

Attendance policy

Silver Birch School



Approved by Proprietor: Noel Thomas

Last reviewed on: September 2022

Next review due by: September 2023

1. Aim

The aim of Silver Birch School attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to as much as is possible.

Silver Birch School takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support.

This document is supported by our policies on **safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning**.

2. Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable —

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age —

- (a) when he attains the age of five, if he attains that age on a prescribed day, and
- (b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his attaining that age.

Prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March

A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year (the last Friday in June) —

- (a) if he attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- (b) if he attains that age on that day, or
- (c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his attaining that age.

Silver Birch School is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this document accordingly.

3. Roles and responsibilities

School leadership team

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full review
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- ensure that legislation and government guidance on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislative changes and how to implement them
- nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop and engage with multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings
- notify the LA and provide all necessary information when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register or when a child's name is added to the admission register

Teachers and support staff

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed

- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents/carers:

- engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- encourage and support their children's aspirations
- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and with the necessary equipment
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school **(see section 4)**, and include an expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as making medical and dental appointments outside school hours
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the headteacher **(see section 4.5)**
- inform the school in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren) along with the name of the parent/carer with whom the child shall live
- sign a home-school agreement.

Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- be aware of the school's attendance rules, and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents or carers and the school timetable
- speak to the headteacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable
- bring a note of explanation from their parents or carers to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen
- follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late **(see section 4.8)**. Pupils are held responsible for this and it is made clear to all pupils what this procedure is

by their teachers. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

- sign a home–school agreement.

4. Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences.

Staff should make it clear on the school register when taking attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised. Where staff have concerns regarding absences, they should follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents/carers should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return. For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a written note from the parent/carer of the child.

4.1 Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents/carers will need to make a phone call to alert the school on each day of absence.

For prolonged absence due to illness, parents may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper. If these are not provided on request it may result in the absence continuing to be classed as unauthorised.

4.2 Medical or dental appointments

Parents/carers should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

4.3 Authorised absences

There may be some exceptional instances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement.

4.4 Exclusion

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. The headteacher will arrange for work to be sent home.

4.5 Family holidays and extended leave

Parents should make every effort to ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. Parents may request a leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances. Requests for leave of this type must be made in writing to the headteacher in advance of the leave being taken. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration.

All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing and will outline the details of when the child is expected to return to school. Parents/carers should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

It remains the headteacher's decision whether to authorise any request for absence during term time.

If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents/carers may be subject to further action by the school or prosecution by the local authority.

4.6 Religious observance

Silver Birch School recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends and will allow authorised absence for these times.

Parents/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

4.7 Study leave

The school operates study sessions at school within this time to help with revision and to reduce the amount of time spent out of school.

4.8 Late arrival

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon. In the morning **registration begins at 9.15am**. Pupils who arrive after 9.30am will be marked as late.

Pupils who arrive after the registration period has ended should go straight to the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised. It is vital that pupils sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for.

The school also takes the attendance register during the afternoon of each school day. If a pupil is not present at the time that the afternoon registration takes place, they will be marked absent. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Persistent lateness may result in disciplinary action being taken against the pupil and/or criminal action being taken against the parents/carers.

5. School action: following up absences

Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the attendance officer will contact the parent or carer to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

Parents/carers will be contacted if a pupil gives a reason for an unauthorised absence and there is doubt about the truth of the excuse.

The attendance officer will chase pupils for a written explanation from their parents/carers for their absence upon the pupil's return from being away. This is for the school records and is necessary no matter what the reason or length of the absence.

Where pupils have been away for either short or long term, the school will support that child when they re-enter school to help them catch up on any work that they have missed.

Where a child has been continuously absent from school for a period of 20 school days or more, and where the absence was unauthorised and both the school and LA have been unable to establish the whereabouts of the child after jointly making reasonable enquiries, the school may remove the child from the school roll. The school will notify the local authority when such action is taken.

The school may take disciplinary action against any pupils who are discovered to be persistently truanting and parents/carers will be contacted to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

This document will be reviewed annually.