



Respect for ourselves, each other and our environment

Soudley School Attendance Policy

April 2021

This School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, governors and volunteers to share this commitment.

The school expects the highest standards of you and expects you to fulfil the responsibilities of your job description.

We consider that as a minimum, we will be polite, calm and well-mannered to others. We will speak appropriately, with consideration, dignity and respect.

We will be helpful to all stakeholders and afford them equal kindness, thoughtfulness and support.

It is our job to support our children and make it work for them; accordingly we work with and support the community to enable this.

Right Respecting School

Article 3 All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

Article 28 Children have a right to an education. Discipline in schools should respect children's human dignity. Primary education should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 29 Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

Aims of this policy

Everyone at Soudley is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all our pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education then punctuality and good attendance is a crucial factor.

As a school, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as quickly as possible. We will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

Children are expected to attend school for 190 days in the academic school year. The Local Authority and Soudley School set out what days this should be.

This leaves 175 days when children can be with their families.

In addition to other hours worked by Soudley School staff, parents and carers, Governors and the Local Authority, expect school staff to be in school, available for work and to carry out their work duties for 195 days in the academic year.

The government expects:

Schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents to:

- Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

Regular attendance is defined as, ‘attend school everyday day unless there is a reason acceptable to the school.’

Parent means: all natural parents whether married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person, any person who has day to day care of a child i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

Pupils to;

- Attend regularly
- Be punctual to their lessons.

This is set out in the following documents:

Department for Education guidance for School Attendance September 2018

Education Act 1966 (section 444(1))

Educations Inspection Act 2006 section 103

Further supporting documents can be found here:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2082769/attendance-guidance-for-schools-updated-311017.pdf>

The school expects children to attend school every day

Good attendance is linked closely with our values and vision:

- This is the link to **SMARTER**: I am showing Motivation/ Attentiveness/ Responsibility/Teamwork/ Equality/ Respectfulness
- This is the link to: Rights Respecting Schools: Articles 3, 28 and 29
- This is linked to: *Respect for ourselves, each other and our environment*

OFSTED states *Pupils value their education. Few are absent or persistently absent. No groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance. The attendance of pupils who have previously had exceptionally high rates of absence is showing marked and sustained improvement.*

The school will

- Foster high expectation of pupils’ attendance in school on a regular basis.
- Maintain a clear policy on attendance which is known to all staff, governors, pupils and parents and carers.
- Raise family awareness of the importance of a child’s regular attendance at school.
- Maintain an accurate attendance/registering system and a mechanism for monitoring and controlling attendance.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law, follow the registration guidelines issued by Gloucestershire LA and complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.

- Be vigilant for extended or unusual absences that may be a cause for concerns
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures with the Local Authority (in this case Gloucestershire County Council, staff and the school governors.
- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence and work towards ensuring all pupils feel supported and valued.
- Maintain clear communication both within the school and between school and parents
- Inform parents/guardians/carers of what constitutes legitimate reasons for absence.
- Set targets for attendance at the start of each seasonal term so that our children and families understand what is expected; this target is dependent on the length of the school term.
- Celebrate attendance with the school community each week at Celebration Assembly (which is then posted on our Facebook page)
- Present a 100% Attendance sticker to reward 100% attendance termly.
- Present a Great Attendance sticker to reward 99% + attendance termly
- Where attendance has improved, we will send a letter out to the parents to say thank you.
- In line with the Local Authority guidelines (Gloucestershire County Council) , issue penalty notices in order to help minimise unauthorised absence in terms times. (see below)

Helping children and families to improve attendance

A rising number of absences due to illness can effect the attendance target. This may not be because of an outbreak of illness but from pupils missing school from coughs and colds or staying off because they 'might be ill'. Combined with unauthorised absences, the percentage of absence can become too high.

It is understandable that this can be a very personal and sensitive issue and parents hold different ideas over what type and level of illness warrants children staying at home.

Therefore the school encourages parents to send their child to school and would reassure each parent that if their child became ill in school or they were too ill to manage in school, we would ring them immediately.

Would parents please;

Inform the class teacher, staff member or the office staff, and we can acknowledge your concern. We will watch your child carefully.

Speak privately with the staff member – if your child hears you say, "You can come home if you are ill", they will more often than not remind us that, "My mum said I could go home if I was ill".

For those children who need medication (prescribed or e.g. Calpol) the school will administer the medicine, **provided you have been to the office and signed a consent form.**

Further support

- Where attendance falls below 95% , the Headteacher may contact parents to inform them of the percentage and, where appropriate, will meet with the parents to improve the attendance.
- The school may also seek to ask for further support, with parental consent, from **Early Help, Families First etc.**
- If ways of trying to improve a child's attendance fail, the school will be mindful of its duties under **Keeping Children Safe In Education (2020)** and may request advice and involvement for the community social worker team.
- Work with families through **Attendance Improvement Meetings (AIMs)**
- If you are ill or have difficulty in getting your child to school we can help you by collecting your child and bringing them to school .Call the school Office 01594 822004
- Children can be in school with non-contagious illnesses but we do appreciate that, when children get ill, they may need rest and recuperation.
- If your child is not very well and they are in school we can administer medicine, watch them carefully and if necessary ring you if they really need to go home. (We will need your written consent and information on how much and what time to give the medicine. Forms are in the School Office)

- Hospital Appointments – we appreciate that these are sent to you and are often in the school day. We also appreciate that there is a long drive to appointments. However, we expect that your child will be in school for part of that day. For example, if it is a morning appointment, your child should be back in school for the afternoon.
- Routine Dental and Medical appointments **should not** be made during school hours.

Information on Absences.

Absences are considered either to be:

- **Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason and that the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be away or that the explanation given afterwards is accepted as satisfactory justification. Legitimate reasons for absence may include illness or exceptional circumstances.
- **Unauthorised absences** are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This includes unauthorised holiday, keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy, absences which have not been properly explained and children who arrive at school too late to receive a mark in the register.

The Headteacher has responsibility for deciding if an absence is authorised or unauthorised. School staff need not accept a parental explanation for a child’s absence, whether written, telephoned or given in person, if they doubt the explanation.

Children under 5 years of age are not of ‘compulsory school attendance age’. Soudley School will expect them to attend school and will supportively follow up if a child is absent for unexplained or extended periods of time. This is to ensure the safeguarding and wellbeing of children that we have in our school.

Penalty Notices:

When can Penalty Notices be issued

- An excluded pupil is found in a public place, without a justifiable reason for being there, during school hours on a school day during the first five days of a fixed exclusion period or a permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified in writing by the school, at the time of the exclusion, of their duty to ensure the child is not found in a public place during school hours and the days to which it applies.
- Code G absence from school during term time in order to take a holiday, where the Head Teacher has not authorised the absence (recorded as G in the school attendance register) and where there have been ten sessions of unauthorised holiday absence within the immediate preceding ten week period. In such case, each parent may be issued with a separate penalty notice for each child taken out of school.
- Code U Persistent lateness of a pupil arriving at school after the registers have closed (recorded as Code U on the school attendance register) and where there have been ten sessions of unauthorised lateness within the immediate ten week period. For U coded absence, we must have thoroughly explored the reasons for the U coded absence and considered whether any support or reasonable adjustment may be required from the school to the pupil. Importantly, we must be able to provide evidence to the Local Authority that this has been done.

In line with DfE statutory guidance and departmental advice local schools and LA guidelines this school will not authorise holidays or days out during term time except for ‘exceptional circumstances’.

It is at the head teacher’s discretion to define and authorise an exceptional circumstance.

Our Meeting Expectations Home School Agreement clearly states the expectation for children to attend every day and be on time.

Procedures for requesting absence of leave in term time

1. **As standard, all parents any carers must fill in a form 'Request for a leave of absence during term time form'** at least 7 days weeks ahead of time, stating the reason for exceptional circumstance to take their child/ren out in term time. **Appendix 1**
2. **It will be made clear that this form warns them, there and then, of a penalty notice should they take unauthorised leave**
3. The school will respond to the Request for Leave of absence, sending a response to **EACH** parent. **Appendix 2**
4. Should a parent make no request for leave of absence and the Head Teacher has determined that the absence is to be coded as G (unauthorised family holiday), they will be sent a **'Leave of absence without request'** letter, which warns parents of a penalty notice. **Appendix 3**

Persistent Lateness

1. Issue a penalty notice for persistent absence

PROCEDURES for reporting an absence.

Parents should contact the school on the first day of absence by 9.30 am and give a reason for the absence.

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence we will:

- Contact the parent by telephone in the first instance.
- If no response: send an email to ask where a child is.
- If we still have no response we will make additional effort to find out where that pupil is e.g. ring a grandparent and/ or continue to ring throughout the school day.
- If contact can still not be established, the school will involve other agencies

Children Missing in Education

Children Missing Education (CME) refers to 'any child of compulsory school age who is **not** registered at any formally approved education activity eg. school, alternative provision, elective home education, **and** has been out of education provision for at least 4 weeks'.

CME also includes those children who are **missing** (family whereabouts unknown), and are usually children who are registered on a school roll / alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address **and either**

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 10 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown

We will be vigilant for extended or unusual absences that may be a cause for concern (it is evident that cases of Female Genital Mutilation and Child Sexual Exploitation may show certain patterns of attendance

Risk Factors include:

- being taken on a long holiday to the family's country of origin
- Where the family request an 'authorised absence' for just before or just after the summer school holidays. (This procedure often takes place in the summer, as the recovery period after FGM can be 6 to 9 weeks.

Therefore:

Where we have been unable to contact a family to find out the reason for an absence, we **MUST** be aware of our safeguarding duty protocols for Children Missing in Education. If an explanation has still not been

received after three days of unexplained absence and speak with the Local Authority to notify them of this absence in the first instance. (See below for further procedures)

Anyone concerned that a child is missing education (CME) can make a referral to the Access to Education Team at Gloucestershire County Council

Access to Education Team

Shire Hall

Westgate Street

Gloucester GL1 2TP

Tel 01452 328774 / 426015

missingpupils@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Monitoring and Review

- Attendance is monitored by the school office where information is collated (daily/ ongoing)
- It may form part of a Pathfinders discussion (individual children) at least once every 3 weeks)
- We will report attendance class winners each week on the Celebrations page on Facebook (weekly)
- The Attendance information is shared by the HT at Governors (6 times a year)
- Governor Monitoring of classes, pupil groups and pupils has a section which focuses on attendance (4 times a year)
- The attendance information is reported on Analysing School Performance (ASP) which is a schools' document published by the DfE (annually).

The school will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

When evaluating success the school will consider whether or not:

- Attendance has improved.
- Punctuality has improved.
- Parental response to absence has improved.
- Re-integration plans have been successful.
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, governing body and the local community.
- Pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedure operating within the school.
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Pathfinders, JIGSAW (Personal and Social Education lessons), or as a theme for any other lessons.

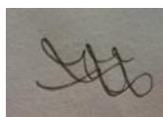
Where there are Attendance concerns, the following letters will be sent. (Those in Appendices 1 - 4 are from GCC)

| Attendance issue | Main cause | Letter focus | Appendix |
|--|---|---|----------|
| Below 96% | Illness | Conversation - duty to regularly attend school | |
| Continuing to fall below 96% | Illness | Informal letter – duty to regularly attend school | A |
| No Notification | Unsure where child is | Child missing in Education – first enquiry. Child continues to be missing – notify LA directly Tel 01452 328774 / 426015 missingpupils@gloucestershire.gov.uk | B |
| Requesting leave of absence in term time | Holiday | Request Form for parents | 1 |
| | Exceptional Circumstance | Request From – School Response May include notification of penalty notice | 2 |
| | | | |
| No request made | Parent did not request leave of absence | Intent to request Penalty Notice unless considered exception circumstance by HT | 1 |
| Persistent Lateness | Persistent late (10 sessions within 10 weeks) | Duty to regularly attend school | 3 |
| Request to issue Penalty Notice to LA | See above | Information sent to LA on form | 4 |

ALL LETTERS WILL INCLUDE THE REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE AND INFORMATION LEAFLET ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND/ OR PENALTY NOTICES

Ratified at the FGB on 29 April 2021: Agenda item 55

Signed: Chair of Governors: Laura Leonard _____



Date: 29.4.2021

Headteacher: _____ Saron Hetenyi



Date: 29.4.2021

Appendix 1**Request for a leave of absence during term time**

Parents should be aware that the law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. The Department for Education allows a Head Teacher the discretion to consider authorising a leave of absence in term time only in “exceptional circumstances”.

You may consider that a holiday will be educational but your child will still miss out on the teaching and learning that their peers will receive whilst your child is away. Children returning from a leave of absence during term time are also unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed and arrangements need to be made for individual children to catch up on missed work. Disruption to the continuity of teaching and learning is something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

If requesting a leave of absence you will need to complete the form on the reverse of this notice, setting out the reasons. If the holiday is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance it will not be agreed. If you nevertheless take your child out of school for the leave of absence this **will be recorded as unauthorised leave**.

In the case of an unauthorised leave of absence the head teacher may request that the Local Authority issue a Fixed Penalty Notice without further warning to the parent. Please note that such a penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 if paid within the first 21 days which increases to £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days. Thereafter, if the penalty remains unpaid this may lead to prosecution through the Magistrates' Court.

All leave of absence requests should be completed on the attached form by the parent with whom the child ordinarily resides. This should be returned to the school at least seven days before the start of the holiday. All requests must be made prior to the leave being taken. Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.

I hope you will support our efforts to maintain good levels of attendance and attainment.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 2

Request for a leave of absence during term time – school response

This response must be sent to each parent

Dear

Child's Name... .. Class/Tutor Group: CLASS

Your request for absence on the following dates: [] to [] totalling days ({} sessions), has been considered and is

AUTHORISED UNAUTHORISED

- a) Their attendance is currently: {}%
- b) The request **does/does not** meet the criteria for 'exceptional circumstances'

Please note: An **unauthorised** absence may be notified to the Local Authority and a Penalty Notice may be issued without further warning

Signed... S. Hetenyi (Head Teacher) Date / /2021

Print name: SARON HETENYI

Appendix 3

Parent's address (formally served) date

Dear (parent's name)

Re: Leave of absence without request

Child(ren)'s Name(s): Date(s) of Birth:

I am aware that your child(ren) was/were absent from school from (date) to (date). I have tried to contact you with regard to these absences but have been unsuccessful and now understand that you were on a family holiday. I believe this to be the case because.....

As you will be aware, as of 1st September 2013 Head Teachers are no longer able to grant any leave of absence in term time unless there are exceptional/unavoidable circumstances. It is also stated in our school policy that all requests for leave of absence should be made in writing, in advance of the proposed absence.

As we are unaware of any exceptional circumstances that might apply, the absence has **not been authorised**. However, if you feel that the absence was due to an exceptional circumstance or illness, please provide supporting evidence to this effect no later than (Date – **allow two weeks**) and I may be able to reconsider my decision.

I must warn you that failure to ensure your child's regular attendance at school is an offence under Section 444 of The Education Act 1996. The Supreme Court Judgement from 2017 (Isle of Wight Council v Platt [2017] UKSC 28) has determined that 'regular' means 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'.

If the reasons given for your child(ren)'s absence from school are not considered to be exceptional (and therefore the absence is unauthorised) then I may request, without further warning, that the Local Authority take legal proceedings against you for your failure to comply with the law. This may result in:

A Penalty Notice requiring the payment of a penalty of up to £120 per parent per child. Failure to pay the penalty due may result in prosecution before Magistrates Court.

Please refer to the school's attendance policy (available on our website and in hard copy upon request) and Gloucestershire County Council's website for further information.

If you wish to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Saron Hetenyi
Headteacher