

SODBURY VALE FEDERATION

Attendance Policy

<i>Policy Number</i>	<i>SFV030</i>
<i>Version Number</i>	<i>02</i>
<i>Issue Date</i>	<i>Sept 2025</i>
<i>Date of Review</i>	<i>Nov 2027</i>



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1 Version History

Version Number	Reason for Issue	Date of Issue
01	Initial Issue For Federation	Nov 2023
02	Update due to Local Authority guidance changes	Oct 2024
03	Update to guidance around occupational absences	Sept 2025

2 Introduction

The schools and governors believe that attendance at school is vital and that every day counts – your child should come to school every day. The following policy outlines the reasons for and management of attendance at school. This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department of Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

3 Rationale

At the heart of everything we do at St John’s Mead CE VC and Horton VE VA schools is a child’s learning but children cannot learn if they are absent. We therefore aim to ensure that our children take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of pupils. We have adopted the following policy and procedures in consultation with parents, children, staff and governors.

4 Aims

- Improve attendance and punctuality across the school.
- Create a culture that encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all.
- Monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty.
- Keep parents and staff informed of their responsibilities for attendance and punctuality.

5 Guidelines

Parental Roles and Responsibilities for School Attendance

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually. We expect the parent/carer to:

- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address
- Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first day and every subsequent day of the absence
- Provide a letter, email or phone call indicating absence due to illness, medical/ dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time or emergencies
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day
- Let the school know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down; if an urgent appointment has been made

Staff Roles and Responsibilities for School Attendance and Lateness.

The School will:

- Give attendance and punctuality a high priority.
- Ensure all new parents are made aware of the Policy and information on attendance in the School Prospectus and through the website.
- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and their presence is valued.
- Work to ensure that there is enjoyment and commitment to learning among the children.
- Encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored and any unexplained absences are followed up promptly.
- Contact individual parents where there is concern about their child's attendance or punctuality.
- Investigate whether there are any home or school factors (or both), which are affecting a child's school attendance.
- Report to parents on the child's attendance in the end of year.
- Share with parent/carers at parents' evening the children's attendance rates in Autumn and Spring, if they are causing concern.
- Reward good or improving attendance through letters home, and stickers and certificates in celebration assembly.
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Officer, and other agencies, when necessary to promote good attendance.
- Use the local authority non-attendance process or request a penalty notice fine to manage absence.

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age must receive suitable education whether by regular school attendance or otherwise.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

6 Authorised / Unauthorised Absence:

It is vital that all staff apply the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

6.1 Authorised

An authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence (adhering to DoE Guidelines). This includes children being educated off site. Absences can only be authorised by the Executive Headteacher. Parents are asked to telephone the school before 9:30am on the first day of absence. If we do not receive a telephone call, the office will telephone to establish the reason. It is anticipated that by making these first day calls, and following up on all absences, parents will get into the habit of calling the school to notify of any absences.

Absence can be **authorised** if.

- ◆ the pupil is away from school for a good reason such as illness or other unavoidable causes. e.g. a day of religious observance, a family bereavement, the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or special off-site tuition.

6.2 Unauthorised

All other absences will be treated as unauthorised, for example, shopping trips, holidays in term time, occasions where the school feels a child is being kept home without good reason or where a child is late a long time after registration has finished and the parent/carer fails to provide an acceptable explanation. In the event of no message being received on the first day of absence and after reasonable attempts by the school, where no explanation for an absence is received, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Absence will be **unauthorised** if: -

- ◆ no explanation is forthcoming;
- ◆ the school does not consider the absence reasonable and for which no permission has been given.

e.g. the pupil stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings; the pupil is shopping during school hours

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

7 School Procedures

7.1 Registration

Registers are taken twice a day using the electronic register at 8:55 am and after lunchtime. Registers show whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised using the codes provided in SIMS (Schools Information Management System). The school office staff will follow up any missing marks in the electronic register as soon as this has closed to ensure parental awareness and the child's safety.

7.2 Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and this can be embarrassing for the child. Good time keeping is a vital life skill, which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

- All students should arrive at school between 8.40am and 8.50am.
- Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed will be marked **late** and must report to the office.
- Any student who arrives 15 minutes after the register closes will be recorded as an **unauthorised absence** for that session unless a satisfactory reason is given. This will be recorded as U on the student's attendance certificate.

St. John's Mead CE VC Primary			
Start time	Key Stage	Registers close at:	Arrival after the time below will mean that the child is recorded as absent for the whole morning.
8:50 am	All Key Stages	8:55am	9:10am
End of Lunch Time	Key Stage	Registers will close at:	Arrival after the time below will mean that the child is recorded as absent for the whole afternoon.
12:50pm	KS2	12:55pm	1:10pm
1:10pm	KS1 & Reception	1:15pm	1:30pm

Horton CE VA Primary			
Start time	Key Stage	Registers close at:	Arrival after the time below will mean that the child is recorded as absent for the whole morning.
8:50 am	All Key Stages	8:55am	9:10am
End of Lunch Time	Key Stage	Registers will close at:	Arrival after the time below will mean that the child is recorded as absent for the whole afternoon.
1pm	All KS2	1:05pm	1:20pm

7.3 Illness

Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide a reason for the absence. Where office staff are not made aware of the reason for a child's absence they will, wherever possible, contact parents or carers by telephone on the first day of absence. If the office are unable to make contact with parents/carers, then we may phone other listed contacts according to priority stated; this is to ensure the well-being of our children.

Where illness is a clear reason for a pattern of absence with supporting information (for example repeat reference to medical aspects by young person, parent carer, prescription information, medical appointment cards, information from other health professionals) we will put in place an Individual Health Care Plan in line with our Managing Medical Needs Policy.

7.4 Medical Or Dental Appintments

Absence from school due to a medical or dental appointment will be considered as an authorised absence. Parents and carers are requested to inform the school office in advance of the appointment, providing an appointment letter or card. Parents and carers are encouraged to make all medical appointments out of school hours.

7.5 Leave Of Absence (Inluding Holidays) In Term Time

Holidays in term time have had a significant impact on school attendance figures. This is an issue for all schools in South Gloucestershire. Adaptations were made in September 2013 to the Attendance Regulations (2006). A key change was the removal of a school's option to authorise holiday. Therefore there is no automatic entitlement in law for leave of absence during term time. Authorisation for leave of absence can only be authorised in 'exceptional circumstances'. Please note the following points:

- All requests for 'exceptional circumstances' leave of absence must be made in advance in writing to the Executive Headteacher, using the Leave in Term Time Request form available from the school office or website.
- Absence will be authorised for religious observance to a body which parents/carers and the child belong.
- Requests will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The nature of an exceptional circumstance will be at the Executive Headteacher's discretion.
- South Gloucestershire council has stated that if your child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence within 10 school weeks, after 19th August 2024, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice. There are two sessions in each school day (morning and afternoon). The sessions of absence can be consecutive (for example 10 sessions of unauthorised holiday in one week) or not (for example 10 sessions of unauthorised absence, spread across the 10 school weeks). This is a change from South Gloucestershire Council's previous threshold.
- There is an increase in the amount that a Penalty Notice is charged at and a decrease in the number of Penalty Notices that can be issued within a rolling three year period.

- On the first occasion that a parent is issued with a Penalty Notice in respect of their child, on or after 19th August 2024, the Penalty Notice will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This amount will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- If a second Penalty Notice is issued, within 3 years of the date of issue of the previous Penalty Notice, to the same parent in respect of the same child, the Penalty Notice will be charged at a flat rate of £160. There will be no reduction if the Penalty Notice is paid within 21 days. This will apply even if the previous Penalty Notice has been issued by another local authority.
- If the threshold for issuing a Penalty Notice is met for a third time (or subsequent times), within three years of the first Penalty Notice being issued, a third Penalty Notice cannot be issued. Instead, alternative action will be considered, which may include prosecuting a parent for the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. This will apply even if one, or both, of the previous Penalty Notices were issued by another local authority.

7.6 Any Other Absence

Other absence from school will be considered on an individual basis and a decision will be made whether the absence will be authorised or unauthorised. Cases will be judged on their individual merits taking into account the following:

- 1) the nature of the event;
- 2) the frequency of requests;
- 3) the overall attendance pattern of the child.

These should be applied for using the 'Request for absence form' which can be obtained from the school office.

8 Attendance Monitoring

All absences, authorised and unauthorised, and lateness will be reported to the parent/carer at the end of the academic year within their child's report.

8.1 Attendance Awards

At St. John's Mead CE VC, the class who have had the best attendance each week are awarded the attendance cup in the Friday celebration assembly. The classes in second and third place are also celebrated.

At St. Johns Mead CE VC and Horton VE VA certificates and gold stickers are presented to all children with 100% attendance for the first half of the year in an assembly at the end of term 3. Silver stickers are awarded to those children with 98-99%.

At the end of the year certificates, gold stickers and pencils are awarded to children with 100% attendance for the whole year. Silver stickers are given to children with 95-99% attendance for the year. An award will be presented to the child/ren in year 6 who have had outstanding attendance during their time at our schools.

8.2 Threshold For Parent Contact

The school monitors the attendance of all pupils on a weekly basis, in particular children whose attendance falls below 95%. Action will be taken to engage with parents:

- Where a child's attendance has fallen below 90%
- Where there has been 3+ broken weeks in one half term.
- Where there has been repeated late or U code marks with or without other attendance concerns

Engagement with parents will include the following stages:

	Threshold	Action by school
Stage 1	Year to date attendance less than 90% More than 3 broken weeks in a half term. Repeated lates or U codes	A letter offering support
Stage 2	No improvement in attendance figures after one month. Continued broken weeks and/or lates.	Meeting with Attendance Lead <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss impact of missed learning • investigate reasons for absence and solutions • set attendance targets • create Individual Health Care Plan
Stage 3	No improvements in attendance figures after one month. Continued more than 3 broken weeks in a half term and/or repeated lates. A child whose attendance is being recorded under 90%	School Attendance Meeting with Attendance Lead and if requested, Education Welfare Officer (EWO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss impact of missed learning • investigate reasons for absence and solutions • set attendance targets • Set review period
Stage 4	Repeated termly attendance continues to be of concern. School Attendance Meetings have not brought about improvement and unauthorised absence has been recorded on the attendance certificate.	Following School Attendance Meeting review, meeting held with De and EWO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise parent/carer that an Attendance Panel and Parenting Contract Meeting will take place. • Attendance Panel and Parenting Contract Meeting takes place (Letter sent by school to arrange)
Stage 5	If there is no improvement after 4-6 weeks and further unauthorised absence has occurred.	School completes a request for an Attendance Panel review chaired by a Local Authority representative.

9 SAFEGUARDING

9.1 First Day Of Absence Call

We will regularly request updates of parent/carer contact information. Adults who have day to day care of a pupil are legally responsible for ensuring regular attendance. We will contact parents/carers on the first day of unexplained absence. Where absences are of concern and all attempts to engage have failed we will refer to the Access and Response Team for further investigation.

9.2 Removal From Roll

There are strict grounds as to when schools may remove pupils from their admissions register. These are outlined in Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006. Regulation 12(6) states that when a school has decided to delete a pupil's name from their admission roll they must notify their Local Authority as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

If the pupil has left the school without explanation and there are concerns about the pupil's welfare we will contact the local Access and Response Team immediately.

If there are concerns that a pupil may be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or radicalisation we will contact the Access and Response Team immediately.

If the school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure will establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Once the school has confirmation that the child has started at the new school they will update SIMs. Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed.

If the school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has 'disappeared' the school will complete a Child Missing Education form with the Local Authority and the matter will be brought to the attention of the Access and Response Team

9.3 Part-Time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs; this decision is made by the Head Teacher in consultation with external agencies. A part time timetable is time limited and must not be treated as a long-term solution. It should only be put in place as part of a formal meeting with school and the parent and with parental consent. This will be reviewed every two weeks within the time limited period. The school will mark the sessions where the pupil is not expected to attend as authorised absence. (Code C).

Appendix 1 – Special Circumstances

The school recognises and embraces the cultural heritage of the Showman families. In order to accommodate the unique lifestyle of Showman families and to support them to ensure children from these families achieve the best educational outcomes the school has consulted with these families and the Local Authority to establish the following:

Attendance for children from Showman families needs to be at least 100 days a year. When families are travelling for work purposes, parents are responsible for maintaining their child's education whilst still complying with the National Curriculum framework, to ensure that engagement in learning and attainment is being prioritised whenever possible.

School will involve the Education Welfare Officer through a referral process when they consider a targeted approach to addressing attendance concerns for a young person is necessary. This is usually once the non-attendance process has been started with a parent, following the early intervention stage and when unauthorised absence continues to be recorded for the young person, despite support being offered by school to address the barriers to non-attendance. These barriers will usually be focused on external circumstances, not on challenging travel for work purposes unless the student is absent for longer than agreed. The Education Welfare Officer will be requested by school to hold meetings with a parent if a formal stage of the non-attendance process has been reached.