



Attendance Policy 2026-27

Commitment to Attendance and Punctuality

Regular school attendance and good punctuality keep children safe and supported. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. We are committed to encouraging and supporting parents in ensuring their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality are a key part of the school's commitment to safeguarding.

Parent Responsibility and The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive sufficient full-time education suitable:

- To their age, ability and aptitude and
- To any special needs they may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day-to-day care of the child.

The legislation that pertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act. Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

The Senior Leader responsible for attendance is Patrick Sullivan. He can be contacted on the school phone number. Families should contact the student's Form Tutor or Head of House in the first instance to discuss attendance and punctuality concerns. Where rates of attendance relate to special needs this should be discussed with the SENCO or key worker.

Registers

Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 (s434) and the Student Registration Regulations 1995 the school must keep an attendance register.

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason, for example:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Unacceptable reasons such as shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Long periods of illness without medical evidence.
- Holidays taken during term time

Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education offsite
- Most types of dual registration with other approved educational providers

Registration & Lateness

The school day begins at 8.35am with lesson 1 at 8.40am. Morning registration will take place in the line-up and at the start of lesson 1 and is done by the class teacher.

Students arriving after 8.40am must report to the attendance office where they will be booked in and marked as late to school on the AM register. Students who arrive late to school in the morning without an acceptable explanation are likely to face a sanction and will not be allowed to disrupt lessons by entering classrooms late.

In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, and evidence is provided, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

Students who arrive after the registers have closed without a good reason will be marked as an unauthorised absence, using code U. Where this is a regular occurrence families will be contacted, targets for improvement set with the potential for fines to be issued by the Local Authority.

In cases where unexplained absences are recorded that affect the overall attendance of a student, the parents can be fined by the Local Authority, or referred to the Educational Welfare Service, resulting in possible court action being taken.

If a child is absent for any reason, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school. However, if the child is absent and no reason has been provided the following procedure will apply:

First Day Absence

The school will send a message to families notifying them of any absences (or lateness) on the morning of the absence and any subsequent day of absence.

We will also contact of absent students by phone on the first day, prioritising vulnerable students and those who have been absent for more than one day.

Ten Days Absence

If a student is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days, this will be notified to the Local Authority. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action that they have taken. The Educational Welfare Officer will lead this process.

Return to School

Where a child is absent from school, the following procedure will be followed for welcoming them back. If they've been off for one day, the tutor welcomes them back and checks they are ok. If they are off for a few days, further communication from the tutor will be made. Parents should support students with keeping in touch with school work through the subject-by-subject curriculum plans and resources published on the school website and learning platforms. For longer term absences a meeting with the Head of House will take place and a more formal reintegration will be implemented with a plan to catch up, some sessions may be provided where the student is given support by the Pastoral team.

Frequent Absence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Where the school is concerned by the number of absences for illness, which cannot be explained by a proven medical condition; evidence will be requested and further absences will not be authorised. This will generally be where a student has attendance below 90% for a period of a term or more. The school is unlikely to authorise absences where a student's attendance is below 90% without medical evidence or a truly exceptional circumstance.

Education Welfare meets with school staff on a weekly basis to discuss attendance concerns. Serious and chronic attendance concerns will be referred to the Educational Welfare Service.

Reporting absence / authorising absence

The school operates a trust relationship with families and will generally accept bone fide messages and information in good faith. However, the school will request medical evidence for absences over 5 days or where the threshold for persistent absence has been met (below 90% attendance) for any absence prior to authorising these.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% days of school across the academic year, regardless of the reason. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and cooperation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and this is combined with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. When a student reaches PA status and the school-based interventions have not worked, when absence is unexplained this could lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority. A referral to the EWS may be made.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance

The Education Welfare Service may also issue a Penalty Notice to parent / carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Education Welfare Officers. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

Persistent poor punctuality

Persistent late arrival at school has a damaging effect on a child's education and is a safeguarding risk. Parents are expected to ensure that their child attends school on time each day. Persistent late arrival to school will be treated with the same importance as persistent absence and if parents fail to engage with the school or take reasonable steps to support and improve their child's punctuality then the school will refer the case to the Education Welfare Service for follow up.

Exceptional Leave of Absence

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. School will only authorise leave of absence in term time in exceptional circumstances and not for holidays.

Where a parent wishes to request a leave of absence, a formal request must be made, in writing using our proforma available on the website and as an appendix to this policy, to the Head Teacher who will consider the application on behalf of the Governors. Consideration will then be given to the student's previous school attendance and that the time requested does not exceed 10 school days in any one academic year.

If a holiday is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be considered as an unauthorised absence and is likely to result in a referral to the EWS.

Penalty Notices for Holidays:

In line with the guidance from the DfES, holidays during GCSE, Mocks and other external exam periods will not be authorised by the school and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

The Headteacher can now request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents, when students are taken out of school for 5 or more days holiday or leave of absence without school authorisation.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is currently £60 per parent, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120, per parent, if paid after 21 days but within 42 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 42 days, the Local Authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

Truancy Patrol

When a student comes to the notice of a Truancy Patrol, the student's pattern of school attendance is investigated. If there are unauthorised absences in the preceding 4 months, a warning letter may be sent to the parent / carers. If there are further unauthorised absences during the subsequent 15 schooldays, a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent / carer.

If there is no significant improvement in attendance in the 3 subsequent weeks, a Penalty Notice will be issued. Again, the Penalty Notice fines are as follows:

£60 per parent, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120, per parent, if paid after 21 days but within 42 days

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 42 days, the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

The Education Welfare Officer

Education Welfare monitors the attendance and punctuality of all children on a weekly basis. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will work with school staff and parents to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence.

If attendance and punctuality problems cannot be resolved by school, then the school will make a referral to Education Welfare. The EWO will try to resolve the situation but if attempts to improve attendance have failed and unauthorised absence persists, the EWO can use sanctions such as parenting contracts, penalty notices and prosecution.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance, under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, to a fine not exceeding £2500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months, or both.

Child Missing Education (CME) Years 7 to 11

Schools have a clear safeguarding responsibility around school attendance. All student's attendance will be monitored and 'missing' students investigated.

We will not remove a child (year 7 to 11) from our roll until we have confirmation of them having started at another school or they have been removed to Home Education (agreed by Educational Welfare) or we have followed the Child Missing Education process and we are instructed to remove from roll by Educational Welfare.

A Child Missing Education referral will be made to the local authority:

- Where a child does not attend for 20 days and due diligence checks have been made (messages, phone calls and home visit if appropriate) with no contact, we do not know where the child is.
- Or we have contact with family, are aware that they have moved away at an unreasonable distance or journey for travel to school.

If a child is absent without due cause for an extended period, but we do know where they are then we will work with Educational Welfare to resolve the matter.

Roles & Responsibilities

All staff are expected to:

Encourage good attendance and punctuality.

Subject teachers are responsible for:

Keeping a register of attendance for each lesson and raise attendance concerns with their Head of Department. This register must be taken in the first 5 minutes of class and amended to take into account latecomers.

Form tutors:

Take morning and tutor time registers, challenge absences. Provide pastoral support to address attendance issues and their impact on attainment. They should welcome a previously absent students on their return and talk through their absence. Non-attendance should be 'visible' to tutors.

Heads of House:

Regularly meet with the SLT member IC attendance (Patrick Sullivan) to identify and action any attendance concerns. Work with families to resolve attendance issues.

Attendance Officer:

Will ensure morning and afternoon registers are taken and are up to date during periods 1 and 6. Contacts parents and requests reasons for absence. Collates daily attendance records and, together with the attendance lead, puts in place agreed procedures to monitor and respond to poor attendance and punctuality.

SLT Lead on Attendance

Monitors and reviews the attendance policy on an annual basis.

Monitors and reviews the attendance procedures and works with the attendance office and Education Welfare to ensure reasons for absence are identified and interventions are put in place. Identifies and monitors attendance of PA students.

Headteacher:

Promotes the attendance policy within the school and ensures that it is implemented effectively.

The Governing Body:

Actively monitors and challenges the school to ensure attendance is high for all groups

Appendix 1 - Attendance Codes

All students must be given a registration mark each day. There are two sessions that require a registration mark. Registration will be taken by subject teachers during period 1 (am registration) and period 5 (pm registration).

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information, please note that these are new codes from 2024.

Register Code	Description
/	Present AM
\	Present PM
L	Late (before registers closed) marked as present
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
C	Authorised absence as pupil is absent due to other authorised circumstances
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
E	Authorised absence as pupil is excluded, with no alternative provision made
I	Illness (NOT appointments)
M	Authorised absence due to medical/dental appointments
R	Authorised absence due to religious observance
S	Authorised absence due to study leave

T	Authorised absence due to traveller absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
B	Approved education activity as pupil being educated off site (NOT dual registration)
P	Approved educational activity as pupil is attending an approved sporting activity
V	Approved education activity as pupil is away on an educational visit or trip
W	Approved educational activity as pupil is attending work experience
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
G	Unauthorised absence as pupil is on a family holiday, NOT agreed, or is taking days in excess of an agreed family holiday
N	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for a reason that has not yet been provided
O	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for an unauthorised absence not covered by any other code/description
U	Unauthorised absence as pupil arrived after registers closed
D	Dual registered (at another establishment - NOT counted in possible attendance)
X	Not required to be in school - for non-compulsory school age children
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances - not counted in possible attendances

Z	Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances
#	Planned whole or partial school closure - NOT counted in possible attendances
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Appendix 2 – Request for Exceptional Leave of Absence

Exceptional Leave of Absence – request

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. **The school will only authorise leave of absence in term time in exceptional circumstances and not for holidays.**

Where a parent wishes to request a leave of absence, a formal request must be made, using this form. The Head Teacher will then consider the application on behalf of the Governors. **Consideration will then be given to the student's previous school attendance and that the time requested does not exceed 10 school days in any one academic year.**

If a holiday is taken without prior authorisation by the school it will be considered as an unauthorised absence and is likely to result in a referral to the Educational Welfare Service. In line with the guidance from the DfES, holidays during GCSE, Mocks and other external exam periods will not be authorised by the school and a Penalty Notice may be issued. The Headteacher can now request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents, when students are taken out of school for 5 or more days holiday or leave of absence without school authorisation.

Name of Child	
Year Group	
House	
Name of parent applying for exceptional leave of absence from school	
Contact details of parent (phone number/email)	
Dates you are requesting for absence	
Reasons for absence – please explain in full	

Please email this form to info@sjbc.wandsworth.sch.uk

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