



Sleights Church of England
(Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Attendance and Absence Policy

September 2024

Working together to be happy; to flourish; to succeed
through our Christian values
perseverance, respect and trust.

Introduction

At Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, we recognise that positive behaviour and good school attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and can put them at risk of wider harm.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly and on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance including the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing education or absent from school.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- Work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.
- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure every pupil has access to the suitable, full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

Our policy outlines the school's commitment to attendance. Our policy aims to provide clear guidance to all staff, parents & carers, pupils and governors/trustees about the responsibilities and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued.
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour, and inclusive learning.

School Attendance and the Law

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

Promoting Regular Attendance

At Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The Headteacher, Scott Grason-Taylor is the senior leader responsible for attendance. Louise Stubbs, the school receptionist, will work with families to ensure absence is identified.

Improving school attendance is everyone's business, it is a shared responsibility by governors, all school staff, parents, pupils, and the wider school community. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families. We pride ourselves at Sleights on knowing and understanding our families and their circumstances.
- Give families information about attendance in our newsletters.
- Promote the benefits of high attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance. This is often as a collective effort, including highest class attendance, rather than singling individuals out.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress. This takes place every half term - in our parents evening (termly) or via updated registers being shared on alternative half terms.

- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body at Sleights recognises the importance of school attendance and promotes it across the school's ethos and policies. They take an active role in attendance improvement by:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents so that children attend school every day and are safeguarded from harm.
- Identifying a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters and ensuring that there is a named senior attendance champion.
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties by rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of the school's attendance procedures so that consistent attendance support is provided for all pupils.
- Ensuring the school engages and works effectively with the local authority Attendance Team and wider local partners and services to address barriers to school attendance.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing, challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils and processes for support are adapted to the individual needs of pupils including those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker or youth justice worker and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.
- Ensuring all school staff receive adequate training on attendance and that relevant staff have access to opportunities to share and learn from good practice in other schools.
- Ensuring that attendance data is shared with the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time.
- Reviewing the school's Attendance Policy, ensuring that the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.

The Headteacher at Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to all pupils and their parents.
- Monitor and analyse pupil attendance data.
- Implement the identified strategies for promoting excellent whole school attendance.
- Implement the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance.
- Manage individual pupil casework files.
- Coordinate individual action plans for pupils causing concern including the instigation of an Early Help Assessment and Plan and/ or the implementation of a attendance contract.
- Ensure first day calling procedures are adhered to if a child is absent from school without contact from parents.
- Make referrals to appropriate external agencies.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is regularly reviewed.

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues.
- Ensure that the regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with.
- Ensure that there is a named senior attendance champion to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource.
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time.
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governors.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented.
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.

All staff at Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to all pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Comply with the regulations and other relevant legislation.
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner.
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions.
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.

Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School requests that parents:

- Work with the school if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their schoolwork or home and family life so that we can offer support at the earliest opportunity.
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return, following this with a note wherever possible.
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school, and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance.
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.

Types of absence

Authorised absence: An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent/carer writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised. For example if a parent takes a child out of school and gives the reason that it was to go shopping for school shoes, this will not be authorised.

Unauthorised absence: An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a pupil is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

If a pupil has an attendance rate of less than 90% without a good reason, the school reserves the right to not authorise any absence.

Persistent absence (PA): The Department for Education (DfE) defines a 'persistent absentee' as a pupil who, at any point in the year, has accumulated absence at 10% or more of the available sessions regardless of whether or not any of it is authorised.

The PA status may change as the academic year progresses, but these pupils are at particular risk of achieving poor outcomes.

Severely absent (SA): Defined as a pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling.

*For further information about persistent and severely absent children, please see the section **Leave of Absence**.*

Absence Procedures

How should I let the school know that my child is not attending?

- Families should contact the school office on a day-to-day process via 01947810395 or let us know via email admin@sleights.n-yorks.sch.uk
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised
- Families should make contact before 9.00am, when our register closes.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.00 am;
- Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons or appointments.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is family responsibility to make first contact.
- We will make contact with families where we have not received information about absence between 9.15am and 9.30am. If we are unable to make contact with parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers. If we have not heard from families, or had successful contact, we will make a home visit on the morning of absence, in the interests of safeguarding.

If absence continues we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%, and/or where punctuality is a concern.
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with the Headteacher.
- Create a personalised action/support plan, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child.
- Offer or signpost you to support from other agencies or services, if appropriate.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Sleights are:

8.45am (doors closed at 8.50am) – Start of the day (to include registration) The registers close at 9.00am. If children arrive after this time, they are marked as late.

3.00pm – End of the day for Pre-School (Explorers)

3.15pm – End of the day (Reception, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2)

At 9.00am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows this.

The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with the Headteacher, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Leave of Absence

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child due to 'exceptional circumstances'. At Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, leave of absence is only granted at the discretion of the Headteacher and shall not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School will respond to all applications for leave of absence in writing.

Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must apply in writing to the Headteacher. We will treat each application individually and discuss with you the circumstances of the application before a decision is made. If a written request for leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, it will be marked as unauthorised. Retrospective requests will not be considered and will also result in

the absence being categorised as unauthorised. In such cases the school may make a referral to the Local Authority to request that a penalty notice fine is issued or consider prosecution.

When absence is granted by the Headteacher, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

How many days of school are missed before a fine is given?

- The school day is split into two sessions – one session counts as a morning or afternoon spent in school. If children attend a full day, this is recorded as 2 sessions.
- A penalty notice (fine) can be given where children miss **10 or more sessions** across a period of ten weeks. This could be a holiday that is 5 or more school days in length (10 sessions), or a combination of absence - for example, 4 sessions of holiday (2 school days) taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks.

How does the ten week period work?

- Missing sessions can be consecutive (for example, 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (for example, 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).
- The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years. For example, 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term.

How much money is the fine?

- The Department for Education set the fine at £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. This fine is for both parent for each child, regardless of whether the family live together or not. For example, a family with three children would expect to receive three fines for each parent - £240 each.
- In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.
- Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

Where does the money go?

- The Local Authority make the penalty notice and take this legal action. The money gathered from fining is put back into the Local Authority. The school does not make any money from fining families.

Medical appointments and absence due to illness

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, we ask that parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment wherever possible. The pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most circumstances, a child should not miss a whole day at school for an appointment.

We will request confirmation (in writing) where appointments are taken during the school day

Where a pupil has a verified and chronic health condition, we will aim to work with parents to ensure children have access to education and provide appropriate support in line with [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](#) and North Yorkshire's Medical Education Service. We will also consider whether an Individual Healthcare Plan is required.

Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance

Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

Support Systems

At Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, we recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

Strategies we may use to support families may include:

- Arrange meetings and opportunities to establish an understanding for absence.
- Explore the role of Play Therapy support in tackling absence.
- Increase established communication (such as additional phone calls or Tapestry contract)
- Additional support from the Early Help service.
- Creating an action plan to improve attendance.

We may also:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is causing a concern and/or where punctuality is a concern;
- Refer the matter to an external agency for multi-agency support;
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate).

- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents and pupils to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Part-time timetables

All schools have a statutory duty to provide full-time education for all pupils and we are committed to every child's right to a suitable, full-time education offer. In very exceptional circumstances, we may decide to implement a temporary, reduced timetable where a pupil's individual needs indicate they cannot currently access a full-time education and it would not be in their best interest to do so. We will not use a part-time timetable to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable will not be treated as a long-term solution and will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision. We will never put a part-time timetable in place without written agreement from parent/carer and/or other professionals working with the family as appropriate. This intervention will only be used as part of a comprehensive package of support for the pupil where it is safe to do so; it will be reviewed regularly in partnership with the child, parent and any other relevant professionals working with the family.

Deletions from the Register

At Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, we will add and will only delete pupils from our school roll in line with the Pupil Registration Regulations. In most circumstances, we will know in advance about pupils leaving our school; this will be planned and discussed with the parent in advance of the pupil leaving. At Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, we will always work with families to gain information about the pupil's next school and/or address before the pupil leaves to reduce the risk of pupils becoming a child missing education through lack of shared information.

We follow North Yorkshire Council's Child Missing Education procedures and will inform the Children Missing Education Team of all removals from our school roll no later than the date the child is removed in line with statutory responsibilities.

If a child is removed from roll to home educate, we can only de-register the child if we receive, in writing, the parent's intention to educate their child other than at school. The pupil will be de-registered on receipt of such a letter and North Yorkshire Council's will be informed of the removal from roll as outlined above.