



South Hetton Primary School

Attendance Policy

This policy has been written in line with the DFE 'Working together to improve school attendance' applied from August 2024.



Attendance Key Contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
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Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

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Nicola Mayo	Head Teacher	nicola.mayo@shprimary.co.uk
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Introduction to our School Attendance Vision and Ethos

South Hetton Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

Here's what the data shows:

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Based on the research outlined above, we believe that all pupils benefit in **attainment, well-being and wider life choices** from the education we provide. Therefore, students need to attend school regularly to achieve well. The aim of our attendance policy is to set out our expectations and consistent practice to facilitate regular attendance for all pupils so that all children maximise their potential.

School endeavours to promote good attendance as part of its ethos and values since strong attendance results in pupils meeting school's over-arching aims and goals, linked to learning and developing positive dispositions. We want all children in school, so that they can access the range of experiences we offer, developing their skills, whilst encouraging them to raise their aspirations of who they can be and what they can achieve.

As a school have established an effective range of incentives and rewards which acknowledge the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils, and parents, who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. We feel that good attendance habits lead to improved independence and perseverance which will serve children well in later life.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to full-time education, suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education other than school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance, from the school.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximising pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason we are dedicated to ensuring the attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All pupils, regardless of background or ability will have access to a full-time education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Pupils will not be deprived of educational opportunities, impacting their attainment, well-being and wider life chances, by either their own absence or lateness, or that of other students.
- Children and families are supported to improve pupil attendance – working together to remove barriers to attendance and to develop support plans.
- Expectations are clear, attendance is monitored and pupils and families are supported.
- School is a place of safety and support for a pupil.
- Government guidance is followed including the management of persistent and severe absenteeism and enforcement action if required.

Policy Content at a Glance

Expectation	Pupils attend school every day on time. Maximum absence 7 days a year (means minimum 96% attendance)	School has systems in place to support attendance. - School ethos - Monitoring procedures - Incentives and rewards - Inclusive curriculum
Monitoring	School monitors every pupils' attendance daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and annually.	School systems in place to support attendance. - Communication with home (Phone calls, letters, school meetings, termly attendance data) - Governor over-sight
Support	This is the focus of the work in school on attendance. School wants to support pupils and families and we will listen to what barriers there are and work to remove them, working together to resolve issues. Parents are required to engage with school. School will help parents to access support for out of school barriers to attendance.	School systems in place. - Meetings - Policies and actions on behaviour, SEND, medical conditions, bullying, pastoral, mental health, well-being, use of resources etc. - Home-school communication - Pastoral support, counselling. - Working with support services
Persistent or severe absence	If all other support fails and absence persists, school may have to formalise plans to support attendance. This may include the local authority team with parenting contracts or education supervision orders.	- Working together with families and support services - Meetings, support and action plans.
Enforcement	If support is not working statutory intervention or prosecution may be required to protect a pupil's right to an education. Fixed penalty notices may be used for failure to ensure that a child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered (eg. unauthorised absences including unauthorised school holiday)	- Local Authority involvement.

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

As outlined above, school is determined to ensure children learn well and develop positive dispositions and habits. Good attendance is promoted and encouraged through a range of rewards and incentives. Attendance percentages are shared via the school newsletter and website, at termly parents' meetings and also annual reports to parents will contain a record of individual pupils' attendance, meaning parents are aware of the importance placed on attendance and school's determination to eradicate poor and sporadic attendance.

Unless there is a clear reason for low attendance, school expects pupils to attend regularly, with no episodes of poor attendance and/or patterns of repeated absence for particular days or periods of time. To achieve this, school has built a curriculum that provides a wealth of positive experiences and opportunities. This is communicated to parents.

2. Attendance data

All of the procedures and steps we take to improve attendance are either set by the government, or have been agreed with the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Team. The government recognises attendance as good if a child is at school for 96% of the time or more. This means approximately 180 days out of a possible 190 school days. The government recognises attendance as poor if a child's attendance drops below 90%. This means 170 days or less out of a possible 190 school days. The government classes this as persistent absence. In other words, a child only has to be absent for 7 school days per term to fall below 90%. Schools are directed by the government to take action when a child's attendance drops below 90%.

In order to promote good attendance, school tracks the attendance of all children on a regular basis using the benchmarks outlined above. This is done through:

-10 week rolling attendance, including across school years, identifying patterns of improvement or decline. School endeavours to intervene where there are indication that pupils are at risk of triggering the criteria above for Persistent absence.

-Half termly attendance, across a school year, to identify those children who are at risk of attendance issues within a particular school year.

-Termly and yearly attendance to ensure that children are accessing education consistently over time and to determine patterns of concern, term by term, year by year, and then take action to prevent or ensure they are not repeated.

3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

The school uses its online data system, Arbour, to analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than expected. This is to ensure parents are fully aware of any concerns with their child's attendance and to offer support to improve in future. Initial letters will be used to notify parents of a concern; if issues persist then further correspondence will be sent and meetings arranged to discuss reasons for poor attendance and to establish targets and support for improving attendance in the future. School will always look to support children and families in the first instance.

4. Facilitate support

If, following the school's attempts to intervene, there is no significant improvement and no satisfactory reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or a parent has not co-operated with the school's attempts to improve the attendance, the school are required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for additional action and support.

In cases where children and families are cooperating with school, but attendance has not improved, and barriers are an issue to improvement, school will look to make onward Early Help referrals, with parental consent.

5. Formalise support

In the event that support from both school and outside agencies is not bringing about the desired impact and change, consideration will be given to parental contracts, with the possibility of an Education supervision order if non-engagement

persists. It is important to note that, at this point, school may determine that poor attendance constitutes neglect and referral to social care may be made.

6. Enforce

Parents need to make sure their children attend school regularly and on time. Because parents are responsible for this duty in law, they will be breaking the law if they do not do this and there are no good reasons for missing school. As outlined in previous sections, the School and Local Authority want to help parents if an issue with attendance is identified. However, if parents fail to engage and/or attendance does not get better because the help and support offered had not been accepted, the Council, on behalf of the school, may issue a warning notice, Penalty Notice or request attendance at an interview to determine whether the law has been broken and/or a safeguarding issue exists. If court is required and a parent found guilty of an offence, a fine could be issued: £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 to consider a community order or up to 3 months in prison.

General / frequently asked questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why your child needs to be absent from school. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Please note that Head Teachers are unable to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation **would not** constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and may be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Attendance and absence management

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

Attendance at school is non-negotiable and it is essential to support a pupil's attainment, well-being and development. High standards of attendance are promoted as part of the school's ethos and supported with incentives and rewards.

- Rewards given for weekly class attendance – the highest attending class or most improved class will be recognised in assembly.
- Half-termly certificates will be awarded for 96% attendance and above every half-term and for improved attendance.
- Annual attendance will be recognised and rewarded for 96% attendance and above.
- Dojo points are given weekly to pupils who have been to school every day that week. Additional class points will be given where a class has collectively attended for 100% or 96%+ each week.

Rewards will be used sensitively and without discrimination – consideration will be given to those pupils who have additional barriers to attendance.

Communication

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

School hours and registration – punctuality

1. School opens its doors at 8:40am and finishes at 15:05pm (15:15pm for Nursery)
2. Pupils are expected to be in school and in the classroom for 08:50 ready for registration in the morning, with registers closing at 9:05am. In the afternoon, registers close at 1:00pm for KS1, and 1:15pm for KS2.
3. Pupils arriving between 08:55 and 09:05 in the morning will be marked as late. Please let school know the reason for the lateness. Missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class.
4. Registers close at 09:05 and pupils arriving after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
5. Registration is recorded on Arbor – the school's electronic management system.
6. Persistent lateness will result in a letter home requesting parents / carers to make an improvement to the situation.
7. If lateness continues parents / carers will be asked to come to school for a meeting to discuss the barriers to punctuality and what support the school can provide.
8. Continued lateness may result in the involvement with the Local Authority.

Absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from school.

On day 1 of an absence - parents must contact school to explain the reason for absence. Parents must **contact school every day their child is absent**. This may be done by phoning the school office and speaking to:

- Mrs Elizabeth Britton, Office Manager, on 0191 526 1662 or
- Mrs Christine Winship on 0191 526 1662

or by leaving a message on the school answer machine or through the home - school electronic communication system - Arbor.

If absence continues to 3 days or more, even if a parent has made regularly daily contact with school, we will get in touch to offer support and to enquire about the pupil's well-being as an important member of our school community.

(Pursuing) Absence without reason

As result of the new DfE attendance guidance, all absence must be accounted for within 5 days. In order to achieve this school will use the steps outlined below.

1. We will make contact by text initially and then by phone, if no reason is given for absence. Please note that this is also a safeguarding procedure. If you miss a call from school, please phone back.
2. If an absence continues *without adequate explanation* we have a safeguarding duty to make contact with the pupil / family and if necessary, make a welfare home visit. If the absence continues and we are unable to ascertain your child's whereabouts we may request support from services to make a welfare visit.

Long-term absence

If a pupil has an operation or an illness which will require them to be absent longer-term from school, we will work with the family to provide additional support to continue their education until they can return to school. This is likely to be alternative provision. The return to school will be managed / phased as appropriate to the situation. If a pupil has been absent for any other reason for any length of time school will work with the family to provide support to the pupil returning to school.

Absence Monitoring

As outlined above, all pupils' attendance is monitored daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and annually. Attendance is a key factor in a pupil's attainment within school, well-being and an influence on future life choices. Attendance is monitored so that we can identify, as early as possible, if attendance is falling for a pupil and put the appropriate support in place. Parents will be informed every term of their child's attendance.

1. If a pupil's attendance falls below 96% at any time during the academic year we will contact home, usually sending a letter to make parents and carers aware of the situation. If any **support is required please contact school**.
2. New guidance which came in to effect in August 2024 means that 5 days/10 sessions unauthorised absence in a ten-week school period may result in a fixed penalty notice.
3. If attendance does not improve, parents and carers may receive a letter requesting they provide medical evidence for any future absences. This is based on a concern over the frequency and regularity of absences. Parents and carers can get in touch with school at any point to discuss absences, medical concerns etc. and if there is any **support the school can provide**.
4. If attendance does not improve you may be requested to attend a school meeting to discuss any barriers to attendance and **any support that the school can provide**. Attendance below 90% is regarded as persistent absenteeism and parents and carers will be asked to a meeting to prevent pupils from falling into this category, and to agree a support and action plan.
5. If attendance does not improve and absence falls below 90% (persistent absentee) and towards 50% (severe absentee) the local authority will get involved to review the **support** required and enforcement action may be taken. If attendance is very low then school will treat this as a safeguarding matter.

Leave of Absence

1. **If you are planning a leave of absence from school you must complete the Leave of absence form and return it to school irrespective of whether the absence may or may not be authorised.** This informs the school that the child will be absent and therefore **safeguarding measures** will not be activated when the child does not arrive at school.
2. Only in exceptional circumstances can a leave of absence be granted.
3. Applications must be made in writing 2 weeks before the requested date for the absence.
4. Requests are made on the Leave of absence form available from the school office or on the website.
5. The request must be made by the parent or carer who the pupil usually lives with and submitted to the Head Teacher. All parents and career with responsibility for the pupil must sign the form.
6. The Head Teacher will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. However, the government states that a leave of absence **should not be granted** unless the headteacher believes the circumstances are exceptional and it is therefore unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.
7. Parents and carers with responsibility for the pupil will receive a letter detailing whether the leave of absence has been granted.
8. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. The days granted will be marked as an authorised absence.

9. If a leave of absence is not granted and a pupil is taken out of school the absence will be marked as unauthorised. This may lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice for failure to ensure that a child of compulsory school age regularly attends school where they are registered.
10. **Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.**

Leave of Absence in Term Time

As outlined above, Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually, taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Medical conditions and Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Every pupil has a right to a full-time education and high attendance is expected for all pupils. However, we are aware that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. This can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or special education needs and/ or disabilities. All pupils have the same right to an education and the school has the same attendance ambition for all pupils. However, when working with families to improve attendance, school will be mindful of the barriers pupils face and put additional support in place. This can include:

- Reasonable adjustments
- Individual health care plans, where needed, if a pupil has a long-term medical condition.

- Considering additional support from external partners (local authority or health services)
- Working with parents to develop specific support plans.
- Where appropriate, Education Health and Care Plans.

Pupils with medical conditions will be contacted annually to check that the information the school has is accurate and that, where appropriate, individual health plans are in place. In support of this, parents are asked to provide school with copies of medical documentations and letters relating to the medical condition.

Medical appointments

Families are encouraged to schedule interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day. A medical appointment is an authorised absence. If an appointment is in school hours pupils are expected to miss the minimum school time possible to attend the appointment – this may mean attending school before the appointment and / or return to school after the appointment whenever possible. Appointment cards or notifications (email or phone) need to be shown to school to authorise a pupil leaving school during the school day.

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Punctuality:

Registration time is at 8:50am at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school after 8:55am then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at 9:05am and any children arriving after this time will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (Arbor).

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions

A letter will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Head will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to pupils.

If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with Head Teacher for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality

Then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

Pupils with specific needs

Pupils with specific needs will receive the support they need on an individual basis to ensure their attendance is good. All decision will take into latest guidance and legislation.

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Document History Log:

Author of document:	Nicola Mayo Tim Cassap	Job role:	Headteacher Associate Headteacher
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