



South Hetton Primary School

Attendance Policy

This policy has been written in line with the DFE 'Working together to improve school attendance' applied from August 2024.



Date Reviewed	September 2025
Next Review Date	September 2026

Attendance Key Contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Nicola Mayo	Head Teacher Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	nicola.mayo@shprimary.co.uk
Elizabeth Britton	Attendance Champion	elizabeth.britton@shprimary.co.uk
Laura Wigham	Attendance Governor	Laura.wigham@tudhoelearningtrust.co.uk

Who else in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Tamsin Hill	SENDSCO	tamsin.hill@shprimary.co.uk

South Hetton Primary School Attendance Vision and Ethos

Our Commitment

South Hetton Primary School is committed to ensuring every pupil receives the highest quality education and achieves their full potential. We provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where attendance is recognised as a fundamental foundation for learning, safeguarding, and wellbeing.

Our Ethos

At South Hetton Primary School, we:

- Value attendance as a foundation of academic success, wellbeing, and safeguarding.
- Recognise that each child's circumstances are unique and require tailored support.
- Balance encouragement and recognition with clear accountability.
- Work tirelessly in partnership with families and the community to build strong routines, habits, and opportunities.

In short: Good attendance is everyone's business. Together, we secure brighter futures for all our children.

Alignment with National Statutory Guidance

- We fully implement the Department for Education's *Working together to improve school attendance*, which became statutory on 19 August 2024. This guidance requires schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities to:
 - Create and sustain a whole-school culture that prioritises attendance.
 - Use robust, data-driven monitoring to identify patterns and concerns.
 - Apply a "support-first" approach, working with families to remove barriers.
 - Escalate to formal measures only when support has not led to improvement.
- Attendance is also integrated into *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (2025). This makes it clear that persistent or unexplained absence is not only an educational concern, but also a safeguarding issue.

Why Attendance Matters

- In 2023–24, 171,269 pupils (2.3%) were classified as *severely absent*—missing at least half of school sessions (The Guardian).
- Persistent absence stood at around 20%, almost double pre-pandemic levels, with disadvantaged and SEND pupils disproportionately affected.
- Research shows children with 95–100% attendance are 30% more likely to meet expected standards at primary level, and near-perfect attendance almost doubles the chance of achieving grade 5 in GCSE English and Maths.
- Each day missed in secondary education equates to a potential loss of £750 in future lifetime earnings.
- There is also growing evidence of a strong link between absence and increased risk of mental illness, especially among girls and pupils with SEND.

Policy Content at a Glance

Expectation	Pupils attend school every day on time. Maximum absence 7 days a year (means minimum 96% attendance)	School has systems in place to support attendance. - School ethos - Monitoring procedures - Incentives and rewards - Inclusive curriculum
Monitoring	School monitors every pupils' attendance daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and annually.	School systems in place to support attendance. - Communication with home (Phone calls, letters, school meetings, termly attendance data) - Governor over-sight
Support	This is the focus of the work in school on attendance. School wants to support pupils and families and we will listen to what barriers there are and work to remove them, working together to resolve issues. Parents are required to engage with school. School will help parents to access support for out of school barriers to attendance.	School systems in place. - Meetings - Policies and actions on behaviour, SEND, medical conditions, bullying, pastoral, mental health, well-being, use of resources etc. - Home-school communication - Pastoral support, counselling. - Working with support services
Persistent or severe absence	If all other support fails and absence persists, school may have to formalise plans to support attendance. This may include the local authority team with parenting contracts or education supervision orders.	- Working together with families and support services - Meetings, support and action plans.
Enforcement	From the 2024-25 school year, should a pupil accrue 10 unauthorised sessions within ten school weeks, and support is not effective or engaged with, our school (in partnership with the local authority) will consider issuing a penalty notice (£80 / £160) in line with national guidance, progressing to parenting contracts or court action if necessary.	- Local Authority involvement.

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

At South Hetton Primary School, we recognise that **attendance and achievement are inextricably linked**. Regular school attendance is essential for children to progress, enjoy learning, and build positive lifelong habits.

We are committed to ensuring:

- Every pupil has an equal right of access to full-time education in line with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative provision.
- Attendance is a whole-school priority and embedded into our culture.
- Aspirations for attendance are ambitious, with high standards and consistent expectations.
- Pupils are not deprived of their education due to absence or lateness.
- Action is taken promptly where attendance gives cause for concern.

Good attendance is promoted through rewards, recognition, and incentives. Attendance percentages are shared via newsletters, the school website, termly parent meetings, and annual reports. Parents are made fully aware of our determination to eradicate poor or sporadic attendance.

Unless there is an unavoidable reason, pupils are expected to attend regularly, without repeated or patterned absences. Our curriculum is designed to provide engaging, positive experiences so that children are motivated to attend.

2. Attendance Data and Benchmarks

Government expectations:

- Good attendance: 96% or higher (approx. 180/190 days).
- Persistent absence (PA): Below 90% (approx. 19 or more days of absence across the year, or just 7 days per term).
- Severe absence: Below 50%.

The school tracks attendance rigorously:

- 10-week rolling monitoring – identifies patterns across terms and school years.
- Half-termly reviews – highlights emerging concerns quickly.
- Termly and annual analysis – ensures consistent access to education and allows the school to identify recurring issues.

Where concerns arise, interventions are implemented without delay to prevent pupils reaching PA or severe absence thresholds.

3. Listening to and Understanding Barriers

We use our management system (Arbor) to analyse absence. Families may receive letters if their child's attendance falls below expected levels. This is not punitive but to raise awareness and offer support.

If attendance does not improve, further correspondence and meetings will be arranged to:

- Discuss reasons for absence.
- Identify barriers.
- Establish targets.
- Agree support strategies.

The principle is support first – we work with children and families to overcome challenges.

4. Facilitating Support

Where improvement is limited, and barriers remain, the school may:

- Refer to the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Team.
- Make an Early Help referral (with parental consent).
- Involve external agencies for targeted support.

This ensures families receive joined-up help at the earliest stage.

5. Formalising Support

If informal support does not secure improvement, more formal measures may be introduced:

- Parenting contracts.
- Education supervision orders (if non-engagement continues).
- Consideration of safeguarding referral to children's social care if poor attendance may constitute neglect.

6. Enforcement

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may constitute an offence under the Education Act 1996.

From August 2024, new national thresholds apply:

- 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) in a 10-week period can trigger a penalty notice.
- Penalty notices are £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 thereafter.
- Repeat offences can lead to prosecution with fines of up to £2,500, parenting orders, community orders, or imprisonment in the most serious cases.

Enforcement will always follow a support-first approach. However, if families do not engage with help and attendance does not improve, the Local Authority will consider legal action.

7. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Absence is only authorised when:

- A child is too unwell to attend.
- Permission has been granted in advance for exceptional circumstances.
- The absence is for a recognised religious observance.

- Transport provided by the Local Authority is unavailable.
- The family is of Gypsy/Traveller heritage and travelling for work (temporary education elsewhere is expected).

All other absences are unauthorised. Holidays during term time are not classed as exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised.

Parents must:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence and provide daily updates.
- Provide evidence (e.g. appointment cards, medical letters) if requested.

Unexplained absences are treated as safeguarding concerns and followed up in line with our safeguarding procedures.

8. Attendance Procedures

- Daily: Absences followed up by text/phone. Safeguarding checks made if a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.
- 3 consecutive days absence: Contact made to offer support and check wellbeing.
- Persistent lateness/absence: Letters, meetings, and support plans initiated.
- Long-term absence (e.g. medical): Individual support and alternative provision arranged.

9. Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

We use positive incentives to encourage attendance:

- Weekly class recognition for best/improved attendance.
- Half-termly certificates for 96%+ or improved attendance.
- Annual recognition for sustained high attendance.
- Dojo points for full-week attendance.

Rewards are used sensitively, with consideration for pupils with additional barriers (e.g. SEND, health needs).

10. School Hours and Registration

- Doors open: 8:40am; school ends: 3:05pm (8:45am - 3:15pm Nursery).
We encourage to children to arrive promptly at 8:40am to access morning reading.
- Pupils must be in class for 8:50am.
- Registers close at 9:05am (after which arrivals are unauthorised 'U' codes).
- Afternoon registers close: 1:00pm KS1, 1:15pm KS2.
- Persistent lateness is addressed via letters, meetings, and possible referral to the LA.

11. Medical Conditions and SEND

We have the same high expectations for all pupils but recognise that some face greater barriers.

We:

- Make reasonable adjustments.
- Develop individual healthcare plans where needed.
- Engage with external professionals (e.g. health services, LA support).
- Review information annually and ensure health/EHCP plans are up to date.

12. Children Missing Education (CME)

- If a child's whereabouts is unknown for **20 school days**, they may be removed from roll.
- CME is a safeguarding risk. Families must keep contact details up to date and inform school of moves.

13. Help and Support

We urge parents to contact school at the earliest stage if difficulties arise. Early communication helps us provide effective support, avoid escalation, and secure the best outcomes for children.

In partnership, we can ensure all pupils access their right to education, thrive in school, and build secure futures.