



Shinfield Infant and Nursery School

Attendance Policy

Author:	Amanda Turner, Headteacher
Approver:	Local Advisors
Owner:	Local Advisory Board
Date:	September 2020
Next review:	September 2021

Changes History:

Version	Date	Amended by:	Substantive changes:	Purpose
1.0	01.09.20	A Turner	Revised document with addendum for COVID-19 pandemic	First release
1.1				
1.2				
1.3				



Shinfield Infant and Nursery School is an academy and part of The Circle Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, company number 11031096, registered at The Circle Trust, London Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1SS. Tel: 0118 332 0011 www.thecircletrust.co.uk

1. Introduction

The Education Act 1996 requires parents /carers to ensure their child receives an efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The Supreme Court has determined that 'regular' attendance means that which is "*in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school*" (Isle of Wight Council v Platt) (6th April 2017).

This school's Attendance Policy is based upon the requirements contained within the following:

- The Education Act 1996;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended by The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013; and
- Department for Education Guidance as from time to time issued in respect of school attendance matters.

2. Commitment to Attendance

As a school we recognise the clear connection between regular attendance and achievement and will, therefore, work in partnership with parents/carers, the school's Local Advisory Board, The Circle Trust and the Local Authority to ensure that pupils achieve maximum possible attendance.

3. Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year unless there are good reasons for their absence;
- Arrive at school on time; and
- Be appropriately prepared for the day.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Ensure they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy, their legal responsibilities with regard to their child's education and the requirement to ensure their child's regular attendance at school;
- Ensure their child attends school every day throughout the academic year unless school has approved the leave of absence;
- Ensure their child arrives punctually and prepared for the school day;
- Telephone the school each day if their child is unable to attend due to illness or any other unavoidable circumstance;
- Provide an explanation for the absence when their child returns to school, including providing medical evidence where requested;
- Avoid making medical, dental or other appointments during the school day;
- Notify school of any issues that may affect their child's attendance; and
- Advise school immediately of any changes to contact details.

School staff will:

- Ensure Registers are taken promptly at 9.00 a.m. and again at the start of the afternoon session at 1.15pm;
- Contact parents/carers when a pupil has failed to arrive at school and where no message explaining absence has been received by 9.30 a.m.;
- Send a written request to parents/carers where a pupil's absence is unexplained – *see note below on Authorised and Unauthorised Absence*;

- Provide parents/carers with their child's percentage attendance at regular intervals (eg: end of year reports and at other times as appropriate);
- Work with parents/carers when there are concerns over a pupil's lack of regular attendance;
- Notify the Education Welfare Service when a pupil fails to attend school regularly or when a pupil has missed 10 school days or more without permission: this being a legal requirement; and
- Where absences persist then a formal referral should be made to the Education Welfare Service which may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

4. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is when the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence OR has given approval in advance, for example:

- a family wedding or funeral
- music/dance examinations and sport event in which a child is competing
- religious observance

Unauthorised absence is when school does not accept an explanation as being reasonable justification for the absence, OR when no explanation has been provided despite a written request being sent to parents/carers, OR when the Headteacher has not approved a parent's/carer's request for leave of absence, for example:

- overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps)
- parentally-condoned absences
- unauthorised holidays in term-time –5 days or more
- excessive delayed return from authorised extended holidays without prior school agreement – i.e. 2 days
- persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed) - i.e. 10 occasions in a 10 school week period.
- less than 80% attendance, the absences being unauthorised; during a 4 school week period
- a pupil having been excluded from a Wokingham School, being found present in a public place, during school hours, without reasonable justification.

Parents/carers should be aware that it is the Headteacher's decision whether to authorise an absence or not. In the case of long term or frequent absences due to illness or a medical condition, supporting medical evidence may be requested. This could be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip from a doctor's surgery or a copy of a prescription. (Please note that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for any cost.)

5. Punctuality/Lateness

It is crucial that pupils arrive at school on time for registration at the beginning of the day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of other pupils in the class. It is paramount, therefore, that all pupils arrive at school on time. The school site is open at 8.45 a.m. and the school building opens at 9.00 a.m.

Registration takes place between 9 and 9.10 a.m. and pupils who arrive after that time will be recorded as late to school.

Registers close at 9.20 a.m. and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence (This could lead to formal legal action by the local authority if the problem persists – see **Penalty Notices** below).

Persistent lateness by a pupil will initially be followed up by school staff and, if not resolved, will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

6. Pupils Leaving During the School Day

Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.

Parents/carers should arrange medical, dental and other appointments outside of school time unless it is an emergency. Parents/carers are requested to confirm the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time.

Pupils must be signed out at the School Office on leaving the school and signed back in on their return. When a pupil is being collected from school, parents/carers are requested to report to the School Office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.

7. Term Time Leave of Absence

At Shinfield Infant and Nursery School we believe term time absences should be actively discouraged. Our purpose is to ensure pupils achieve their full potential and there is a clear link between poor attendance and underachievement. However, we also recognise that there may be occasions when a parent/carer considers there are extenuating or compassionate reasons for such absence. The law has removed the right for school to grant up to 10 days' leave of absence in special circumstances for the purposes of a family holiday and there is no automatic right to take any leave or holiday in term time. As outlined in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, the Headteacher can only grant leave of absence if the circumstances are considered 'exceptional' in which case the pupil's absence will be authorised.

The school holiday dates, INSET days and other important dates are published on the school's website and parents/carers are asked to note these when planning holidays and family events. If there are exceptional reasons for requesting leave of absence during term time, the following procedures will apply:

The parent/s or carer/s with whom the pupil normally resides must complete and submit a Leave of Absence form at least one month in advance of the requested absence. Forms are available from the School Office or the school website. The Headteacher (or person authorised to do so on the Headteacher's behalf) will consider the application, and will decide whether or not the application can be granted on the basis of 'exceptional' circumstances. Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending upon the specific circumstances of the particular application. School will endeavour to respond within 5 working days to the parent/s or carer/s who submitted the application.

Where leave of absence is granted, the pupil's absence will be authorised.

8. Penalty Notices

A one-off period of irregular attendance, such as an unauthorised period of leave in term time, can result in a referral being made to the Education Welfare Service and this may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice by Wokingham Borough Council in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct. The Penalty Notice Code of Conduct September 2019 states that a Penalty Notice may also be issued in these cases:

- 10 unauthorised absences due to a child arriving late after the register has closed
- 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) in term time in a 10-week period. This can span from the last term in a school year through to the first term in the next school year. The deliberate taking of a holiday in term time without/against school permission (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parents/carers understood that permission had not/would not be given) and where this has created unauthorised absence of at least 10 sessions (5 days or more), whether consecutively or not, in a 10 school week period, will result in the issuing of a penalty notice.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days (Figures correct as of 01.09.17).

If a Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter may result in each parent/carer being liable for prosecution in the Magistrates Court for failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school contrary to Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

9. Addressing Attendance Concerns

Shinfield Infant and Nursery School collects attendance and absence data daily and weekly from the Registers. This information is forwarded to the Local Authority, The Circle Trust and the Department for Education as required. This collecting of data also enables us to identify those pupils whose attendance is

giving cause for concern. Should this apply to your child, the Headteacher will write to you to make you aware of the concern. If your child's attendance does not show an improvement you will be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher and Attendance Officer to agree an Attendance Action Plan.

10. The Education Welfare Service

If your child's Attendance Action Plan fails to bring about the required improvement in attendance, we will consider making a formal referral to the Education Welfare Service which works to support schools, parents and pupils to promote and ensure good school attendance and punctuality. However, the Service also has a statutory responsibility to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

When a pupil is referred to the Education Welfare Service there are various actions that can be taken to address attendance concerns. In certain circumstances, and in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct, Penalty Notices may be used to bring about an improvement in a pupil's attendance. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

The Fast Track Intervention may also be offered as an early intervention measure designed to ensure that appropriate action is taken to address school attendance concerns. Fast Track involves engaging parents and identifying what improvements and actions need to be achieved over a fixed time frame (usually 8 or 12 weeks).

Parents have a legal responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly. Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates' Court.

11. Promoting Good Attendance

At Shinfield Infant and Nursery School we celebrate excellent attendance throughout the year in a number of ways:

- Attendance figures displayed in the weekly newsletter
- Class awards on a weekly basis.
- Individual pupil certificates for 100% attendance for the whole school year.

12. Changing Schools

It is important that if parents/carers decide to send their child to a different school that they inform Shinfield Infant and Nursery School in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from our school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next;
- The address of the new school; and
- A new home address if appropriate is supplied.

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and after four weeks the pupil will be registered on the S2S website as a Pupil Missing Education.

13. Elective Home Education

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The law allows parents/carers to choose to educate children at home instead of sending them to school. This is known as Elective Home Education.

Should parents/carers wish to follow this route, they need to put this in writing to the Headteacher with a request that their child is removed from the school roll. School will then inform the Education Welfare Service and arrangements will be made to monitor the education put in place at home.

14. Local Advisors

It is the Local Advisors' legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate attendance at Shinfield Infant and Nursery School and our figures are presented to the Local Advisory Board (LAB) on a termly basis. The LAB has specific responsibility for overseeing attendance matters in our school.

Date Approved: September 2020

Review Date: September 2021

Appendix:

1. Addendum added September 2020

—

Appendix 1:

Addendum to the Attendance Policy for Shinfield Infant and Nursery School

1. Scope

The Government has made it clear that they expect all pupils to return to school in September 2020 in all settings and that attendance is mandatory. Shinfield Infant and Nursery School will continue to promote good attendance; thus enabling and encouraging all pupils to achieve excellence. There is a very strong link between regular attendance and achievement and we will be expecting all of our pupils to return to school to support both their educational achievement and their well-being. Securing good attendance is a fundamental responsibility within our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in our school. Shinfield Infant and Nursery School is able to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct; however, the school would like to ensure every alternative option is exhausted prior to issuing sanctions, including fixed penalty notices.

This addendum applies until further notice and sets out changes and exceptions to our normal attendance policy. Pupils, parents/carers and staff should continue to follow our normal attendance policy with respect to anything not covered in this addendum.

2. Prevention

From the start of the new school year in September 2020, attendance will once again be mandatory for all children, except where statutory exemptions apply. The expectation that parents/carers will let the school know if a child is unable to attend and the reason will remain. Pupils should not attend school if they have been given Public Health or clinical advice and must adhere to self-isolation period. During this time, pupils will have access to remote education via Google Classroom.

The register will be taken as usual and attendance codes used consistently. Registration periods will accommodate the staggered start times.

3. Lateness

Due to restrictions on parents gathering on the school site Shinfield Infant and Nursery School Primary will be operating staggered start times as follows:

8:40	Year 2
8.45	Nursery
8:50	Year 1
9:00	F2

4. Support

Some pupils will need additional social and emotional support for re-engaging them to return to school; therefore the school will identify pupils and plan appropriate support. The school will then engage with parents/carers who will also need additional time and support to secure pupils' regular attendance. The school will be clear on attendance expectations, take time to understand concerns and build confidence within the parent/carer community.

The school will continue to work with other professionals to ensure the services and support are in place that will ensure a smooth return for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

5. Becoming unwell at school

If anyone in the school becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they must be sent home and advised to follow '[stay at home guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID19\) infection](#)', which sets out that they must self-isolate for at least 7 days and should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19). Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms. If a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved to the side of their bubble classroom in the first instance where they can be isolated away from other children. The window should be opened for ventilation. If the child needs to go to the toilet while waiting to be collected, they should use the allocated year group toilet. The toilet will then be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else. PPE must be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs). More information on PPE use can be found in the '[Safe working in education childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#)' guidance. Any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms and any pupils who have been in close contact with them do not need to go home to self-isolate unless they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test) or if the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive (see below) or they have been requested to do so by NHS Track & Trace.

6. Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are in close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19). If rates of the disease rise in the Wokingham area, children (or family members) will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore, they may be temporarily absent. Some pupils no longer required to shield, but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional, may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school in September. Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

7. Safeguarding

We will continue to apply all safeguarding responsibilities connected to pupil attendance at school as detailed in the policy and the addendum (available on website). Non-attendance of timetabled pupils should be followed up in the usual way and the reason for absence should be documented on SIMS. Where every effort has been made to contact a family of a child that has failed to attend and there are safeguarding concerns, reporting should take place through the normal channels.

8. Register coding

Further technical guidance for recording attendance and absence has been received and is being used.

9. Monitor and Improve:

The senior leadership team will keep the arrangements detailed in this addendum under review and amendments to operational procedures will be made as required and will be clearly communicated to all staff, advisors and pupils. A thorough review of the addendum will be undertaken every half term.