



## SOHO PARISH PRIMARY POLICY Attendance

Most recent review	September 2020	Next review due	September 2023
Governor committee responsible	SAW	Written by	Louise Ritchie

### 1. Principles

We are committed to providing a high quality education to every pupil, which enables all to achieve as well as possible. We believe good attendance and punctuality are crucial to every child's success, and we expect every child to aim for 100% attendance and punctuality.

Good attendance and punctuality not only enable children to benefit as fully as possible from their education, but are also very important habits to develop for their future economic wellbeing.

We believe that the most effective way of encouraging good attendance is to provide a welcoming, safe and stimulating educational environment where we strive to meet every child's needs, so that children and their parents feel positive and enthusiastic about coming to school.

We recognise that parents have a vital role to play, and we seek to maintain strong home-school links and communication systems which can be used whenever there is a concern about attendance. In addition, ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the parents' legal responsibility - permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

If there are problems which affect a child's school attendance, we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents to resolve these problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.

### 2. Punctuality

Timings and procedure for school opening are as follows:

- 08:45 Playground gate open & manned. Pupils proceed directly to class.
- 09:00 Playground gate shut. Latecomers please proceed to red door in Archer St.
- 09:00 Registration in class.
- 15:15 Playground gate open & manned.
- 15:20 School finishes (Foundation Stage)
- 15:25 School finishes (all other classes)

In the morning:

- If a child is present when the register is called, they will be marked present, otherwise they will be marked late.
- Late arrivals after 09:30 are recorded as an unauthorised absence.

In the afternoon:

- Children not collected by 15:35 will be taken to Reception class for collection and marked as collected late. If you are late for collection and the playground gate is shut, please go to the Red Door.

On Fridays, children and parents if they wish go directly to class. Parents should leave the classroom by 08:58 to allow the class to take registration at 09:00.

### **3. Understanding types of absence**

Every half – day absence from school has to be recorded and classified with a code by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only the school can make this decision and record it. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

- AUTHORISED absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/ dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.
- UNAUTHORISED absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which “leave” of absence has not been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and /or legal proceedings. Some examples of this include:
  - Parents/carers keeping their child away from school unnecessarily
  - Truancy before or during the school day
  - Absences that have not been properly explained
  - Late arrival after the close of registration (morning or afternoon)
  - Shopping trips, looking after other children or adults or birthdays
  - Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed

### **4. Medical needs**

Absence from school can be authorised if there is a valid medical reason.

#### **a. Illness**

Whilst it is understood that any child can have an illness and be away from school for a given period, we do not expect children to miss school for trivial reasons, such as minor coughs and colds.

#### Broken bones

Children who have suffered injuries such as broken bones should attend school if their Doctor advises that this is appropriate. Staff will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that children with injuries are kept safe at school and are able to participate in the curriculum with minimal disruption to their learning.

#### Participation in activities at school

We consider that any child who is well enough to attend school should be well enough to participate in all activities, including PE, playtimes and any outdoor activities. However, a child who has an injury may be unable to participate in PE. If the parent feels this applies to their child, it is their responsibility to discuss this with the Class Teacher, Headteacher or School Administrator in advance. All other children will be expected to take part in all normal school activities.

#### Medication

Children should not miss school because they are taking medication unless this has been advised by a Doctor. If a child is taking medication such as antibiotics, the parent should contact the School Administrator, and follow the procedures set out in the school's policy regarding administration of medicines.

#### Proof of illness

If a child is absent for more than 3 days, the parents should provide the school with a Doctor's note explaining the absence.

Where a pupil has frequent absences the school may decide to ask for evidence such as a medical certificate, appointment card, or a label from prescription medication for each absence, even a single day, before authorising that absence.

Additionally the school may wish to refer to the school nursing service where there are health concerns or if there is a view that illness is being used as an excuse to cover other reasons for absence.

#### **b. Illness during the school day**

If a child becomes ill during the school day, or suffers an injury which requires medical attention, the school may decide to contact the parents and ask them to collect the child. This decision must always be taken by the Headteacher, or Deputy in their absence, in consultation with the First Aider.

#### **c. Dental/Medical Appointments**

Wherever possible, parents/cares should make every effort to avoid making medical or dental appointments during the school day. It is preferable to try and arrange these during holiday periods or at the beginning or end of the school day. An appointment at the beginning of the school day should not result in a whole day's absence from school.

### **5. Absence for non-medical reasons**

Occasionally, non-medical absence may be authorised if there are exceptional circumstances affecting a family, such as a bereavement. Parents should discuss this with the Class Teacher, Headteacher or School Administrator at the earliest possible stage.

#### **a. Holidays in term-time**

There are 14 weeks of school holidays per year, and additional holidays should not be taken in term time. Any holiday taken in term-time will be unauthorised and may result in further action (see sections 5 & 8 below).

We understand that some families have relatives in distant parts of the world, and that occasionally they may wish to make extended trips abroad. We urge all parents to inform us if they are contemplating such a visit and will work with parents to try and agree a timetable which minimises the child's absence from school.

**b. Religious observance**

We authorise absence for religious observance in line with Local Authority guidance and therefore:

- We will not normally authorise more than one day's absence in any term for any individual occasion of religious observance (thus no more than 3 days in any academic year)
- Parents should inform the school in advance if their child will be absent to observe a religious festival. Such absences will be unauthorised if the school has not been informed in advance.

**6. Regular and persistent absenteeism:**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they are absent from school for 10% or more across the school year for whatever reason. The reasons can be both authorised and unauthorised.

Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational achievement and future prospects. We will need the full support and co-operation of all parents to tackle this.

- We will monitor all absence thoroughly
- If your child's attendance has reached or is in danger of reaching the PA level we will inform you immediately and make the case a priority.
- Pupils who have reached the PA level will be tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we will combine this with academic mentoring where absence is seen to affect progress and attainment.
- All PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action plan and the plan may include: the allocation of additional support through a mentor or an external agency, individual programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance.
- All PA pupils will be made known to the Westminster Early Help team and/or the Local Authority (LA).

**7. Removal from the school roll**

Any pupil absent for more than 4 consecutive weeks will be removed from the school roll, unless the absence is for genuine medical reasons which are substantiated by a Doctor's letter. The parents of a pupil who has been removed from the roll would have to reapply for their child's school place if they wished their child to return to the school. The place may be allocated to another child on the waiting list if that child has higher priority under the published admissions criteria.

## **8. Action to address attendance / punctuality concerns**

Any child whose rate of attendance and/or punctuality falls below 95% may be regarded as cause for concern unless there is a valid reason for the absence (eg a single illness such as chickenpox). Where a concern is identified, the Learning Mentor will liaise with the parents to discuss any barriers to attendance, and agree an improvement plan, with interventions if appropriate. Our aim is always to work together with families in a positive way to overcome barriers.

If a parent fails to cooperate with the school in overcoming attendance problems, the school may refer the case to the Westminster Early Help team and/or the LA, who may decide to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice against the parent.

## **9. Roles and responsibilities**

The **Governing Body** will:

- set annual targets for attendance, and monitor the school's performance in relation to these
- make strategic decisions concerning the school's attendance policy and practice

The **Standards, Achievement and Wellbeing Committee** will:

- recommend strategic decisions concerning the school's Attendance Policy and practice to the Governing Body
- monitor the implementation of this Policy, and ensure it is reviewed annually.
- monitor the school's half-termly attendance data, and report to the full Governing Body their findings on progress towards the annual attendance targets.

The **Headteacher** will:

- ensure that all staff, parents and pupils are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance and punctuality.
- ensure that the school provides a welcoming, safe and stimulating learning environment, where every effort is made to meet each child's needs.
- ensure that the school uses effective strategies for promoting good attendance and punctuality.
- ensure that the school has effective systems for recording attendance and punctuality.
- ensure that the school has effective systems for following up absence and lateness.
- ensure that the school has effective systems for addressing specific concerns regarding attendance and punctuality, including referral to the Westminster Early Help team and/or the LA.
- ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to facilitate the attendance of children with medical needs, injuries or disabilities.

- take any decisions to involve external agencies in cases of poor attendance, such as formal referral to the Westminster Early Help team and/or the LA, or the use of Fixed Penalty Notices.
- ensure that the staff handbook is updated annually to give current guidance on the completion of attendance registers.
- ensure that statutory attendance returns are made to the LA and DfE, and ensure that these are made available to the Governors' SAW Committee.

The **School Administrator** will:

- ensure that all parents are aware of the school's Attendance Policy and the Parents' Promise contained in the Guide for Parents.
- monitor attendance registers daily for accuracy of completion, and liaise with class teachers to clarify any inconsistencies.
- ensure that all new teachers and supply teachers are briefed on how to complete attendance registers, through drawing their attention to the relevant section in the staff handbook.
- receive and record late arrivals, enquiring into the reason for lateness and recording this in the late book.
- make first day contact with parents where no reason for absence has been given, and chase any outstanding reasons for absence.
- alert the Learning Mentor immediately to the absence of any Child In Need or on the Protection Register, or another whose attendance is known to be causing concern.
- identify any pupils who are beginning to show patterns of poor attendance/punctuality, and inform the Learning Mentor, Class Teacher and Headteacher.
- liaise with the Westminster Early Help team and/or the LA to ensure that action is taken to address persistent attendance problems.
- provide termly attendance returns as required by the LA and DfE, presenting these first to the Headteacher for checking and authorisation.

**Class Teachers** will:

- ensure they complete attendance registers in an accurate and timely manner, in accordance with school procedures as described in the Staff Handbook.
- alert the Learning Mentor or School Administrator immediately to the absence of any child whose attendance is causing particular concern.
- promptly record in the register any messages they receive from parents regarding reasons for absence.

The **Learning Mentor** will:

- provide parents with advice and guidance on attendance, as required.
- work with pupils and families who are experiencing difficulty with attendance and/or punctuality, and plan interventions as appropriate.
- liaise with external agencies such as Social Services and the Westminster Early Help team where appropriate in overcoming barriers to attendance.
- ensure that the School Administrator, Headteacher and relevant Class Teachers are kept informed over attendance concerns, and any interventions which are being implemented.

**All staff** will:

- ensure they are familiar with this policy.

- fulfil their job descriptions as well as possible in order to contribute to making the school a welcoming, safe and stimulating learning environment, where every effort is made to meet each child's needs.
- provide good role models of attendance and punctuality.
- avoid taking holidays in term-time.
- Inform the Class Teacher or Learning Mentor promptly where they are aware of any issues affecting the attendance of a particular pupil.
- cooperate with the Headteacher in making reasonable adjustments to facilitate the attendance of children with medical needs, injuries or disabilities.

**Parents will:**

- make every effort to ensure that their child attends school every day and on time.
- make every effort to ensure that their child attends school in a fit condition to learn, ie having had sufficient sleep, well nourished and appropriately clothed.
- inform the school promptly if their child is unable to attend, giving reasons for their absence.
- provide the school with a doctor's note explaining the absence if their child is absent for more than 3 consecutive days.
- inform the school office of the reason on arrival in case of lateness.
- work cooperatively with the school to resolve any issues related to their child's attendance or punctuality.
- complete a form requesting leave of absence if they know in advance that their child will have to miss school due to special circumstances.
- avoid taking their child on holidays in term-time.

**Pupils will:**

- make every effort to come to school every day and on time.



## SOHO PARISH PRIMARY POLICY Covid Addendum to Attendance Policy

Most recent review	September 2020	Next review due	Ongoing
Governor committee responsible	SAW	Written by	Louise Ritchie

### Westminster Statutory School Attendance

School attendance is mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

Parental duty to ensure a child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school, and of compulsory school age

School responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence

Local Authority availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with LA codes of conduct

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>

### DFE Attendance Guidance

From the beginning of the new academic year, schools should return to using the attendance and absence codes in use before the outbreak.

New category: Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus.

Only to be used this academic year, in instances where travel to or presence at school would conflict with public health guidance.

Pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria should be recorded using code X. This will not be counted as an absence in school census.

Schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak (e.g. Nursery children attending half day sessions)

### Circumstances Related to Coronavirus

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice. The DfE provide examples in which the new coding category could apply: Addendum

Pupil required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus

Pupil required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus

Pupil required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine

Pupil clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only

### **Pupil Shielding or Isolating**

Shielding advice for all adults and children was paused on 1 August 2020. It is expected most pupils will be able to return to school as there will be far fewer advised to shield in future (current advice on shielding).

Pupil no longer required to shield but remains under the care of a specialist health professional. Should discuss their care at the next planned clinical appointment (RCPCH shielding guidance).

Pupil unable to attend because they are complying with clinical or public health advice. School expected to offer access to remote education and monitor engagement (action for all schools).

Pupil not able to attend as parents following clinical or public health advice. Absence will not be penalised (NHS shielded patient list).

### **Illness Absence**

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness.

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention.

Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

### **Westminster Back to School Campaign**

Returning to school is vital for a child's education and wellbeing.

Time out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. It can affect both current learning, and future ability to learn, and therefore we need to ensure all pupils can return to school sooner rather than later.

The safety of children and staff is a top priority. Schools are regularly assessing the risk posed by coronavirus and have put measures in place to support the need of their staff and children

## **Westminster Education Service**

### **School Standards**

In order to support schools in managing attendance as all children return to school this term, schools are asked to report by exception if they are facing low attendance numbers, using 85% as a threshold.

This will enable the Local Authority to ascertain where schools may need additional whole school support around getting children back into school. This threshold will be reviewed as the term progresses and in response to the intelligence gathered.

If your school has attendance of 85% or below, please send details to [school.standards@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:school.standards@rbkc.gov.uk) every Monday morning up until half term.

### **Required Action for Schools**

#### **Guidance on Full Opening: Action for all Schools & Local Authorities**

Communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families.

Identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. Including disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, with persistent absence prior to the pandemic, or not engaged during the pandemic.

Use the additional catch-up funding to put measures in place for those families who will need support to secure regular attendance.

Work closely with other professionals to support the return to school, including continuing to notify the child's social worker of non-attendance.

### **Pupils or families anxious about returning to school**

Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this.

This may include pupils who have been shielding previously but advised that this is no longer necessary, living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or concerned about the increased risk of coronavirus (including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds or with conditions such as obesity and diabetes).

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school.

### **Early Help Attendance Referral**

Children not attending school regularly: This includes pupils of statutory school age enrolled at a Westminster School with more than 10% unauthorised absence over the past term.

Threshold met when school efforts to support the family have failed and without intervention, the needs of the child will escalate to statutory level.

Evidence 3 attempts to engage family (letter, parent meeting, home visit).

Multi-Agency and Assessment Referral Form: Families meeting referral criteria may receive Early Help support by completing a MARF online

<https://fisd.westminster.gov.uk/kb5/westminster/fis/ehat.page>

### **Early Help Pre-Referral Work**

**Support Panel:** Schools have an opportunity **every month** to share concerns with locality partner services, as part of case consultation about families at pre-referral level. This can be done with consent of the family or cases can be discussed anonymously. Please contact:

#### **North East Locality:**

Toni Sydney 07971 026 832 [tsydney@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:tsydney@westminster.gov.uk)

Peter Watt 020 7641 5436 [p.deputy@portmancentre.co.uk](mailto:p.deputy@portmancentre.co.uk)

#### **North West Locality:**

Robbert van Heel 07971 026 470 [rvanheel@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:rvanheel@westminster.gov.uk)

Helen Chin-Fatt: 020 8969 5835 / [hchinfatt@dorothygardner.co.uk](mailto:hchinfatt@dorothygardner.co.uk)

#### **South Locality:**

Jemmelle Griffith: 07507 859 793 [jgriffith@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:jgriffith@westminster.gov.uk)

Catherine Drake Wilkes: 07966 194 597 [cdrakewilkes@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:cdrakewilkes@westminster.gov.uk)

### **Family Navigators**

#### **So who are Family Navigators?**

- Family Navigators are allocated to our Locality Family Hubs (Church Street- NE, Queen's Park-NW and Bessborough- S)
- Usually based within the Hub, managing walk-ins
- Short-term and Long-term pieces of work