

Strawberry Fields Primary School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

September 2022

Context

This policy follows Department for Education guidance and statute:

www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf

Key timings for attendance and punctuality

	Years 1-6	EYFS
School door open	8.45	8.45
School doors close	8.50	8.55
<i>Children arriving after these times should be taken into school through the school office</i>		
Registers open	8.45	8.45
Registers close	9.15	9.15
<i>After 8.50 (8.55 in EYFS) children will be awarded a late mark After 9.15, children will be marked as an unauthorised absence. This must not be taken as a reason to keep a child at home if they are likely to arrive late.</i>		

Mission

In our school, we strongly believe that a good education is the best way we can ensure that all children achieve the best possible outcomes, regardless of their background. Excellent attendance and punctuality is a fundamental component of a good education. Children who are not in school will miss out not only on curriculum learning, but also on the vital socialisation and character development that comes from being part of a class and school community.

It is the responsibility of all schools, parents/carers and pupils to work in partnership to ensure good school attendance and punctuality, and to support those children and families who may be experiencing barriers to good attendance or punctuality. We work with families to identify reasons for poor attendance or punctuality, and support them to resolve difficulties. Our attendance policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is part of all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, anti-bullying, behaviour and learning and teaching.

We define education widely and holistically, and all activities undertaken during school hours are important for the education of the children. Attendance is mandatory. This includes off-site provision, school performances, school trips and residential. Where a child cannot participate in a particular activity, they must still attend school, where appropriate alternative learning will be provided.

Good attendance is important because:

- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically. There is a direct link between poor outcomes and poor attendance
- regular attenders are more likely to be fully invested in the school as a community
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning easier and more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training
- regular attenders develop a model of good attendance and a stronger work ethic which will advantage them as they move through education and into employment

% Attendance expressed in number of days absent

Strawberry Fields Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.

Attendance / absence is presented as a percentage figure, but it is often helpful to relate this to the number of days of education missed:

98% = fewer than four days absent in a school year
95% = fewer than ten days absent in one school year
90% = 4 weeks absent in one school year (equates to a ½ day each week)
85% = 5.5 weeks absent in one school year (approaching a whole half-term in the school year)
80% = 7.5 weeks absent in one school year (equates to one day each week or a whole half-term)

Over five years, children with an average attendance of 90% will have missed half a school year of education; children with an average attendance of 80% will have missed a whole school year.

Please note: unauthorised absences can lead to a local authority fixed-penalty notice and/or prosecution

School responsibilities:

- Provide a welcoming, warm and safe learning environment
- Teach a dynamic, engaging and relevant curriculum
- Promote the value of good attendance and punctuality to children and parents/carers
- Record attendance and punctuality accurately and follow our procedures (see appendix 1) when a child does not attend school
- Monitor attendance of all children termly and follow our procedures (see appendix 2) when a child's attendance is causing concern
- Identify quickly when a child's attendance is a concern and follow our procedures (see appendix 2)
- Liaise effectively with other agencies (e.g. the cluster support worker, the local authority attendance officer) as appropriate
- Request reasons for absences and encourage the earliest possible return to school once the child is well enough. **This may even be later the same day.**
- Treat parents and carers respectfully when issues regarding attendance are discussed
- Keep parents and carers informed of their child's attendance, including by sending a termly attendance report letter

Parent/carers responsibilities:

- Ensure children attend school on every school day unless illness or another special circumstance agreed by the headteacher prevents this
- Recognise the importance of good attendance and promote this to their child(ren)
- Work with the school and other agencies to improve attendance where attendance within the family has a raised a concern
- Understand that poor attendance or punctuality can significantly disadvantage their child(ren) in the future, and can also be viewed as a safeguarding concern
- Recognise that concern about attendance is based on concern for the best interests and wellbeing of the child, and their prospects in the future
- Treat all school staff respectfully when issues regarding attendance are raised

Reporting a pupil absence:

We have a duty of care to ensure that your child is safe at all times, and a child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter.

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On the first day of absence, please contact school by any of the following methods, before 9.30am:

- By phone (0113 2320796)
- By email (info@sfpsch.org.uk)
- By calling in to the school office

Please do not use the Class Dojo to contact school about a child's absence.

Please state the reason your child is absent. If it is known that a child will be absent for an extended period (for example, a period of isolation specified by a doctor), please state the child's likely return date in the initial message. Otherwise, please contact school for each day of absence.

Children suffering from vomiting and/or diarrhoea must remain at home for 48 hours after the last occurrence in order to ensure the virus is not spread. This helps to support good attendance for the wider school community.

Authorised absence:

- Genuine illness. **Please note, children can still attend school if they are 'under the weather' or 'not 100%'**. Children should be kept off school for illness only if they would be too ill to access curriculum learning in the classroom
- Medical or dental appointments **only when these cannot be arranged outside of school hours**
- Periods of isolation recommended by a doctor or other medical professional (for example, in the case of chicken pox)
- Bereavement of close relatives (by 'close' we mean parents, siblings and other relatives with whom the child had frequent contact)
- Religious observance (no more than two days per academic year)
- Approved leave where there are exceptional circumstances, **as agreed in advance with the Headteacher**

Where a child is unwell in the morning, please consider whether they will be well enough to return to school for the afternoon sessions.

Exceptional circumstances

Parents do not have the right to remove their children from school during term time. Absence in term time will only be considered if parents/carers make a request to the school on the appropriate Leave of Absence Request Form, available from the school office or website, giving **exceptional reasons** why the application for absence has been requested and provide information to support their application.

Please note that the definition of 'exceptional' means 'very unusual'. Therefore, repeated requests, or requests for leave for trivial or avoidable reasons are extremely unlikely to be authorised.

The headteacher will decide whether or not the absence will be authorised.

Parents/carers, who take their children out of school during term time without authorisation, may be issued with a penalty fine. Parents may also face a possible prosecution in court.

Unauthorised absence:

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school, and do not have a legal right to remove their child from school during term time.

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The following will all be recorded as unauthorised absences:

- Holidays during term time
- Absences for events such as sporting competitions where the headteacher has not given permissions
- Family occasions other than funerals of close relatives
- Taking a whole day off before or after a routine medical appointment
- Non-attendance when trips or residentials are taking place which the child is not participating. Children should still attend school. Alternative educational activities will be provided
- Any other absence that is not related to illness, isolation, an unavoidable medical or dental appointment or a specific special circumstance agreed by the headteacher

Please note: schools **do not** have the legal right to grant holiday requests during term-time. Requests for term time holiday **cannot** be granted at the discretion of the headteacher and will always be recorded as 'unauthorised absence'

Persistent absences

The Department for Education regards attendance of 90% or below as persistent absenteeism. This means any child with 90% attendance is considered a persistent absentee. The figure is based on a running total over the course of the year i.e. more than 10% of all possible school days on which the child could have attended up to that point in the year. All persistent absentees will be invited for an attendance meeting. (See appendix 2).

Continuing concerns regarding attendance

We have a clear process for tracking children's attendance in school, and an attendance register is kept with the details of those children whose attendance and/or punctuality is causing concern. Where there are ongoing concerns we will follow the procedures laid out in appendix 2.

Triggers for school action

Trigger	Actions
Attendance drops below 95%	School will contact parents/carers to discuss actions to improve attendance
Attendance drops below 90%	Schools official attendance procedures will be initiated (see appendix 2) Evidence may then be required for further absences due to illness (e.g. evidence of a doctor's appointment)
A child has 10 or more unauthorised absences	Schools official attendance procedures will be initiated (see appendix 2) A local authority fixed-penalty notice may be issued
A child displays an unusual pattern of absences – e.g. regularly missing a particular day	School will contact parents/carers to discuss actions to improve attendance
A child is late more than 10 times in a term	School will contact parents/carers to discuss actions to improve punctuality

Local authority fines

Strawberry Fields Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.

Local authority fines are issued to encourage and ensure good attendance of all school age children. They can be issued when a child has ten or more unauthorised absences from school. **Please note, as the register is taken in the morning and afternoon, one day of unauthorised absence constitutes two unauthorised absences.**

- Local authority fines are £60 per child per parent.
- In the case of repeat or serious cases, they can be fast-tracked.
- The fines can be issued more than once in a school year.
- Fines double if not paid with 21 days. If the fine remains unpaid, further legal action is taken.

Our communication to you

We will communicate attendance at the end of each term in the school year via an attendance report. Where a concern around attendance is identified at other times, we will communicate to parents/carers as appropriate.

If required, we will work with families to identify reasons for poor attendance, and support them to resolve difficulties. This includes by following our attendance processes (see appendix 2), but also by looking at what specific and/or bespoke support can be offered to address whatever barriers to attendance are identified.

Punctuality

In addition to good attendance, good punctuality is incredibly important. Significant curriculum learning often takes place at the beginning of the day. Moreover, missing key routines such as the register and the beginning of the day with their classmates can be unsettling for children.

Being late to school has a significant impact on the amount of learning time lost over a school year. This table gives you an indication of how much time is lost if a child is regularly late.

Minutes late per day	Number of days over a year
5 minutes	3.4 days
10 minutes	6.9 days
15 minutes	10.3 days
20 minutes	13.8 days
30 minutes	20.7 days

Pupils arriving after the register has closed will receive a 'U' code to mean 'late'; this will represent an unauthorised absence. We actively discourage late arrival and are alert to patterns of late arrival, which could provide grounds for prosecution.

Attendance in Early Years

Whilst school attendance does not become compulsory until the term in which the child turns five, we believe good attendance habits in education should begin as early as possible. A child's attendance record will follow them throughout their statutory education. It is important that key attendance and punctuality expectations are established as quickly as possible.

By accepting a place in our nursery or reception classes, you are committing to ensuring the good attendance of your child.

This document is compiled with reference to:

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<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance>

https://www.gov.uk/.../Advice_on_school_attendance_sept_2014.pdf (mainly regarding schools' responsibilities)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/401467/parental_responsibility_measures_for_school_attendance_and_behaviour.pdf.pdf (mainly regarding parents' responsibilities)

Appendix 1 – absence procedures at Strawberry Fields

On the first day of absence, parents/carers contact school by any of the following methods, before 9.30am:

- By phone (0113 2320796)
- By email (info@sfpsch.org.uk)
- By calling in to the school office

Please state the exact reason for the absence and the date the child is expected to return if known.

Please do not use the Class Dojo to contact school about a child's absence.



Non-attendance is recorded as either authorised or unauthorised. If no date for the return to school is known, parents/carers should contact school on each separate day of absence. Parents/carers may also be asked to consider whether the child might be well enough to return to school to attend for the afternoon session.



At 9.30am, if we have not had any notification of the whereabouts of your child, a text message will be sent to the first contact for your child. This will be followed, if necessary, by a phone call and/or text message to other known contacts.

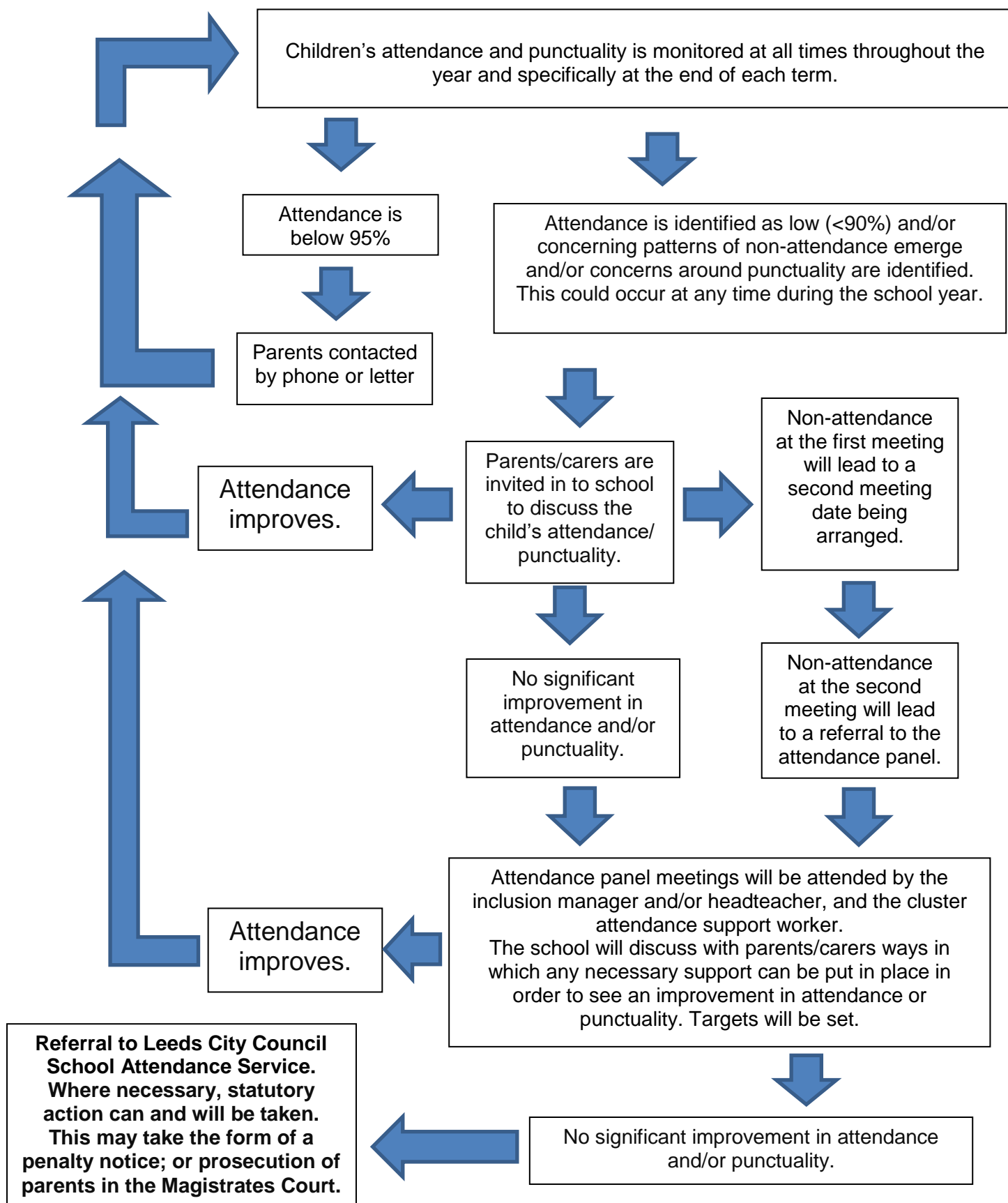


If, after attempting to make contact with all emergency contact numbers, we still have not had any notification with regards to your child's absence, two members of staff will attend the home address.



If, after attending the home address, we are still unable to establish the whereabouts of your child, the appropriate authorities (police and social care) may be contacted.

Appendix 2 – persistent absenteeism/poor punctuality



Fixed penalty notices can be given once a child has had ten unauthorised absences. As the register is taken in the morning and the afternoon, one day of unauthorised absence constitutes two unauthorised absences.