AEM
Sutherland House School

Sutherland House School Attendance and Truancy Policy

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- DfE (2019) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy

Policy written by:	Milly Murray	Senior Teacher
Policy ratified by:	Ann Stewart	Head Teacher
Policy date:	September 2022	
Policy review date:	September 2023	

0

Contents page

1. Statement of intent

Sutherland House School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling good attendance.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which states that:

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability, and aptitude and to any special educational needs, he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".

2. Definitions

Sutherland House School defines "absence" as either:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

The school defines an "authorised absence" as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency.

The school defines an "unauthorised absence" as:

- Parents keeping children away from school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.

The school defines "persistent absenteeism (PA)" as:

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the academic year for any reason.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The governing body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of the attendance policy and procedures of the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Autism East Midland's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of the attendance policy and procedures of the school and distributing these to parents.

Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for:

- Following the attendance policy, and for ensuring pupils do so too. They will also be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.

Designated members of staff will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of each afternoon session.

The school will ensure that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

The school will inform the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Are being educated from home.
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning.
- Have been permanently excluded.

Parents/ carers will be expected to take responsibility for the attendance of their child/ children during term-time.

Parents/ carers will be expected to promote good attendance and ensure their child/ children attend school every day.

Pupils, who are able, should be responsible for their own attendance at school and for their punctuality to lessons.

4. Training of staff

We recognise that early intervention can prevent behaviours that challenge. As such, members of staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their inductions and annual refresher training.

Teachers and support staff will receive training on this policy as part of their new starter induction and receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Teachers and support staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern and know how such concerns should be managed.

5. Pupil expectations

Pupils are expected to attend school every day.

6. Absence procedures

Parents/ carers are required to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of any absence.

Parents/ carers are required to send a note on the first day their child returns with a signed explanation as to why they were absent. This must be done even if we have already received a phone call.

A telephone call will be made to the parent/ carer of any pupil who has not reported their absence on the first day of absence.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure that proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

In the case of persistent absence, arrangements will be made for parents/ carers to speak to the Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for pupil attendance.

The school will inform the LA of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without permission.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 85 percent, a formal meeting will be arranged with the parents/ carers.

7. Contact information

Parents/ carers must provide accurate and up-to-date contact details.

Parents/ carers are responsible for updating the school if the details change.

Parents/ carers must provide the school with more than one emergency contact number.

8. Attendance register

The designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.

- Absent.

- Attending an approved educational visit.

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school uses the national attendance codes to enable the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning

- \ = Present in the afternoon

- L = Late arrival before the register has closed

- C = Other Authorised Circumstances

- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made

- H = Authorised holiday

- I = Illness (NOT medical or dental)

- M = Medical or dental appointments

- R = Religious observance

- B = Off-site educational activity

- G = Unauthorised holiday

- O = Unauthorised absence

- U = Late – arrived after registration closed

- N = Reason not yet provided

- X = Non-compulsory school age absence

- S = Study leave

- T = Traveller absence

- W = Work experience

- V = Educational visit or trip

- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity

- J = At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment

- Y = Exceptional circumstances

- Z = Pupil not on admission register

- # = Planned whole or partial school closure
- * = Not yet Marked

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment, and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

9. Attendance referrals

If pupils are persistently absent, they will be referred to the Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for attendance who will attempt to resolve the situation through a parent agreement.

If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the local authority attendance officer has the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices.

10. Lateness

Punctuality is important.

The school understands that a lot of pupils travel a significant distance to school, and as such, are more likely to find themselves stuck in traffic from time to time.

The school also understands that the majority of our pupils are transported in taxis and LA transport, and therefore it is not always their fault if they are late for school.

The school day starts at 8.45am.

Registers begin at 9.15am, pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time. The register closes at 9.30am.

Attendance after the register closes will receive a mark to show that they are on site but will count as an absent mark.

11. Truancy

Truancy means any absence of part, or of all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be concerned about the regular attendance of pupils, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning.

All pupils are expected to be in their classes by 9:00am and 1:00pm, where the teacher will record the attendance.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting.

If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher will be notified and they will contact the pupil's parents, in order to assess the reasons behind the child not attending school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents/carers of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, then the school will inform the pupil's LA.
- The LA of the pupil will be informed where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally condoned absence, excessive holidays in term time and persistent late arrival at school.

12. Missing Children

Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the Headteacher.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing during the school day:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the Headteacher immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the headteacher.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
- All classrooms
- All toilets
- The hall
- The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents/ carers of the pupil will be notified.

8

- The school will attempt to contact parents/ carers using the emergency contacts provided.

- If the parents/ carers have had no contact from the pupil, and the list has been exhausted, then the police will be contacted.

- The missing pupil's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.

- If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, or is a LAC, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.

- When the pupil has been located, a designated member of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.

- The Headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure the pupil understands they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary.

- Parents/ carers and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

- The Headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred.

- Appropriate disciplinary procedures are followed in accordance with the Positive Behaviour Policy.

- Prolonged periods of unauthorised absence without contact will be handled in accordance with this policy.

- A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome.

13. Term-time Leave

Our aim is to prepare pupils for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed.

Leave during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, for example bereavement or serious illness.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- When a pupil is settling into the school, unless exceptional circumstances apply, e.g. the death of a family member

- Immediately before and during assessment periods

- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence

- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If term time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the pupil's LA will be informed.

14. Religious Observances

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days required for religious festivals.

Parents/ carers must inform the school at least 7 days in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

The day(s) of absence must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.

15. Appointments

As far as possible, parents/ carers should attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.

Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to the school.

If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, the pupil must be signed out by a parent/ carer.

Pupils must attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

16. Young Carers

The school understands the difficulties young carers face and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as throughout their time at the school.

The school takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each situation will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

17. Exceptional Circumstances

When absence is due to exceptional circumstances, the 'Y' code will be used on the attendance register.

Exceptional circumstances include when a pupil is unable to attend because:

- Transport provided by LA is not available and the pupil's home is not within walking distance.
- There has been widespread disruption to travel services which has prevented the pupil from attending.
- The pupil is in custody and will be detained for less than four months.

The use of the 'Y' code is collected in the school census for statistical purposes.

18. Rewarding Good Attendance

The school acknowledges outstanding attendance in the following ways:

- Trips e.g., cinema, bowling, out for a meal.
- Vouchers.
- Attendance displays.

Good attendance and punctuality will be rewarded in the following ways:

- Postcards/ letters home
- Certificates

19. Monitoring and Review

The school monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year.

The school's attendance target is 95 percent each year.

Details of our absence levels can be found on our website.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher.

Any changes made to the policy will be communicated to all members of staff.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2023.

Appendix A - Attendance Monitoring Procedures

1.
- A red, amber, green (RAG) rated spreadsheet will be sent weekly to class teachers detailing weekly and annual attendance to date.

2.
- Attendance will be discussed with class teachers. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by FT should be passed immediately to the Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for attendance

3.
- Contact will be made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. Second day N codes will be sent to the Deputy Headteacher. Any N codes not established after a week will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

4.
- Pupil attendance drops below 95% – Class teacher or Deputy Headteacher will speak to pupils to discuss any issues or problems to ascertain how the school can help to improve their attendance. Class teacher will make a phone call home, if applicable.

5.
- Pupil attendance drops below 93% – a letter will be sent home raising concerns that attendance has fallen below the school target of 95%. The letter will also have a leaflet attached outlining how parents can work with the school and their child to help improve attendance.

6.
- Pupil attendance drops below 90% – a letter will be sent home explaining that a pupil's absence is now being monitored. Deputy Headteacher will contact parents. Attendance monitored for two weeks. If attendance has not improved, then parents will be required to attend a meeting in school with the Deputy Headteacher. If parents are unwilling to co-operate, or genuinely unable to attend, a referral may be required to the local authority education welfare officer who will then carry out a home visit.

7. • If attendance has not improved within the two week monitoring period (likely to be close to 85% or below), or if attendance has fallen rapidly, parents will be invited to either: a school attendance meeting with the Deputy Headteacher. A LA representative will be invited. Provision will be discussed and targets will be set for raising attendance. This will be monitored over a further two week period.

8. • After the two week monitoring period, if targets are met, a letter will be sent home from the leadership team to congratulate the pupil and the family. Monitoring and communication with the family will continue until attendance stabilises – if targets are not met, the Deputy Headteacher will contact the LA as an update and to discuss further actions such as a longer monitoring period or a parental contract.

9. • No improvements in this time may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued by the LA