

# Seaham Trinity Primary School



## Attendance Policy

Date current version published	January 2020
Date of next review	
Purpose of the document	To improve school attendance and ensure children attend school regularly in line with Local Authority guidance
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Document approved by	Governing body
Document approved on	
Changes made to this version	Updated to be in line with Local Authority Policies and Procedures and New school procedures
Reference material	
Linked documents	

Attendance Policy  
Document Control

# Attendance Policy

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## 1. Statement of Intent

Seaham Trinity Primary School recognises the importance of full attendance and aims to ensure that all pupils achieve and maintain high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Regular attendance and punctuality is a prerequisite to a good education and therefore is a priority for the school. Seaham Trinity 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. As a school, therefore, we aim to pursue the goal of regular attendance and punctuality. In this matter, the partnership between school and home is vitally important.

With this in mind, the target attendance for Seaham Trinity Primary School is 96%

## 2. School Attendance – The Law

The Education Act 1944 establishes the duty of parents ensuring regular and punctual attendance of their child(ren). Parents are responsible for this duty in law and will be breaking the law if they do not do this and there are no good reasons for missing school.

The School and Local Authority want to help parents if they have a problem. If attendance does not get better or parents do not accept help and support offered, the Council may issue a warning notice, Penalty Notice or ask parents to attend an interview to ask questions about whether they have broken the law.

Parents who are found guilty of an offence, could be fined up to £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious. In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.

## 3. 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 (Pupils Attendance Record) Regulations 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.

In accordance with current legislation, each class in school has an attendance register. It is school policy that morning registers are completed by **09:00 am** and afternoon registers by **1:05 pm** for KS1 and **01:35 pm** for KS2.

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.

## 4. 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. Parents/carers are expected to telephone (using the automated absence option). 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 using the automated absence reporting system – Parents ring the school, choose 'pupil absence' option then leave a short message stating the child's name, class and reason for absence – Absences should be followed up with medical proof where possible.

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 or personal contact) 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 a problem in relation to a particular pupil, the Attendance Improvement Team will intervene.

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, Seaham Trinity Primary School will provide work to be completed at home (where appropriate) or will seek support from services that can offer tuition at home.

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). Where possible medical appointments should be sought outside of school hours.

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 present (Take Register note).

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 Office staff.

## 5. Leave of Absence

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence Form if they intend to remove their child from school for any purpose, which they may obtain from the Office Reception or the School Website. It should be completed and returned to the school office before the absence. The current regulations allow Head Teachers to grant leave of absence in "exceptional circumstances".

**Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.**

When a leave of absence request is received, the school will take each case on an individual basis and consider the impact the absence from school will have on the child's education. Once a decision is made a letter will be sent to parents to inform them whether the absence will be authorised or unauthorised. Any requests that are declined should be reported to the Attendance Improvement Team (AIT), whom in turn will take the appropriate action.

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 Head Teacher. The penalty notice would be issued by Durham County Council following consultation with the AIT.

**Parents do not have a legal right to take children out of school on holiday. The law says that schools have the discretion to grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. This is at the discretion of the Head Teacher only. Consideration will be given to all holiday requests on an individual basis**

## 6. Categorizing Absence

Our policy deals 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 may have difficulties, 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
- 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 agencies

## 7. Lateness

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. Parents must sign their child's name and class into the late book which will then be transferred accordingly to SIMS by the office staff, the number of minutes late will be recorded.

In responding to lateness, we will of course need to take account of the 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 with 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 AIT or One Point will be notified.

School starts at 8.50 am and registers close at 9.00 am if a child arrives after 9.05 am they will be entered onto the MIS as 'U' (late after registers have closed) accounting for an absence for the morning session.

## 8. Role of the school in Monitoring/Improving Attendance

- To promote and safeguard the welfare of the children that the school comes into contact with.
- To contact parents/carers of the first day of absence to ascertain reasons for missing school
- To work with pupils to identify any barriers to good school attendance and offer support where needed
- To be an integral part of schemes and initiatives aimed at improving pupil attendance and improving punctuality.
- To liaise with teachers over the attendance of pupils and to establish early contact with parents/carers.
- To assist in the development and evaluation of strategies aimed at resolving issues relating to nonattendance and lateness.
- To assist in the speedy and effective exchange of pupil information between schools following the transfer of a pupil.
- To assist in the induction of children into the school with regard to the general ethos of the school, rules and behaviour guidelines.
- To work in partnership with pupils, parents/carers, school staff, the Local Authority, relevant agencies and support units.
- To support and motivate parents on matters relating to attendance and behaviour.
- To prepare and present reports as necessary, to maintain appropriate records and statistics.
- To assist the Head Teacher in the preparation of information relating to attendance
- To have due regard to confidentiality, child protection procedures, health and safety issues, appropriate statutory requirements and relevant policies of the Local Authority.

## 9. 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 Seaham Trinity 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 weekly Attendance Award – the class with the highest percentage attendance receive the Attendance Trophy which awarded during assembly and prominently displayed in class.

Individual certificates are awarded each term for those children who have achieved 100% attendance

1st term = Bronze Certificate

2<sup>nd</sup> Term = Silver Certificate

3<sup>rd</sup> term = Gold Certificate and special prize for achieving 100% attendance for whole academic year

Other Incentives will take place over the course of the year and will be detailed on the school website and Facebook page for parents information.

## 10. Attendance Targets

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Actual Attendance	94.2%	94.4%	95.1%	95.3%	95%
Target Attendance	95%	95%	96%	96%	96%

To enable Seaham Trinity Primary School to achieve these targets, these systems have been developed

- To provide detailed robust data on school attendance:
- The Head Teacher will regularly report to the Governors.
- Pupils whose attendance is being monitored are aware of their targets for improvement. Pupils are rewarded for meeting their targets.
- Attendance is published annually on the school profile and is also made available to all through inclusion in the school newsletter.
- 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.