



Attendance Policy

Sunnybrow Primary School



Academic Year

2025/2026

Attendance Policy
2025-2026
Sunnybrow Primary School

Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Claire Sim	Head Teacher	c.sim200@sunnybrowps.co.uk
Claire Sim	Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	c.sim200@sunnybrowps.co.uk
Jeannine Murray	Chair of Governors	j.murray500@sunnybrowps.co.uk

Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Claire Sim	Headteacher/SENCO	01388 746 413
Carl Vincent	Deputy Headteacher	01388 746 413
Julie Bray	Parent Support Advisor	j.bray100@willington.durham.sch.uk
Louise Jones/Gemma Clarke-Boyd	School Secretary	01388 746 413

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

'Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for today.'

Sunnybrow Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.



Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school, and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

- **Did you know** that an average attendance of 80% or less across a child's school career adds up to missing a whole 2 years from school?
- **Did you know** that in a school year, being 5 minutes late each day = 3 days off.

Here's what the data shows:

- Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.
- Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.
- Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.
- Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Children who have regular attendance are more likely to achieve their potential as they have no missed learning.

Their friendships are more stable and children are settled and happy at school.

A fractured attendance can lead to anxiety and a lack of stability.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

All safeguarding children, equality, diversity, disability and inclusion policies. It is written in line with guidance from Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.



We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.
- School is a safe and welcoming safe for **all** children, so children want to come to school.

2. Attendance data

The school has a rigorous approach to attendance data led by the Headteacher, School Secretaries and Parent Support Advisor. First day absence and follow up procedures are in place. The Headteacher, with support from the Attendance Officer tracks data and proactively follows the Local Authority attendance guidelines, working constructively with parents to resolve issues before they become entrenched.

Persistent absence

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent. School will inform parents/ carers when their child is close to becoming persistently absent (attendance at 92%) and they will be invited into school for a meeting with the Headteacher and Parent Support Advisor so appropriate support can put into place.

Severe absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent. School will work with pupils, parents, partner services and agencies to provide additional support through a more formal, planned approach in conjunction with the Local Authority.

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 school-week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence

If support is appropriate, this should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Penalty Notice or Offence investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. (DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. (DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet)

If penalty notices are not paid then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence. If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences

3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

The school will contact parents and arrange a meeting to discuss possible patterns in attendance. This is supported by Julie Bray our Parent Support Advisor and our Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer. In addition, as part of the strategic group, the SENCO and emotional well-being lead will work with those children in school, to understand any barriers to attendance. An Attendance Support Plan will be written in consultation with all stakeholders.

4. Facilitate support

The school operates a holistic approach to attendance. As well as the Headteacher and Parent Support Advisor meeting with parents, we also have support in school for pupils in order to remove barriers. This includes support from our SENDCO, Senior Leadership Team and our Nurture Lead. If this is not enough, a strategic meeting will take place and the case will be triaged and we will seek support for the parent such as through Early Help.

5. Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or team around the family. At this point, the school would seek clarification and advice from the Attendance Improvement Team.

6. Enforce

If, following the school's attempts to intervene, there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or parents have not co-operated with the school's attempts to improve the situation, the school are required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action.

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Headteacher authorises absences. If your child misses school a lot because of illness, or if school do not know of any serious health issue that would mean your child could miss school a lot, the school may ask you to provide medical evidence to authorise absences. If parents do not contact school to explain why their child is absent, this absence will be marked as unauthorised. If a child in Sunnybrow has 5 authorised absences, the school is likely to make a referral to the local authority, which could lead to a fixed penalty notice or further legal action. Under the new national framework, fixed penalty notices are considered when a child has missed ten or more sessions (five days) for unauthorised reasons in a period of ten school weeks

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence. If you have any concerns or queries regarding attendance, please contact the Headteacher.

General / frequently asked questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's Headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday. **The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.**

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Attendance and absence management

Promoting good attendance and punctuality



We strive to raise the profile of good attendance within school. We have an attendance mascot (Max the Meerkat), who is always looking for MAXimum attendance.

Each week, in Celebration Assembly, the class with the best overall attendance wins Max and gets a cookie from his cookie jar. The winning class also get £1 to put in their class savings jar.

We report weekly attendance percentages for each class on the school newsletter- 'The Friday Flyer'.

Monthly, every child who has achieved 100% will earn a raffle ticket. At the end of the year, a ticket will be drawn and the winner will receive a prize.

Punctuality:

The school gates open at 8.45am. We will keep the gates open for ten minutes to allow for 'soft start' into school and to ensure children are in and settled before registration.

Registration time is at **8.55am**, at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class.

In-line with Government guidance, the register will close at **9.20am**. Pupils arriving late but before the register closed will be marked as late (L). Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (Arbor).

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions

A letter or dojo message will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Headteacher and Parent Support Advisor will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way to improve this.

If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason, a letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with the Headteacher and Parent Support Advisor for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind the pattern of poor punctuality.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality, then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

Communication

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

On the first day of absence

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence or parents can message Mrs Jones (Mon-Wed) or Mrs Clarke-Boyd (Thurs-Fri) via Class Dojo.

Doctors and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

Periods of extended absence

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days, then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received, the school will text or telephone, to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare. Our Parent Support Advisor will carry out a home welfare visit to check that everything is okay.

If the school receives no reason for any absence, then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (fine). This also includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Pupils with specific needs

Our policy will be applied fairly and consistently with due regard to individual needs of pupils/families who have specific barriers to attendance.

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that you keep school informed of any change of details**. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Please see key contact list and details at the start of this document.

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, school will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed by parents and staff
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents and students to implement the policy effectively
- Ensure regular meetings of the behaviour and attendance sub-committee take place and they will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance. Governor meetings will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site

The school leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job

Document History Log:

Author of document:	Claire Sim	Job role:	Headteacher
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Date document created:	March 2023	Approval by Governing Body:	
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Annual Review History:

Task	Date Reviewed	Reviewed by	Signatories
First document review	September 2024	C. Sim	<i>C. Sim</i>
2 nd Review	September 2025	C. Sim	<i>C. Sim</i>
3 rd Review			
4 th Review			

Revisions Log:

Revision	Date of revision	Reason for revision	Resulting version number	Signatories
Revision 1	01.09.23	Added in that guidance had been sought from KCSIE 2023	1	C. Sim
Revision 2	01.09.24	Changed KCSIE to version 2024.	2	C. Sim
Revision 3	02.09.25	Changes KCSIE to version 2025. Added changes to registration times.	3	C. Sim