



'Celebrating Learning Together'

Shebbear Community School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy adopted on: 20th May 2019

Reviewed: April 2022

Date of next review: Spring 2023

Rationale

Shebbear Community School recognises the need for, and the benefit of, regular full-time attendance of all its pupils. The staff will work with pupils and families to encourage and promote full attendance and prompt timekeeping .

Attendance targets are set annually; these are agreed by the Headteacher and the Local Authority and reported back to the Governing Body.

Introduction

The policy has been informed by either statutory requirements, as referred in the Education Acts and Regulations, or by government advice, Council policy and Ofsted expectations.

Attendance at school is clearly an important pre-requisite for a successful and fulfilling school career. Prolonged absence, irregular attendance and lack of punctuality can all serve to undermine educational achievement and result in considerable long-term disadvantage to children and young people. Pupils who do not attend regularly may be placed at considerable risk and, in some cases, may be drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

It is recognised that pupils may have difficulties attending regularly for a variety of complex and often inter-related reasons. These may include:

- The pupils' educational, social and emotional development;
- The pupils' medical history;
- Social, economic and cultural considerations within the family and community;
- Factors operating within the school;
- Availability of appropriate support from statutory and voluntary agencies within the community.

It follows that Devon County Council, schools, parents/carers, pupils and the community at large need to work collaboratively in order to maximise attendance. A positive approach is needed which promotes access to education within an ethos which values learners, promotes equal opportunities and encourages the involvement of pupils and their parents/carers.

Legal Framework

Shebbear Community School works with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) and Devon County Council (DCC) to support the enforcement of the legal framework as defined in The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5) and The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016. There are responsibilities on:

- Parents to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, to send them to school regularly once they are on roll at a school.
- DCC to provide education and to enforce attendance.
- Schools to register attendance and notify the EWO of irregular attendance, unauthorised absence or any pupil who has unauthorised attendance of 10 days or more in any school year.

Pupil Attendance at Shebbear Community School

Parental Support:

The role of the parent/carer in supporting the school's efforts to secure high levels of attendance is critical. At Shebbear Community School we maintain close, effective and positive links with our parents and ensure that they are contacted at an early stage to deal with unexplained absences of their child. Parents/carers are expected to contact the school on the first day of absence to inform the school the reason for the non attendance of their child.

Pupils:

We expect pupils of all ages to contribute to securing and maintaining good attendance. We ask pupils to:

- Listen to their parents/carers and the school;
- Communicate with parents/carers and the school about any worries or anxieties;
- Go to bed at an appropriate time and come to school on time and be ready to learn.

Unauthorised Absence and First Day Call Procedure:

On the first day of absence, we expect parents to make contact with school. As a school, we have a responsibility to safeguard our pupils, therefore a phone call will be made by the office staff if there has been no communication from parents/carers.

1. Class registers are completed and absent pupils are marked.

2. Pupils arriving late must enter through the main door and sign in at the school office. The pupil's attendance is updated on the register
3. Voicemail and emails are checked for communication from parents regarding absence.
4. Office staff check with teachers that those marked as absent have not since arrived.
5. Office staff check if any siblings of the absent pupil are present.
6. At around 9:30am, the school will attempt to make contact with those adults on the absent pupil's contact list, starting with the home phone and working down the list. If no answer, a message is left if an answer phone/voice mail facility is available or a text or email may be sent.
7. If no response has been received, check with present siblings (if applicable) if reason for absence is known.
8. Office staff will then inform the Head Teacher of any absences not accounted for.
9. The Head Teacher carries out a risk assessment (see appendix 1)
10. If no contact is made after all steps are completed, and staff have suitable reason for concern about the safety of a child, the appropriate outside agencies will be contacted (e.g. Services working with the family, such as the EWO, Devon Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH team) or police.

If pupils are persistently absent with no satisfactory explanation then this matter will be passed to the Local Authority through the EWO.

Punctuality:

Regular lateness can have a detrimental effect on:

- The child's learning
- The learning of others
- The child's sense of belonging
- The child's behaviour

Children are expected to be in class at 9.00 a.m. each morning. If a child has not registered by 9.05 a.m. they are deemed to be late and this will be recorded in the register. Parents will also need to sign the late book which is kept in the school office which is where they should report to if they are late for school.

The close of the register is 9.30 a.m. and after this time it is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Lateness tends not to be a particular problem in the afternoon, however children who arrive at school (for example, those who have had a medical appointment in the morning) after 1.00 p.m. are deemed to be late and the register is closed 10 minutes after registration in each key stage (meaning pupils arriving after this time are deemed to be absent without authorisation)

Punctuality is monitored by the school and the parents of children who are persistently late will:

- Receive a series of letters from the Head Teacher confirming the school's concerns;

- A formal meeting with the Head Teacher as necessary;
- If no improvement is made the matter will be reported to the EWO.

Home School Links:

Monitoring and encouraging attendance is an integral part of the class teacher's role along with the Head Teacher, Senior Leaders and office staff. When concerns about attendance are identified (through regular monitoring by the school) parents will be contacted initially by letter and then, if attendance has still not improved, parents will be asked to meet the Head Teacher or a Senior Leader to discuss the concerns and strategies to resolve the problems. If it is felt to be useful the EWO may be invited to this meeting. Similarly parents/carers are encouraged to contact the school to resolve difficulties with attendance and punctuality.

Strategies to be used when tackling the early signs of absenteeism:

Shebbear Community School aims to adopt early intervention strategies when dealing with poor attendance or punctuality. The primary strategy is to develop a regular dialogue with parents/carers and pupils to ensure the school is fully aware of the issues that may be contributing to poor attendance and punctuality. The school with the help of the EWO will aim to put strategies in place to address these issues.

Specific procedures used by the school to identify patterns of poor attendance:

- Monitoring authorised absences – excessive numbers of authorised absences such as illness will need following up by school staff;
- Monitoring patterns of lateness – are parents/carers aware that the child is regularly late?;
- Identifying patterns of absence – are children absent on particular days e.g P.E. or swimming days?

Monitoring Procedures:

- 1) The Head Teacher will have overall responsibility for monitoring attendance registers.
- 2) The EWO will visit the school at least twice a year to monitor the attendance policy and marking of registers.
- 3) Attendance figures are submitted to Devon County Council and Department for Education (DfE) as part of the national and local monitoring of attendance.

Marking the attendance register:

Each register must, by law, be marked at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. Class teachers are responsible for marking the register accurately and on time. Termly and annual totals have to be reported to the DfE.

It is very important that registers are taken promptly after the lunchtime break so all pupils are accounted for.

Recording reasons for absence in the registers:

All reasons for absence must be recorded in the register. The various codes used to record absence are:

/ Present (AM)

\ Present (PM)

L Late (before registers close at 9.10 a.m.)

U Late (after registers close at 9.10 a.m.)

H Family holiday. To be agreed in advance by the Headteacher.

F Extended family holiday (agreed)

G Extended family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)

I Illness (not medical or dental appointments) (sub-coded to ill or positive case of Covid)

M Medical or dental absence. School must be given a written explanation of absence.

B Educated off site

C Other authorised circumstances as agreed by the Headteacher, e.g. family funeral

D Dual registration (attending another establishment as well as our school)

E Excluded

J Interview

N No reason yet provided for absence

O Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code)

P Approved sporting activity

R Religious observation – only permissible if 48 hours notice is given.

T Traveller absence

V Educational visit or trip

Y Enforced closure

The class teacher should only record present or not present. Codes are added by the school administrator.

Attendance Targets:

The DfE expect children to attend at least 96% of the time. Each year, the school sets its own attendance target. This will be monitored and reported upon to the

Governing Body. The Head Teacher and EWO will meet regularly to monitor data, discuss individuals and agree action.

The school positively reinforces good attendance and punctuality by:

- Having attendance awards for pupils and classes with good attendance;
- Dealing with bullying immediately and firmly (see Positive Behaviour policy);
- Providing SEN Support Plans for those children with special educational needs or medical needs;
- Liaising with appropriate agencies where support for parents is needed;
- Providing Pastoral Support Programmes (PSPs) for those children at risk of exclusion;
- Regular newsletter items on good attendance.

Extended leave from school:

Amendments to the 2006 regulations (which came in to force on the 1st September 2013) now remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that 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.

Therefore holidays will not be permitted during term time and, should parents take their children out of school for a holiday, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Such absences will be reported to the school's EWO who may, in consultation with the school, decide to issue a fixed penalty notice.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (updated in September 2013) levy penalty payments of £60 per parent per child which should be paid within 21 days. This sum doubles to £120 per parent per child if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay this sum may lead to a summons from a magistrate's court.

However we recognise there may be exceptional circumstances which can be considered by the Head Teacher for leave during term time, for example, a family illness or bereavement necessitating time away.

Statutory regulations demand that parents must make this request in writing to the Headteacher.

Each request will be considered individually and various factors will be taken into account such as:

- The child's attendance history;
- Efforts have been made to minimise the number of school days taken.

Please note that exceptional leave will NOT be granted:

- To those with poor attendance;
- During school examination and assessment periods;

- When the cost of leave is cited as a reason.

If the children do not return by the agreed date (contained in the letter of request and the Head Teacher's authorisation) then following a further 10 days period **the child can be removed from the school roll and referred to the EWO.**

If there are extenuating circumstances which prevent return on the planned date it is essential that parents/carers make every effort to contact school and explain the reason for the continued absence.

Persistent Absence

When children's attendance falls below 90% they are regarded as having persistent absence. As a school we aim to keep the numbers with this level of absence as low as possible and certainly not above 2% of our pupil population. The school monitors the children who are at risk of having persistent absence in liaison with the EWO. The parents of children whose attendance falls below or close to 90% are written to by the Head Teacher. If the attendance rate fails to rise over the next 4 to 6 weeks then the EWO will contact the parents to offer advice.

Parents of pupils with low attendance may also be asked to provide medical evidence for each absence. When pupil attendance does not improve sufficiently (in consultation with the KPW) then an attendance panel will be arranged.

Attendance and punctuality form part of the school's ongoing pupil progress tracking. Teachers will report attendance concerns to senior leaders particularly when it is having an impact on achievement. Senior Leaders will take this matter up with the parents involved including pupils who are in receipt of the pupil premium.

School Refusal

When a pupil first presents with school refusal, the school will work with the child and parents to put the following strategies into place:

- Taking early action on non-attendance (e.g. meeting and sharing information with parents);
- Providing extra support from staff, e.g. Pastoral Support Worker;
- Looking into factors that could contribute to absence (e.g. bullying, SEND issues) and making reasonable adjustments where needed (such as extra support in class; intervention programmes, social skills groups and allocating a buddy to provide peer support.)

If, after trialling these strategies, the child's attendance continues to be a problem, then the school will make a referral to the EWO, who will provide further support for the family. Ultimately it is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child attends school and the school is obliged to follow persistence absence procedures, as outlined earlier in this document.

The role of Devon County Council:

Devon County Council supports schools and parents in the area of attendance by means of the Early Intervention and Prevention Service. The EWO may follow up referrals by:

- Communicating with parents/carers by letter or phone;
- Seeing a pupil in school;
- Seeing pupil and parent/carers in school;
- Arranging home visits;
- Liaison/referral to other professionals/agencies.

The outcome of any intervention is communicated back to school. The EWO may, in extreme cases, consider the use of legal action in relation to school non-attendance.

Covid 19:

The pandemic of 2020 and the ongoing impact of Covid has affected attendance at school. Infection rates continue to be relatively high and while we are beginning to 'live with Covid' it does still have an impact on attendance. A Covid outbreak within the school can have a highly detrimental effect on the attendance of both individual pupils and the school as a whole.

The school will continue to follow the advice and guidance of PHE, DfE and DCC. This will dictate our ongoing policy when children test positive for Covid or are showing symptoms. Parents/carers are encouraged to liaise with the school so a sensible course of action can be taken.

In normal circumstances, pupils living in homes where others have tested positive for Covid do not have to isolate and therefore miss school.

Pupils who are absent from school (as a result of Covid) and are well enough to do so, will be expected to undertake home learning set by the school. This will be set through Google Classroom or Class Dojo. Where possible, pupils may be able to join live lesson streamed from the classroom. Please see the Remote Learning Strategy for more details:

<http://www.shebbear-pri.devon.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/Remote-Learning-strategy.update.22.pdf>

When analysing attendance data, the school will take into account any absences for Covid but, it will not be used as an excuse for overall poor attendance. The school will separate Covid and non-Covid related absences when considering further measures such as referring to the EWO. The school will continue to look for patterns of attendance over an extended period.

The school will continue to remind parents and carers of the importance of good attendance and the need to ensure pupils do not miss school unnecessarily.

This policy will be reviewed by staff and governors on an annual basis.

Signed Chairman of Governing Body

Appendix 1

Risk Assessment of the need for Emergency Contact in Unexpected Absences

No apparent risk: There is no apparent risk of danger to the child. This may be appropriate for children who we have reason to believe are absent from school but not at harm due to previous patterns of behaviour or information from other people.

Low or medium risk: The risk of harm to the child is assessed as a possible but minimal risk **OR** the risk of harm to the child is assessed as likely but not serious. This may be relevant for those children where there are no additional vulnerabilities, however, the school has minimal contact information and making parental contact is always difficult.

High risk: The risk of serious harm to the child is assessed as very likely. This would be relevant for children already considered vulnerable. This may be due to risk of neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Also consider child sexual exploitation and Prevent, in addition to protected characteristics; mental health, forced marriage, honour based violence, trafficking, and female genital mutilation. This may also be relevant for those children where the absence and lack of ability to make parental contact is highly unusual.

- 1) If this is assessed as 'No Apparent Risk' or 'Low/ Medium Risk' the Head Teacher, along with senior leaders, can make the decision to continue to make enquires and not contact the police if they do not feel that this is necessary or proportionate. These cases should not be ignored and must be monitored over time and consideration given to escalation if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk.
- 2) If assessed as 'High Risk' the school will consider contacting the appropriate services, such as the Devon MASH team. Where there is a need for an immediate response then contact the Police.
- 3) School enquiries continue and any further information shared with appropriate services/Police.
- 4) Follow safeguarding procedures to record concerns, actions and decisions.