

Summerhill School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

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:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [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. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all students are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive in school by 8:45 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:55 and will be kept open until 9:20. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:55 and will be kept open until 13:15.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 8:55 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Summerhill School Phone Number: (01384) 816165; Select: Option 2 to report a student absent

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Parents are encouraged to provide adequate detail, because stating 'Unwell', 'Poorly' or 'Not sure if they're unwell, I'm keeping them off to see' gives insufficient information for us to authorise the absence.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents 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 will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

For all medical appointments, please provide a copy of the appointment letter. If you bring the appointment letter to reception, we will take a copy. Alternatively, you can email a photo of the letter to attendance@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk.

3.4 Other absence

Applications for other types of absence in term time must be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

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Commented [AC1]: I think we keep it longer than that... Definitely until a student has left the school. Need to check what it says about SIMS records on our DPIA.

Commented [AC2]: Should this be 8:50?

Commented [AC3]: Should this be 8:55?

Commented [AC4]: Tweaked this bit

Commented [AC5]: Moved this into a separate section so it didn't get lost in the medical bit

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3.5 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A student who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. Failing to attend this school on time on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

3.6 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.7 Reporting to parents

Parents will be able to access weekly attendance and punctuality records via the ClassCharts App. Attendance will be reported on termly summary reports.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. Parents to wish to request a leave of absence should do so using the Leave of Absence form which is available on the school website or upon request from school reception.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Absence in order to take part in events which are optional (ie not all members of that religious body are expected to take part) cannot be authorised as religious observance.
- Traveller students 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 student is attending educational provision

4.2 Legal sanctions

Local Authorities can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. Summerhill School has a legal responsibility to inform the Local Authority of significant unauthorised absence.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Summerhill School does not receive this money.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

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Commented [AC6]: Added this line

Commented [AC7]: Added this to make it clear that the "I want to go to a conference" reason is not acceptable

Commented [AC8]: Is it really the school that fines someone?

Should it say "Local Authorities can fine parents...?"

Commented [AC9]: Added. Are you happy with the word "significant"

Commented [AC10]: added

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- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

House Competitions throughout the school year reward both excellent and improved attendance & punctuality. Personalised strategies are put in place as required. The school's Rewards Day is only open to students who have not had any recent unauthorised absence.

Commented [AC11]: tweaked wording

Commented [AC12]: added

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors student absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call the school each day a child is ill.

If a student's absence goes above 5 days in any year we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

Commented [AC13]: added "in any year"

If after contacting parents a student's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the student will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Student-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Headteacher & Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The Headteacher & SLT is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher & SLT also support other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and liaising with the Local Authority regarding fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

Commented [AC14]: tweaked to emphasis role of LA

7.3 The attendance officer & family welfare officer

The attendance officer & family welfare officer

- Monitor attendance data at the school and individual student level
- Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher & SLT
- Work with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advise the Headteacher & SLT when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Commented [AC15]: changed "Monitors" to "Monitor" (there are two of them)

7.4 House Tutors

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House tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. House Tutors also encourage a high level of attendance.

Commented [AC16]:

7.5 Office/reception staff

Office/reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed XXXXXXXX by the [XXXXXX]. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

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Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

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

Commented [AC17]: added "organised or approved"

Code	Definition	Scenario
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student 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 student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

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Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student 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 student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day