



Attendance Policy – Speedwell Infant School

January 2026

Introduction

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. Parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Good attendance is essential if children are to take full advantage of opportunities offered to them at school and to develop the educational and social skills which are to equip them for life.

At Speedwell Infant School we aim to achieve good attendance by implementing this policy through the ethos of the school whereby parents, carers, staff and children can work together in partnership.

Staff encourage good attendance by liaison with families. We consult other agencies when this is appropriate. We monitor attendance and work to solve any identified problems quickly. There is an established system of rewards and incentives which acknowledges the efforts of families to improve attendance and time keeping. Our attendance policy is based on equal opportunities for all.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, governors and parents in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- ◆ Promote good attendance as the norm, encouraging the school target of 96% or above for each child.
- ◆ Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all at school.
- ◆ Help every child to reach their maximum potential by aiming to avoid any unnecessary breaks in their school life.
- ◆ Demonstrate that good attendance is valued by the school.
- ◆ Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- ◆ Develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- ◆ Implement a system of rewards for good attendance

Definitions

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate unavoidable reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the Headteacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if absence is supported by parent, an absence will be unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school even if the absence is supported by the parent.

Procedures

Speedwell Infant School will undertake the following actions to support good attendance:

- ◆ Complete regular monitoring of attendance registers to identify any attendance or lateness concerns
- ◆ Take action to support parents/carers to improve their child/children's attendance and/or minimise lateness where issues are identified
- ◆ Refer parents/carers to, and work with other professionals where needed to support improvements in attendance
- ◆ Promote the importance of good attendance with children and parents/carers through the weekly celebration assembly
- ◆ Promote the importance of good attendance through the end of term attendance assemblies, issuing awards to children with good attendance (96% or above)
- ◆ Promote the importance of good attendance through updates in the school's newsletter and by email communication with parents/carers
- ◆ Where there are persistent concerns about attendance, or unauthorised attendance of more than 5 school days in any 10 week period, determine whether the case should be escalated to the Local Authority for consideration for legal action as appropriate

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

The Headteacher leads on the monitoring of attendance, and follows up on any patterns of poor attendance, supported by the Deputy Headteacher and office staff. Where there are attendance or lateness concerns, the Headteacher may determine that additional support is provided to the family either through the specialist TA in school or the Positive for Young People Early Help Officer contracted with the school.

Below are the key responsibilities of different staff members and parents/carers in relation to attendance.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- ◆ Ensuring that the Arbor register is completed accurately at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions
- ◆ Liaising with the Headteacher with regard to any concerns regarding attendance and patterns of absence or punctuality
- ◆ Ensuring, along with colleagues, that the ethos in the class and the school is supportive of good attendance
- ◆ The morning register is completed by 8.55 am and the afternoon register by 1.10 pm

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- ◆ The attendance policy and organisation of a regular review
- ◆ Authorising absence in exceptional circumstances
- ◆ The organisation of rewards for good attendance
- ◆ The organisation of events, e.g. attendance assemblies, weekly celebration assemblies
- ◆ Supporting families and children to achieve good attendance
- ◆ Supporting staff in monitoring attendance
- ◆ Publicising the school's attendance record when required
- ◆ Monitoring levels of absences and lateness for all children
- ◆ Ensuring that pupils are re-integrated successfully after an extended absence
- ◆ Supporting families and children to improve attendance where there are concerns
- ◆ Determining whether an absence concern should be escalated to the Local Authority

Administration staff

Administration staff are responsible for:

- ◆ Producing reports required by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and the LA
- ◆ Ensuring that records of absence are kept confidential
- ◆ Producing weekly attendance data for celebration assemblies
- ◆ Ensuring that the Arbor registers are completed

- ◆ Entering into the Arbor registers the absence codes. The school registers are officially closed at 9.30am and 1.30pm. Children arriving late after 9.00am and 1.10pm but before 9.30am and 1.30pm will be marked with an 'L'. This is counted as a present mark. Children arriving after 9.30am and 1.30pm are marked with a 'U' or other relevant code depending on the circumstances of the lateness. This shows an unauthorised absence or the reason for the lateness. This distinction is required by government legislation.
- ◆ Telephoning parents / carers on the first day of absence if an explanation has not been received by the school
- ◆ Recording verbal and telephone messages from parents in writing and adding the information to Arbor
- ◆ Providing weekly updates to the Headteacher relating to the attendance of children being monitored and any new attendance concerns.
- ◆ Ensuring that letters are sent to parents / carers and the information returned is recorded
- ◆ Ensuring that records of absence are kept confidential
- ◆ Collating all relevant documentation where an absence concern is to be escalated to the Local Authority

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- ◆ Legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance at school
- ◆ Letting the school know as soon as possible why their child is absent
- ◆ Talking to the class teacher or Headteacher as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school, so that problems can be identified quickly and dealt with
- ◆ Ensuring family holidays are not taken during school term time
- ◆ Where possible booking medical appointments at the end of the school day
- ◆ Provide evidence of medical appointments to the school office

Registration

The school doors open at 8.45am and children are expected to be in school by 8.55am at the latest. This gives plenty of time for all pupils to come into their classroom and be ready to learn when lessons start.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for marking the attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

All attendance records are documented using Arbor. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved in line with the relevant retention schedule

Lateness

Children who are persistently late after close of register soon fall behind with their learning.

Any pupil who comes into school after 8.55am (1.10pm for the afternoon register) will be marked as late. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am (1.30pm for the afternoon register) will be marked as late after close of register (Attendance code U). This is an unauthorised absence for the whole session and will affect a child's overall attendance percentage and can be used to calculate absence thresholds for legal decision making.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.30am (1.30pm for the afternoon register) will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Where a child arrives late after the register has closed (after 8.55am / 1.10pm) the parent/carer will be required to sign the child in using the electronic sign in system in the entrance. The School Business Assistant will monitor lateness, and where this is a regular occurrence will inform the Headteacher. The Headteacher will investigate the reasons for lateness and work with the parent/carer to improve arrival at school so the child/children are not regularly late.

Absences

Children who miss school miss out on important learning, and can find it difficult to re-settle into school and access future learning.

Children should attend school for 190 days per year. The school target of 96% attendance means that any child attending for less than 182.5 days per year will not meet this target. Where a child's attendance falls below 90%, or 171 days per year, this is classed as persistent absenteeism.

Speedwell Infant school recognises that children may be off school due to genuine illness, and parents/carers should inform the school office as soon as possible on the first morning of absence of the reason for absence. The school office staff will record this on the register.

Towards the end of each half term, attendance data will be checked by the Headteacher and the School Business Assistant. The Headteacher will review the reasons for absence and where appropriate the parents of any child with attendance below 90% will receive a letter highlighting this and inviting them for a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the attendance issues and identify next steps. Any agreed support will be put in place and attendance will be monitored weekly to ensure there is improvement.

In addition, the School Business Assistant will monitor attendance on a weekly basis to identify any children with more than 5 school days absence in a 10 week rolling cycle. Where this occurs, this will be shared with the Headteacher, who will review the reasons for absence as above and act as needed. This may result in the case being escalated to the Local Authority for further action such as a penalty notice fine.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any contact from the parent/carer, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers each morning to identify those pupils who are absent without explanation and, as a safeguarding requirement, make contact with the parent/carer of these children by telephone. Where the school are unable to make contact with the parent/carer, they may contact other contacts provided by the parent/carer to try to ascertain the wellbeing of the child.

Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time

In September 2013 the government introduced new regulations making it clear that Headteachers **must not** give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any requests for term time leave should be made on a request for absence form available from the school office and handed in at least two school weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. (Attendance code G).

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. We rely upon parents/carers to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents/carers are always informed of our concerns.

The school are able to offer support for improving attendance through the school's specialist TA and the contracted Positive for Young People Early Help Officer where this is appropriate.

If a child's attendance does not improve and absences are unauthorised this may lead to consideration of parental responsibility measures which include the issue of penalty notice fines or other statutory action.

National framework for penalty notices

The new national threshold for consideration of legal action is 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence, including lates after close of register (Attendance code U) and unauthorised leave in term time (Attendance code G).

If your child's absence falls into this category the school will decide if further offers of support is likely to improve the situation or if a request for legal action should be submitted to the Local Authority.

Policy review

This policy is based on a Derbyshire County Council model policy, and will be reviewed annually.