



**Scapegoat Hill and
Linthwaite Clough Federation
(SLCF – Shaping a learning
community)**

Attendance Policy 2023-24

Reviewed by Governors:

Attendance

School VISION – to be a community of confident creative learners thriving together in a rich, inclusive environment that raises the aspirations of each unique child

Our aim

At Scapegoat Hill and Linthwaite Clough schools, our aim is to provide for all pupils the opportunity to achieve their full potential. To ensure that pupils succeed and have access to the widest possible range of opportunities, during their time with us and when they leave our school, it is vital that children's attend is as high as possible. We believe that promoting regular school attendance is a key component in the school's strategy to raise educational standards.

Reducing absence and persistent absence is a vital and integral part of school's and local authority's work to promote children's welfare and safeguarding. It ensures that every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.

School is responsible for supporting the attendance of pupils as individuals and responds to difficulties and issues which might lead to non-attendance.

School adopts a positive and proactive approach towards attendance matters and encourages parents/families to take an active role in the schooling of their children. This can play a major role in improving levels of attendance and punctuality and in reducing absenteeism.

Health and safety

The health and safety of all children and practitioners in school is paramount. Good health and safety habits are taught as part of the whole curriculum. Risk assessments are carried out appropriately for each learning environment. All equipment is subject to maintenance and safety checks.

School will: -

- be open to all pupils for 380 sessions each school year
- maintain attendance registers
- accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness;
- clearly distinguish between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised according to criteria laid down by the DFE (schools will remind parents that it is the decision of the headteacher as to whether or not an absence will be authorised);
- submit termly absence returns through School Census and publish information relating to levels of attendance and absence and include details of these in the school's prospectus and profile;
- set annual targets to reduce absence and submit these targets in accordance with the relevant regulations;
- give a high priority and value to attendance and punctuality and ensure that specific strategies are in place in order to achieve this;
- ensure compliance with all relevant statutory requirements (particularly with regard to the maintenance of attendance registers and the setting of targets);
- ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents through newsletters, through parents' evenings or through other media; (parents are reminded of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their children's regular and punctual attendance);
- Collect and make effective use of attendance data to monitor progress/trends and set targets for improvement – for individuals, classes, year groups and the whole school;
- provide clear guidance to staff on the practice of registration and on such connected issues as the appropriate categorisation of absence;

- identify clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness (allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities);
- recognise the crucial importance of early intervention and provide appropriate strategies;
- make provision for first-day of absence contact;
- monitor post-registration absence;
- identify a range of both proactive and reactive strategies to promote attendance and address absenteeism, especially persistent absenteeism;
- provide for a clear and unambiguous hierarchy of sanctions;
- set up effective networks for liaising with other involved agencies and services such as Attendance Officers (AOs), Social Care, Connexions, the Police, Health, etc;
- establish procedures for reintegrating long-term absentees and pupils who may, for specific reasons, have been on a reduced timetable;
- identify an interesting, flexible, and accessible curriculum, CCL, which encourages regular attendance;
- provide for regular structured meetings between school staff and the AO;
- ensure that reasonable steps are taken by the school before a referral is made to the AO;
- stress to parents the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term-time;
- involve and identify a role for governors;
- identify a key senior member of staff with overall responsibility for attendance;
- ensure that good practice is identified and disseminated;
- be regularly monitored and reviewed;
- help create an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance, addressing school-based causes of poor attendance such as bullying, racism,
- help create an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance- appropriate curriculum – CCL (Confident Creative Learner) - session

Responsibilities of parents and carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are **registered regularly, on time, properly dressed** and in a fit **condition to learn**. (Parents are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered.)

Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children. Parents should: -

- take an active interest in their child's school life and work;
- attend parents' evenings and other school events;
- ensure that their child completes his/her homework;
- be aware of letters from school which their child brings home;
- ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day;
- ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance;
- always notify the school as soon as possible - on the first morning of any absence due to illness/health and as early as possible for planned absence (appointments);
- confirm this in writing when the child returns to school;
- avoid booking family holidays during term-time;
- talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.

Term time holidays

Wherever possible parents should avoid taking their children out of school during term time for family holidays. Such absence can be very disruptive to pupils' learning and development.

Every request for holiday absence will be considered individually. Only in **exceptional circumstances** will authorisation be given for more than ten days holiday in term time in any one school year.

These circumstances may include:

- A close family wedding
- Children with SEND needs
- Service and forces children
- A close family member at end of life
- A close family bereavement
- Any other reason that is **UNIQUE** to the family or child

It does not include:

- The cost of the holiday
- Parent working hours
- Family birthdays or other special occasions
- Events deemed educational by families
- Any other reason that is not unique to the family or child

Where the headteacher decides that authorisation cannot be given but the absence occurs, consideration will be given to the issuing of a Penalty Notice in line with Kirklees Code of Conduct.

Responsibility of the Local Authority (LA)

There are three key areas of activity regarding LA support and challenge for schools, pupils and parents: -

- the work of LA allocated Attendance Officer;
- the work of other LA support services;
- the development of multi-agency networks and partnerships,

Attendance Officer Referrals

There are, however, occasions when other agencies/services or parents may make a referral.

Before making a referral to an AO we will have first undertaken a number of steps to address the pupil's non-attendance. These would include: -

- action by the class teacher
- Head or Deputy Head informed
- contact with parents

Referrals may be made when: -

- a pattern of irregular attendance has developed;
- a period of entrenched non-attendance has begun;
- communication by the school to the parents has met with little or no response;
- there is evidence of a lack of parental co-operation in ensuring a child's regular attendance;
- a parent withdraws a pupil from school having expressed an intention to educate him or her otherwise than at school (Elective Home Education);
- a pupil is withdrawn from school by the parents who are moving to another area and the school does not have a confirmed destination school/provider where the child will resume his or her education (such pupils will be treated as "children missing education");
- a pattern of persistent lateness has developed;
- there are child protection concerns;
- there are specific and identifiable welfare issues which are preventing a pupil from accessing education.

AO Visits to Schools

Referrals are discussed with AOs during regular consultation visits. The frequency of these visits will be in accordance with an individual school's identified level of need.

LA Policy on Prosecution

If a pupil who is registered at a school fails to attend that school regularly and attempts by the AO and the school fail to ensure that the pupil returns to regular attendance the AO, on behalf of the LA, will, unless there are mitigating circumstances, consider taking legal action by issuing a summons against the parents to appear before the magistrates court under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act. In deciding whether or not to take legal action, the AO must be satisfied that: -

- a) there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction; it must consider what the defence case may be and how this is likely to affect the prosecution case;
- b) it is in the Public Interest to prosecute; in cases of any seriousness, a prosecution will usually take place unless there are Public Interest factors pointing against prosecution, which clearly outweigh those in favour;
- c) any action which it takes complies with the terms of the Human Rights Act.

In cases where parents wilfully and knowingly withhold a pupil from school the AO will proceed against the parents using sub-section 1a of Section 444 (the "aggravated" offence which is an imprisonable offence).

AOs will when appropriate use a Fast-Track to Prosecution process. (Copies of the details of this process are available from the AO Legal Manager.)

If after legal action has been taken the pupil still fails to attend school regularly, the AO will, if deemed appropriate, take further legal action (after a three-month period).

Other AO Services

As well as undertaking casework with individual pupils AOs will offer strategic support and challenge to schools by working with school management teams on policies and procedures. AOs will promote improvements in schools' management of attendance through the strategies listed below.

Attendance Audit

Attendance Audit completed by school annually. Key features of this audit are: -

- examining existing procedures;
- inspecting attendance-related documentation;
- assessing communication with parents;
- analysing attendance data;
- considering strategies used to promote attendance
- evaluating the effectiveness of AO support.

The written report produced by the Audit is made available to the governing body.

Provision of Guides to Practice, Leaflets, etc.

AOs provide schools with a variety of documentation aimed at enabling the more effective management of school attendance. Documents include:

- Codes schools should use where a pupil does not arrive on the expected start date – guidance for schools
- Children missing education and deletions from the register – guidance for schools
- Is your child missing out? School Attendance: Information for Parents –DFE Leaflet
- Term Time Holidays - *Guidance for Schools A Collective Approach* - Children & Young People Service
- Code of Conduct for the issuing of Penalty Notices - Children & Young People Service
- School documentation/report

Copies of these documents are available through school

Pastoral Support Programmes

AOs will, when appropriate, support the school in the development and implementation of Pastoral Support Programmes (PSPs).

Inset and Training

Inset and training is offered appropriately, covering such issues as:

- good practice on the keeping of registers;
- strategies for promoting regular attendance;
- strategies for addressing persistent absenteeism;
- communication with parents;
- good practice in monitoring punctuality;
- reintegrating long-term absentees;
- rewards and incentives;
- first-day of absence contact;
- primary-secondary transfer – including workshops with pupils re transition.

Children Missing Education

AOs have a clear role to play in helping to trace children who go missing from schools.

LA Children Missing Education procedures incorporate the DFE S2S (school-to-school) Missing Pupil Database and the LA's One Database and are integrated into Locality working. School follows corresponding procedures in relation to those pupils who are removed from school by their parents without a named-school destination being provided and confirmed.

Children who Refuse to Attend School

In some cases, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between a child who is psychologically traumatised by the prospect of attending school and a child who simply does not want to go to school. It is clear, however, that in such circumstances the longer the child remains out of education the more difficult it will be to secure a return to regular attendance at school. Appropriate procedures are undertaken.

Role of Learning Service

Kirklees Learning Partners (KLPs), will offer challenge and support to schools in matters of attendance. KLPs will:

- consider a school's attendance data and compare this with comparative benchmark data in order to assess performance;
- assess progress achieved towards the meeting of attendance targets;
- consider the attendance performance of identified pupil cohorts;
- analyse any links between attendance and attainment;
- offer support and challenge to the school to ensure that the curriculum offered supports good attendance;
- liaise with relevant support services accordingly.

We will support the attendance of children at school by accessing appropriate training and advice on child safety and other safeguarding issues and on supporting vulnerable pupils, such as LAC and children from homes where there are incidents of domestic violence.

We are vigilant in monitoring absence rates and discuss repeated absences or noted patterns of absence with the Special Needs Co-ordinator to promote whole school responses to attendance problems

Role of the Management Information Service

The Management Information Service provides school with detailed data relating to attendance/absence issues allowing us to analysis and interrogation of this data.

MULTI-AGENCY NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

We recognise that the reasons for non-school attendance are such that no single service or agency can expect on its own successfully to address the issue and strive to develop a multi-agency, cross-service, inter-disciplinary approach which is characterised by the delivery of a child-centred, seamless, co-ordinated and effective response.

SUPPORTING THE ATTENDANCE OF VULNERABLE PUPILS OR PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Policy and Arrangements for Supporting Looked After Children

School recognises that looked after children may underachieve as a group and is determined to address this situation.

Policy and Arrangements for Supporting Young Carers

School recognises that a number of children may be late to or absent from school as a consequence of their responsibilities in relation to caring for a sick or disabled parent or sibling.

School responds sympathetically to the needs of young carers and combines this with a recognition that these children are nevertheless fully entitled to participate in all educational activities.

Referral of young carers to outside agencies will be done sensitively, recognising any feelings of guilt which the individual child may be experiencing.

School has designated a teacher – INCO - to have responsibility for young carers. We seek appropriate advice on how to support these pupils

Policy and Arrangements for Supporting the Attendance of Pupils who have or may have Special Educational Needs

We recognise that special educational needs, including unidentified or unmet SEN, can prevent some children from attending school. School practitioners (including SENCO) work with AOs, Educational Psychologists and other LA support staff and with the family when there are concerns that a pupil's poor attendance may be related to unidentified or unmet SEN. The Parent Partnership Service, a confidential arms' length statutory service, offers information and support to parents of children and young people with SEN. The PPS can advise parents on attendance issues where SEN is considered to be a contributory factor.

Policy and Arrangements for Supporting the Attendance of Pupils who may have been bullied

We recognise that bullying is an issue which may prevent some children from attending school or from achieving their full potential when they do attend.

AOs will offer support to pupils whose attendance is being affected by actual or perceived bullying.

Policy and Arrangements for Supporting the Attendance of other Vulnerable Groups

School will endeavour to respond energetically to support the school attendance of any group of children who may be vulnerable. Such groups might include:

- children from families under stress;
- children transferring school;
- children entering school outside the normal year of entry.
- traveller pupils

KEY DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

Advice and Guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Pupil Attendance - DfES Circular 2005

Missing Out: LA Management of School Attendance and Exclusion - Audit Commission 1999

Improving School Attendance in England – National Audit Office 2005

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006

Keeping Pupil Registers DFE 2007

Ensuring Regular School Attendance. Guidance on the Legal Measures Available to Secure Regular School Attendance – DFE 2007

Guidance on Education-Related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices – DfES 2004

This policy on attendance was developed in discussion with staff, governors, parents and pupils taking account of relevant guidance issued by the DfE and good practice identified by the LA.

Review date Summer 2023