



Attendance Policy

Date: January 2024

Review Due: September 2024

Reviewed Annually

Ethos and Aims

At Saxon Way Primary School, we believe that punctuality and good attendance are essential for all pupils, to ensure they can benefit fully from the Proud Traditions, Wide Horizons and High Achievement that Griffin Schools offer. We aim to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any barriers to this are identified and acted upon as soon as possible. The school aims at 100% attendance for pupils and promotes good punctuality now and for the future.

Parent and carers should be aware that if they fail to ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually they may be prosecuted under section 444 / 444 1a Education Act 1996 by the Local Authority.

Regular and punctual attendance provides the means for children to take advantage of all educational opportunities. It ensures continuity, promotes responsibility and a purpose which can be carried into adult life. A pupil who is late or absent may cause disruption to others when they arrive. They are likely to have missed the instructions to the lesson or a new concept, thus putting themselves at a disadvantage.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents, Carers and Pupils

Parents/carers of children of compulsory school age are legally required to ensure that they receive fulltime education. Parents/carers are also responsible for informing the school of any absence as soon as possible; the school expects to be contacted on each day of the absence. This can be done by telephoning the school – 01634 336 720, visiting the school office, email - office@saxonway-gst.org or by written note. The reason for absence and when the child is expected to return to school should be stated. Pupils are expected to arrive at school punctually. Parents are expected to notify the school of changes to contact details and if there is a change in home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child.

Persistent lateness can be seen as absence and is managed in the same way as poor attendance by the school. Parents should ensure that their child arrives at school before the morning session begins, prepared to begin the school day. Pupils should be in their classrooms by 8.55am.

Morning registration times are 8.45am – 8:55am for both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils. Pupils arriving from 8:56am to 9:25am will be marked as late. Should a child arrive after this time they will be given an unauthorised absence mark.

Afternoon registration time for Key Stage 1 pupils is 12.30pm. The registers close at 12.45pm. Afternoon registration time for Key Stage 2 pupils is 1.30pm. The registers close at 1.45pm.

If families decide to remove their child from school or to send their child to a different school they must inform Saxon Way Primary School as soon as possible in writing.

Promoting Attendance

Saxon Way Primary will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement, newsletters,

rewards, and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents, and the child.

The School will:

- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality, using newsletters and other communications to parents; making attendance a high priority.
- Employ a key member of staff with responsibility for monitoring, improving, and evaluating school attendance. At Saxon Way Primary, the attendance lead role is fulfilled by Angela Vidler.
- The Senior Leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance to school is the Head of School, Jen Vidler-Ironmonger.
- Encourage parents to fully support the policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education.
- Encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Celebrate good attendance.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored, using SIMs registration system, and absences are followed up promptly in accordance with this policy.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies the SEASS, Attendance service purchased by the school, Medway Council Attendance Team, Medway Special Educational Needs (SEND), School Health, Early Help/Family Solutions, Social Services etc).
- Meet the legal requirements with the use of correct codes for absence, with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence. (DFE guidance)
- Ensure that all staff comply with the school policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality.
- Ensure attendance information is available for Governors and parents.
- Share good practice with the local authority and other schools.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle back to school after a long absence. It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils. Include details on how your school will do this.
- Liaise with the Local Authority (LA) and other relevant agencies promptly for those children whose health needs do not allow them to attend school (See Supporting Children with Medical Conditions policy for further details.) (Insert link to the school's policy)
- Make every effort to meet the individual needs of the pupils with SEND.
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere;
- Provide a safe learning environment;
- Provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's/carer's concerns;
- Contact parents/carers on the first day of absence when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain absence;
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers. Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence.

- In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body will be required.
- Inform parents/carers of the % attendance of their child/children at parents evening and in their annual report;
- Make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly;
- Send letters to parents highlighting falling or poor attendance.
- Meet regularly with the Attendance Advisory Officer (AAOs) through SEASS to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality;
- Invite parents/carers in for Attendance Clinics to discuss reasons for absence and to offer support to improve attendance.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the AAOs. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by AAOs may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice or parental prosecution.
The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is currently £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the fine may result in the Local Authority prosecuting.
- Notify AAOs after 5 (10 sessions) days unexplained absence.
- Request medical evidence after the 3rd day of any consecutive absence
- Request medical evidence for persistent absentees

Leave of Absence

Saxon Way Primary can refer parents/carers to Medway Local Authority for prosecution. Saxon Way Primary do not make this decision lightly and the attendance team will have pursued all reasonable attempts to improve a child's attendance before this decision is made.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may consider:

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

There are three types of penalty notices that can be issued: -

- Holidays
- 10 sessions of unauthorised sessions in a 6-week period.
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

The 1996 Education Act clearly states, "If any child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, the parents/carer of the child shall be guilty of an offence". The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 also introduced the use of penalty notices as an additional sanction to address the problem of poor school attendance. Failure to ensure your child's regular attendance at school may result in prosecution in the courts or a penalty notice being issued.

In the event of 10 or more unauthorised sessions recorded, a referral may be made to the Local Authority. If your child incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a six-school week

period, a penalty notice may be issued to each parent/carer for each child, resulting in a £60 fine, increasing to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice, within 28 days, will result in a court prosecution for your child's irregular school attendance.

In the event of 10 or more unauthorised holiday sessions recorded, a referral may be made to the Local Authority. If your child incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised leave of absence, a penalty notice may be issued to each parent/carer for each child, resulting in a £60 fine, increasing to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice, within 28 days, will result in a court prosecution for your child's irregular school attendance.

The school can approve absence. The school does not have to accept the parent/carers offered explanation as a valid cause for absence. There are certain circumstances outlined in the DfE guidelines that the school categorises as authorised absence. The guidelines are based on the needs of the community and the kinds of reasons parent/carers may wish their children to take leave of absence. The school follows the guidelines for authorising absence as listed below:

- Illness, emergency medical, dental and hospital appointments. It is expected that routine check-ups, including hospital review appointments should, as far as possible, be made during holiday periods or after school hours.
- Family bereavements
- Attending a religious observance
- Off-site activities (These fall into two categories; educational visits or individual activities e.g. an examination)
- Exclusion (Excluded pupils are treated as authorised absence. They will remain on the school's register unless permanently excluded when the situation has to be reviewed)

Saxon Way Primary School does not authorise a leave of absence for extended periods during term times e.g. extended holidays or visiting family abroad.

Medical Evidence

From the third day of absence, medical evidence will be required and a return to school date. If medical evidence is not provided, the school will inform the Attendance Advisory Officer (AAO), who may arrange a home visit. If a child's attendance becomes a cause for concern, the parents/carers will be invited to attend an attendance clinic to discuss any issues with the School Attendance Team and the school's Attendance Advisory Officer.

Holidays during Term Time

We operate the DfE zero tolerance approach to extended holidays and we notify parents/carers of this so that they can make an informed decision about removing children from school for this reason. We refer children with unauthorised extended holiday absence to the local authority who arranges for fixed penalty fines to be issued. The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the fine may result in the Local Authority prosecuting.

An unauthorised absence referral will be made to the AAO if, in any 6 weeks, 10 unauthorised sessions have been recorded.

Breakfast Club

Saxon Way runs an established Breakfast Club. The aim of the club is to promote punctuality and good attendance. Breakfast Club may be a useful option for families where there are barriers to punctual attendance. Breakfast Club is run by trained school staff and is open from 7:30am.

Late Collection of Children

Persistent late collections are monitored and the school attempts to support parents/carers with this by helping to develop strategies to improve their punctuality in collecting their children.

There are a number of free after school clubs available until 4.15pm, but these must be booked in advance.

Persistent late collections will be discussed with Medway Children's Social Care.

School Procedure

The school monitors attendance and lateness weekly. Issues relating to pupil attendance are followed up during regular review periods. Attendance is a high priority and is celebrated weekly in assembly with the presentation of our Attendance Bear. 100% attendance is celebrated termly.

The Department for Education expects a child to have an annual school attendance of not less than 96.4%. By working together, we that every child achieves that goal

Head of School: Jen Vidler-Ironmonger
Attendance Advisory Officer: Lauren Allen

Attendance admin officer: Angela Vidler