

SODBURY VALE FEDERATION

Attendance Policy

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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 2026
04	Updated for DfE statutory guidance (July 2026), 2024 registration regulations and current South Gloucestershire attendance procedures	Sept 2026

2 Introduction

The schools and governors believe that regular attendance is essential to pupils' education, wellbeing and safeguarding. This policy sets out the Federation's approach to promoting and securing regular attendance. It has been updated for September 2026 and has regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' (updated July 2026), the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and current South Gloucestershire Council attendance procedures.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/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 schools.
- 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 and promote a culture of belonging in which every pupil is expected, supported and encouraged to attend.
- 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.
- Monitor attendance and absence data regularly, identify emerging patterns early, and ensure unexplained absences are followed up promptly.
- Contact parents/carers promptly where attendance or punctuality is causing concern, listen to and understand barriers, and agree appropriate support.
- Work with pupils, families, the Local Authority and relevant partners to remove barriers to attendance, including barriers linked to SEND, disability, physical or mental ill health, caring responsibilities or other vulnerabilities.
- Report to parents on the child's attendance at 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.
- Recognise and celebrate good and improving attendance in ways that do not disadvantage pupils whose absence is linked to illness, disability, SEND or other unavoidable circumstances.
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Officer/Local Authority and other agencies when targeted or formal attendance support is required.
- Use South Gloucestershire's attendance support and legal intervention processes where voluntary support has not been successful, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate.

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive suitable full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The Federation also has regard to the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the Department for Education's statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'.

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 one for which leave has been granted in advance by the school, or where the relevant statutory attendance code records the absence as authorised. The Executive Headteacher, or an appropriately delegated senior leader acting in accordance with this policy, determines whether leave is granted. Parents/carers should contact the school before 9:30am on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day unless otherwise agreed. Where no reason is received, the school will make first-day contact and follow safeguarding procedures as appropriate.

Examples of circumstances in which absence may be authorised include:

- ◆ illness where the pupil is too unwell to attend; medical or dental appointments that cannot reasonably be arranged outside school hours; and other circumstances for which leave is granted in accordance with the statutory attendance codes.

Religious observance, bereavement and approved educational activities will be recorded using the appropriate statutory attendance code. The school will use the national attendance codes in force at the time.

6.2 Unauthorised

Absence will be unauthorised where the statutory conditions for authorised absence are not met. Examples include holidays in term time that have not been granted as exceptional circumstances, shopping trips, caring for siblings, avoidable transport difficulties, or arrival after the register has closed where no other attendance code applies. Where the reason for absence has not yet been established, the appropriate temporary code will be used and amended once the reason is known.

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 absences to establish the reason, take appropriate safeguarding action, identify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised, and record the correct statutory attendance code. Attendance registers are legal records and will be retained for six years from the date of the relevant entry.

7 School Procedures

7.1 Registration

Registers are taken twice each school day using the electronic attendance register: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Registers will be completed using the statutory attendance codes in force under the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Office staff will follow up missing marks promptly. The Federation will meet the statutory requirement to share daily attendance data with the Department for Education.

7.2 Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss learning 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 pupil arriving after the register has closed will be recorded as absent for that session using Code U, unless another statutory code is more appropriate. Pupils arriving after the start of the session but before the register closes will be recorded as late using Code L.

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	KS1 & Reception	12:55pm	1:10pm
1:10pm	KS2	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 and each subsequent day, unless otherwise agreed, to explain the reason. Where the school has not been notified, office staff will make first-day contact and may contact other listed contacts in priority order where necessary to establish the child's safety and wellbeing.

In most cases, a parent/carer's notification that a child is too ill to attend will be sufficient and medical evidence will not routinely be requested. Medical evidence may be sought in a minority of cases where there is genuine and reasonable doubt, where illness-related absence is frequent, or where evidence is needed to understand a complex or long-term health need and identify appropriate support. The school will not be rigid about the form of evidence and a lack of written evidence will not prevent support being put in place. Where appropriate, the school will consider reasonable adjustments, an Individual Health Care Plan, the South Gloucestershire Graduated Response and, where a pupil cannot access suitable education because of health needs, whether a Section 19 referral should be considered with the Local Authority.

7.4 Medical or Dental Appointments

Necessary medical or dental appointments that cannot reasonably be arranged outside school hours will normally be authorised using Code M. Parents/carers should inform the school in advance wherever possible and pupils should attend school for as much of the session/day as reasonably possible. Evidence of the appointment may be requested where appropriate.

7.5 Leave of Absence (including holidays) in term time

There is no entitlement to a holiday during term time. Under the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, leave of absence may be granted only where the relevant statutory conditions are met. For leave requested for exceptional circumstances, the Executive Headteacher will consider each application individually and determine the length of any leave granted. A family holiday will not normally constitute an exceptional circumstance.

- 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 for religious observance will be recorded using Code R where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.
- Requests for leave due to exceptional circumstances will be considered individually. The Executive Headteacher will take account of the specific facts and circumstances and the statutory guidance; previous attendance alone will not determine whether circumstances are exceptional.
- The national threshold for considering a Penalty Notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions may be consecutive or non-consecutive and may span different terms or school years. In line with South Gloucestershire procedures, the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice where the threshold is met and legal intervention is appropriate.
- Where support is appropriate, the school and Local Authority will ordinarily seek to understand and address barriers before legal intervention. South Gloucestershire may use an Attendance Action Plan, Attendance Contract and/or a Notice to Improve. A Notice to Improve is normally a formal warning period of six school weeks. A Notice to Improve may not be appropriate in every case, for example where an unauthorised term-time holiday has already occurred and support would not be relevant.
- For a first Penalty Notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a rolling three-year period, the fine is £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second Penalty Notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within the rolling three-year period is £160 with no reduction for early payment.
- If the national threshold is met for a third time within the rolling three-year period, a third Penalty Notice cannot be issued. Alternative action will be considered, which may include an Education Supervision Order or prosecution. Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority, not the school.

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 and Support

Attendance, absence and punctuality are monitored regularly at pupil, group, class and whole-school level. Parents/carers will receive attendance information through school reporting arrangements. The Senior Attendance Champion will oversee the strategic approach to attendance, evaluate the impact of interventions and report patterns and priorities to governors.

8.1 Recognising Attendance and Improvement

The Federation may celebrate strong class attendance and positive attendance habits where this supports a welcoming culture and a sense of belonging.

Recognition will focus on good attendance, improvement, punctuality and positive engagement. Rewards will be used sensitively so that pupils are not disadvantaged or stigmatised because of unavoidable absence linked to illness, disability, SEND or other exceptional circumstances. The impact of attendance recognition will be reviewed alongside attendance data to ensure that it supports, rather than undermines, the Federation's support-first approach.

8.2 Early Identification, Persistent Absence and Escalation

The school monitors attendance at least weekly and responds to patterns as they emerge rather than waiting for a fixed percentage. A pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible sessions and severely absent when they miss 50% or more. Pupils approaching these thresholds will be prioritised for early support. Particular attention will be given to repeated broken weeks, lateness, unauthorised absence and vulnerable groups, including pupils with SEND, long-term health needs and young carers.

- Emerging concerns may include attendance falling below 95%, repeated broken weeks, increasing illness absence, repeated late/U marks, or any pattern that indicates a developing barrier to attendance.
- The response will be proportionate to need and will begin with listening to the pupil and family, understanding barriers and agreeing practical support.
- Where voluntary support does not secure improvement, support may be formalised through an Attendance Action Plan or Attendance Contract and, where appropriate, multi-agency or Local Authority involvement.

The Federation will use the following staged approach as a guide. Decisions will be made on the individual circumstances and safeguarding needs of each pupil and family:

	Threshold	Action by school
Stage 1 - Early concern	Emerging pattern of absence or punctuality concern; attendance may be below 95%, or there may be repeated broken weeks/lates.	Early contact with parent/carers; listen and understand barriers; check pupil voice and relevant contextual information; agree practical support and a review point.
Stage 2 - Targeted support	Concern continues or there is insufficient improvement following early support.	Attendance meeting with the Attendance Lead/Senior Attendance Champion. Agree an Attendance Action Plan with clear actions, reasonable adjustments/support and a review period. Involve relevant school or external services where appropriate.
Stage 3 - Persistent absence/formal support	Pupil is persistently absent (10% or more sessions missed), is approaching severe absence, or patterns continue despite support.	Intensify support. Consider a formal Attendance Contract, Early Help/multi-agency support, SEND/health pathways and Local Authority/Education Welfare involvement. Agree clear expectations, actions and review dates.
Stage 4 - Formal warning/legal consideration	Unauthorised absence continues; voluntary/formal support has not been successful or engaged with, or support is not appropriate. The national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions in 10 school weeks may be met.	Liaise with South Gloucestershire Council. Where appropriate, issue/use a Notice to Improve (normally six school weeks) and/or request consideration of a Penalty Notice in accordance with the National Framework and Local Authority procedures.
Stage 5 - Further legal intervention	Attendance has not improved following appropriate support/formal action, or further unauthorised absence occurs.	Refer to/liaise with the Local Authority regarding the appropriate next step. This may include an Education Supervision Order or prosecution. Safeguarding and support remain central throughout.

9 Safeguarding

9.1 First Day Of Absence Call

We will regularly request updates to parent/carers contact information. We will contact parents/carers on the first day of unexplained absence. If contact cannot be made, the school will use professional judgement and safeguarding procedures, which may include contacting other named contacts, undertaking a welfare check, seeking advice from the Local Authority or making a referral to children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

9.2 Removal From Roll

There are strict statutory grounds for deleting a pupil's name from the admission register. The Federation will comply with Regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England)

Regulations 2024 and will make the required returns to the Local Authority under Regulation 13. A pupil will not be removed from roll unless the relevant statutory ground and all associated conditions are met.

If a pupil has left school without explanation, the school will make reasonable enquiries promptly and liaise with South Gloucestershire Council. Where there are concerns about the pupil's welfare, safeguarding procedures will be followed 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.

Where the school is told that a pupil is transferring to another school, staff will establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the expected start date. The school will make the required Local Authority returns and transfer the Common Transfer File in accordance with statutory requirements. The pupil will only be removed from roll when a statutory ground for deletion is met.

If the school is concerned about a transfer or cannot establish a pupil's whereabouts, it will follow South Gloucestershire's Children Missing Education procedures and work jointly with the Local Authority. For relevant deletion grounds involving prolonged unauthorised absence, the school and Local Authority must make joint reasonable enquiries and satisfy the statutory conditions before deletion from roll.

9.3 Part-Time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in the pupil's best interests, a temporary reduced timetable may be used to meet individual needs. It must not be used to manage behaviour or as a long-term solution. It will be agreed with parents/carers, be time-limited, include a clear plan for review and reintegration to full-time education, and take account of safeguarding, SEND and health needs. The arrangement will be reviewed regularly. Sessions that the pupil is not required to attend because of the agreed temporary reduced timetable will be recorded using Code C2. Where education is provided elsewhere, the appropriate attendance code will be used.

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:

The Federation recognises the occupational travelling patterns of Showman families. Where a pupil is a mobile child and travels with a parent who is travelling in the course of their trade or business, absence will be recorded using Code T only where the statutory conditions are met. Pupils should attend school as regularly as the parent's trade or business permits and, where possible, attend another school while travelling so that continuity of education is maintained. For a child aged six or over, the statutory defence in section 444(6) of the Education Act 1996 requires at least 200 school sessions of attendance in the preceding 12 months as well as attendance as regularly as the trade or business permits. This is not an entitlement to 180 sessions of absence.

The school will work proactively with Showman families and the Local Authority to support continuity of education and appropriate dual registration where relevant. Education Welfare/Local Authority involvement will be sought where targeted support is needed or where absence falls outside agreed occupational travel arrangements. Holidays and other non-occupational absences will be considered and coded separately in accordance with this policy and the statutory attendance codes.