

Attendance Procedures

School attendance is subject to various education laws and these school attendance procedures are written to reflect the laws and guidance produced by the Department for Education and the Local Authority (Cornwall or Plymouth depending on where the child normally resides).

Section 1: Rationale

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all students and endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome through the embodiment of our TEAM values. Parents and students play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is the school's duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training
- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%.

Section 2: Operating the procedures

Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parent/carer and the child.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance through our website and letters, as well as contact with home
- report to parents/carers on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- set targets for the school and individuals for attendance
- run events when parents, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels
- have clear trigger points that may escalate to the next stage as detailed below.

Informal stage

All staff are expected to challenge the majority of student absence from school to achieve the wish that students attend school 100% of the time.

Pastoral staff, the attendance team and tutors will always try and offer support wherever possible. For example, they could try a positive attendance tracker, or they could help identify some worries the child has with some solutions to help rectify any issues.

Formal Stage

Stage 1 – Student percentage falls below 95% - concern letter sent to parents/carers

Stage 2 – Student percentage falls below 93% - Second concern letter sent to parents/carers.

Parent/carers may be contacted by the schools Attendance Manager or Administrator at this point.

Stage 3 – Student percentage falls below 90% - student becomes a Persistent Absentee. The Local Authority Education Welfare Service may proceed with legal action. Parent/carer may be invited in to complete an attendance contract. This may involve the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), Head of Year (HoY) and/or a member of the attendance team.

Responsibilities of students

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time ready for morning line up. The whistle blows at 08:35am, at which point students should line up with their tutor group. On days of extreme weather, students should still arrive by 08:35am but can continue into the building and go straight into their tutor rooms.
- Go to all registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the reception desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence (and subsequent days if required) by calling 01752 843715
- discuss with the tutor/HoY any planned absences well in advance and apply for these on an Absence Request Form (available from school)
- support the school in aiming for 100% attendance from their child each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and every subsequent day of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments (these may not be authorised if it is for non-urgent appointments)
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance e.g. service family, family funeral (absences are rarely authorised).

What to do if my child is absent?

First day of absence

A student not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a student is absent the parent/carer must:

- contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- contact the school EVERY DAY the student is absent unless medical evidence has been produced explaining a longer-term absence from school with clear dates of return
- send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence which should be handed to the child's tutor to be kept on file.

If a student is absent, the school will:

- telephone or text home on the first day of absence if the school has not received a phonecall from home – this is because the school has a duty to ensure a student’s safety as well as regular school attendance
- invite parent/carer in to discuss the situation with the attendance officer and/or pastoral or senior leaders if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Council Education Welfare Officers if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Second day of absence

Parent/carers are required to contact school every day of a child’s absence. The school will continue to try and contact parent/carer on this day.

Third day of absence

Please note: If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence, the school may have to start safeguarding procedures. The school will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the student, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family. The case may also be referred to our school Attendance Team who may attend the home address to see if contact can be made. The school reserves the right to call the Police for a welfare check to be carried out.

Five days of absence

The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive sessions. If a student is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority may be notified that the child is *at risk of missing*. Children’s Services (MARU/MASH) staff or Police may visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year. It is the parents/carers responsibility to inform the school of any changes to contact numbers and addresses.

Continued or ongoing absence

If a student misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as a *persistent absentee*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a student by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, the school monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data may be shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

Section 3

Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If a student is late, they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information as well as causing disruption to the lesson for others.

The school day begins at 08:35am and all **students are expected to be in school at this time**. Morning registration is at 08:40am and it closes at 9:10am. The school reserves the right to bring forward the time of registration closing if students are continually late despite warnings.

- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with the Department for Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a student is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded *M*. Please be advised that, where possible, medical appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Additional codes used nationally can be found in Section 5.

If students accrue 3 lates in a half-term period, they will be issued with a 30 minutes afterschool detention. Failure to attend this, will escalate to a one hour detention after school. Failure to attend this, will result in a full day reset.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other students. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and could be subject to legal action** (see Section 6 for further detail).

Section 4

Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (Appendix A) in advance and before making any travel arrangements. The school reserves the right to only authorise one session for medical appointments during school hours unless the appointment can be proven to be an exceptional circumstance. If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and may result with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and the school expects parents/carers to help the school by not taking children out during school time.

Section 5

Understanding types of absence

Students are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised

- unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes (but is not an exhaustive list):

- parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily
- to go shopping
- their own or family birthdays
- to look after siblings
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorized Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorized absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorized absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorized absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorized absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorized absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorized absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorized absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorized absence

O	Unauthorized absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorized absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorized absence
S	Study leave	Authorized absence
T	Traveler absence	Authorized absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorized absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils. Includes absences caused by COVID	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Section 6

The Department for Education produce guidance that summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, Headteachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils and parents. These requirements are contained in:

The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

Section 7

Various situations not covered above and FAQs from parents/carers.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. The school will be more than happy to offer a meeting with your child's Head of Year or tutor to see if there is something we can support with to encourage improved attendance. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their

absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

We recommend that you contact your child's tutor immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, perceived bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional (your child's GP for example).

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

I'm considering home schooling my child, what should I do?

We truly believe that the vast majority of children should be in school. Whilst it is the parent/carer's legal right to choose Elective Home Education, we will almost always dissuade against this move and would encourage parents/carers to discuss any potential concerns, or reasons why they may be considering EHE, with the child's Head of Year, a member of the Safeguarding Team, or someone from the Attendance Team.

My child is leaving Saltash Community School, what do I need to do?

If your child is leaving our school (other than when leaving at the end of Year 11 or Year 13, parents are asked to:

- 1 Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing otherwise we are not allowed to remove a child from roll.
- 2 If students leave and we do not have the above information, then your child may be considered to be a *child missing education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services (MARU/MASH), the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

We are a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and/or Showman family and wish to travel.

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the *T* code. If you intend not to return to Saltash Community School, please communicate this to the school as soon as possible.

Study leave

We believe that pupils/students' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. No study leave will be granted during this period therefore, and students will be expected to attend school in the usual way.

Teenage pregnancy

Support will be directed to keeping a student in school and, wherever possible, her return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A student who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence may be treated as unauthorised.