those parents or carers should inform each other if they intend to request an absence for the child. It is not the school's responsibility to do this. If there is a parent or carer with whom the pupil normally resides, it is expected that they will be aware of all absence requests. The person who is in care of the child during a leave of absence will be the person liable.
- The school will consider each request for absence on its merits, but general principles are:

a) Head Teachers may authorise leave of absence in order that a pupil may take part in a family holiday which cannot take place during school holidays because a parent is unable to arrange leave from work to coincide OR if the pupil's disability requires special adaptation or facilities to be arranged that impacts on the timing of any available holiday. The fact that holidays are cheaper during term time is not regarded as a valid reason for missing education. Where parents are unable

to arrange leave, this is normally required to be supported by written evidence (for example, that adult's employer).

b) Where leave is authorised, one week of term time per school year shall be regarded as sufficient.

c) Leave will not normally be granted for pupils to go on holiday with friends or friends' parents, unless for exceptional circumstances as approved by the Head Teacher.

d) Leave will not be granted to pupils who already have poor attendance records. This will depend on individual circumstances.

e) In some cases, such as an extended visit to relatives abroad, a trip may bring considerable educational benefit to the child. In such cases we might wish to discuss how the trip could be used as part of an educational programme, perhaps by setting work to be done whilst away, or asking for a project to be completed on return.

We do 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 or carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. See Section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

➤ After the register has closed at 9.15am pupils will be marked as absent using the L code. The reason for this will be sought from parents or carers.

Given the nature of our pupils' needs we will always endeavour to support and work with families to resolve lateness.

Due to the needs of our pupils, we recognise that there are factors which may affect punctuality, some of which are listed below. However, the general principle is that punctuality should be ensured and, if this not routinely possible, the parents or carer is expected to work with school staff to address this. Factors may include:

- School transport issues
- Significant health care needs
- Pupil behaviour or anxiety
- Family context, including parental capacity or siblings' needs
- Housing

4.5 Following-up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason (see admin responsibilities, above)

If there are absence concerns, the school must:

- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether any absence should be approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code
- Work with parents/carers or outside agencies to ensure good attendance

4.6 Reporting to parents

New Siblands School will report attendance during annual summer term report writing and EHCP Annual Reviews. There may be other times this is reported, for example during health referrals, during meetings led by Social Workers, parents evenings etc.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Head Teacher will only authorise a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head Teacher's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail).
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. This list is not exhaustive.
- Involvement in planned sporting events, as agreed by the Head Teacher.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

The national threshold for persistent absence in all schools is 90%. Attendance in Special Schools has been lower than 90% for several years. The threshold at which we will be concerned at New Siblands is currently 86%, although we may be concerned about pupils whose attendance is higher than this. Our senior leadership team monitor attendance thresholds daily.

Should attendance drop below the threshold we will analyse the data and consider if action is required. Many pupils at New Siblands have significant medical or care needs that will impact on regular attendance. This is always taken into account, when analysing attendance.

Persistent non-attendance may result in:

- Open conversation with families in order to improve attendance. This may involve supportive actions.
- Discussion with school Safeguarding Team, considering possible actions.
- Discussion with relevant agencies (e.g. Social Worker, Health team, LA, Educational Welfare Officer). This can include multi-agency meetings.
- Inviting parents to a SAM meeting (School attendance meeting). This is a formal meeting to address attendance concerns and ensure all involved are working to improve attendance.
- School considering whether a fixed-penalty fine may be recommended to the Local Authority (see below).

At any stage, it may be considered that the Early Help Assessment and Plan (EHAP) process may be used, in order to focus all agencies working with the pupil on addressing school attendance in the context of the pupil's wider needs.

5.3 Legal sanctions

- In cases where parents or carers take their child on an unauthorised holiday during term time, if applicable we will follow the South Gloucestershire school attendance Code of Conduct and request that a Penalty Notice is issued by the Local Authority. Where all or almost all unauthorised absence marks are U coded (including late after registration) we will first seek to engage with the parents or carer. If U code absences persist, we will request a Penalty Notice in line with the LA Attendance Code of Conduct.
- Penalty Notices may be issued to one or both parents/carers regarding each of their children if more than 10 sessions (1 session equals either a morning or afternoon) of unauthorised absence are accumulated in a 7-week period (i.e. 70 sessions of possible attendance at school). A session is a morning or an afternoon. Any person with day-to-day care of the child may be issued with a Notice; this could include grandparents, step-parents and partners.
- Unauthorised holidays in term time will result in the school requesting a Fixed Penalty Notice on the 11th missed session (6th day of absence).

- Other than for holidays in term time, the decision regarding the issue of a Penalty Notice will be taken as part of the legal process between the school and local authority (i.e. at Attendance Panels and Reviews).
- The fine is £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice; rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. The payment must be made in full – part payments will not be accepted - details of how to pay are printed on the Penalty Notice.

South Gloucestershire Guidance for Parents or Carers on Fixed Penal fines may be found here:

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/southglos/directory/files/penalty_notices_-_parents_carers_leaflet_-_jan_2021_1.pdf

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

- Each morning class teachers conduct wellbeing check-ins with all pupils in their class.
- Bespoke initiatives may be implemented, led by attendance strategic lead.
- Parent or carer support systems, including referrals or support from outside agencies.
- Effective coordination between school staff and the school transport team.
- Effective communication between school staff and relevant health teams, including hospital discharge team.

7. Attendance monitoring

The Office Manager at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis. This is also delegated to the admin team.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

The parent/carer is expected to call the school each day their child is ill unless they have made explicit that the child will be off for a longer period of absence. If the child has sickness and diarrhoea, then the child would be marked absent for 48 hours.

If a pupil's absence goes above 5 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this, unless medical evidence has been provided.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The national persistent absence threshold for all schools is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil may be classified as a persistent absentee, unless there are significant extenuating circumstances (e.g. recognised significant medical or care need). The rate of persistent absence for Special Schools is usually significantly higher than mainstream schools, so the 10% threshold may not necessarily trigger this as a concern.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. This data is collected anonymously – no pupils are identified through this process. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

New Siblands School tracks attendance through a system called Arbor and data is stored securely on cloud-based Arbor servers. Using Arbor we will:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils.
- Run reports in order to analyse attendance of individuals or groups of pupils.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as needing intervention and support, due to attendance issues.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 2 years by the school leadership team. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Governing Body

9. Emotionally-Based School Avoidance and Mental Health

Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA) may affect between 1%-5% of the school population. South Gloucestershire Educational Psychology Service has produced guidance for schools regarding EBSA by drawing on the current evidence base and information from the literature and from other Educational Psychology Services. EBSA is a 'broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school' (West Sussex EPS 2018). South Gloucestershire has decided to use the term EBSA in preference to other terminology, e.g., 'School Phobia', 'School Refusal' and 'Emotionally Based School Avoidance' as this seems to be the most commonly used term. However, it is recognised that often 'avoidance' is an emotional response to an aversive situation rather than a conscious choice.

Understanding Emotionally Based School Avoidance EBSA is different from absence relating to physical illness and truancy. Most young people experiencing EBSA can be highly anxious and show significant distress associated with attending school and/or engaging in aspects of the school experience. In many instances, children want to participate in their education even though they feel unable to do so. Parents are often aware of their child's school-related anxiety, even when this may not be apparent to school staff. Often, the young person's anxiety will reduce during weekends or school holidays. Difficulties children have in articulating their distress and the struggles that

parents/carers and school staff have in understanding the young person's emotional experience of school are often key barriers in identifying and supporting young people at risk of EBSA. For some young people, the distress may be obvious in their presentation and chronic non-attendance. For others, however, these difficulties may not be so easily identifiable. These young people may demonstrate sporadic attendance, missing the odd day here and there or particular lessons, or may only be able to attend school when provided with a high level of support and a modified timetable.

The Department for Education has produced the document, [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance.pdf](#) (Feb 2023). This outlines the expectations on schools to support pupils for whom a mental health issue may be affecting attendance. The guidance includes:

- An expectation to apply it to any pupils displaying any social, emotional or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance. It is not only for pupils who have a diagnosed mental disorder, or a disability or special educational need.
- Guidance that any actions taken to support attendance are referred to as "reasonable adjustments". This term is used throughout the guidance as a way of describing those actions in general terms, as opposed to a school's duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with a disability under section 20 of the 2010 Equality Act.
- Where a child has a disability, Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan and/or an assigned social worker, it is important that school staff take account of this when considering to address attendance. A section on additional considerations for children with Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and/or an assigned social worker is included.
- Recommendations about effective actions that can be taken, including working closely with parents or carers, creating a plan to support the attendance of pupils with mental health needs, making referrals to other agencies, seeking advice or support from health teams and putting in place additional pastoral support within school. The guidance recognizes that parental mental health issues can affect pupil attendance and recommends that, in those case, practical whole-school support or multi-agency work may be required.

At New Siblands School, we know that mental health needs and anxiety can have a significant impact on pupil attendance at school. We recognise and acknowledge the complexities involved in supporting pupils with mental health needs or those who are recognised as experiencing EBSA and will provide support for those pupils, within the capacity of the school to put in place reasonable adjustments.

10. Part-time timetables, Phased returns and Alternative Provision

10.1 Part-time timetables

There may be occasions when a pupil is on a part-time timetable. If a part-time timetable is in place, then it must be agreed in writing by both the school and parents/carers.

Department for Education guidance on Part-time timetables states:

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs...A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution...There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised.

A part-time timetable will have agreed outcomes that focus on returning to full-time and be reviewed regularly with parents/carers.

A number of pupils at New Siblands have medical needs and this will sometimes require them to have a part-time timetable, as agreed between the school and parents/carers. If a part-time timetable is required for health reasons, then support and advice will usually be sought from the pupil's health team.

10.2 Phased returns

Some pupils may require a phased return to school, following a part-time timetable or period of absence (such as significant illness or operation). In this case, all relevant advice will be sought to ensure that reasonable adjustments are being made to ensure the phased return is successful. The school will work closely with parents/carers and relevant agencies (e.g. health, school transport) to ensure the phased return is monitored, regularly reviewed and adapted where necessary. The aim of a phased return is successful return to full-time attendance. Any absences from school during the phased return will be marked as authorised in the attendance register.

10.3 Alternative Provision

Occasionally, pupils will access education opportunities outside of the school setting. This will either be:

- at a setting arranged by parents/carers, or by another agency on behalf of, or in agreement with, parents/carers (e.g. the Local Authority or health team).
- commissioned directly by the school.

If the absence is arranged by parents/carers, or on their behalf, the school will decide whether to authorise the absence. The school may ask the parent/carer or organising agency to provide

information about the activity or setting. If the school has concerns about the activity or setting then the school may ask for evidence that the activity or setting is safe and can be considered an appropriate alternative to school attendance. As an example of an activity that may be authorised, some pupils access therapeutic services outside of school.

If the provision is commissioned by the school, then the school must ensure that due diligence is undertaken before the provision takes place, to ensure that the activity is appropriate and safe. This will include:

- Information regarding the nature and intended outcomes of the provision
- Safeguarding policies and systems
- Health and Safety policies and systems
- Evidence of staff safety procedures e.g. DBS checks, relevant training and experience
- Visits to the setting, or to view the activity
- Evidence of security arrangements (e.g. site security of the setting)
- Sight of public liability insurance
- Any appropriate welfare, pastoral support provided through the activity or setting
- References regarding the setting or activity (ideally from a professional organization, such as a LA, school or other agency)

Once due diligence has been undertaken, then outcomes will be established, regular communication will take place and the provision will be reviewed on a regular basis by the school.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child protection policy
- Positive Behaviour policy
- Healthcare and Admin of Meds in School Policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence

U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day