# Seaton Valley Learning Partnership Attendance Policy

## Seaton Delaval First School

Updated September 2020

**SEATON DELAVAL FIRST SCHOOL**

## Introduction

Excellent attendance promotes excellent learning. Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

Seaton Delaval First School believe that regular school attendance is crucial to allowing children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Seaton Delaval First School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to early identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Seaton Delaval First School believe attendance is a shared responsibility, involving the whole school community and local community; Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a thread that runs through all aspects of school improvement, and is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

Seaton Delaval First School defines our key levels of attendance as:

| Attendance | Description |
|---|---|
| **98%-100%** | Excellent |
| **96.3%-97.9%** | Good |
| **96.2%** | Satisfactory |
| **90.1%-96.1%** | Unsatisfactory |
| **90%** | Persistent Absence |

## Principles

The aim of this policy is to reconcile external requirements and legislation with the ethos and character of schools within our learning partnership. This policy provides a framework and guidance for all staff and parents to encourage pupils to attend school regularly so that they can take full advantage of the educational opportunities available irrespective of learning age range.

As a partnership of schools we believe the following important principles underpin our approach to managing attendance:

- Pupils and parents/carers understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality.
- All school staff, including governors, administrative and support staff understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality
- Clear procedures for enabling pupils to come to school
- Attendance issues are addressed in the curriculum
- Parents/carers and pupils having the opportunity to raise concerns and share in addressing those concerns
- Allocating resources e.g. time, people, space to support the policy
- Rewarding students who have for good attendance and those who strive to improve their attendance
- Identifying patterns of absence and intervening early. Patterns of attendance are established early in a school career. Children who miss significant amounts of their education in primary schools are more likely to truant later on. Xxx will work with the school partnership using data to identify students early.
- Sanctions for failing to ensure regular attendance are fully understood by the whole school community and parents/carers.

Rewarding good attendance is very important, each school will do this in their individual ways and will communicate with parents.

Each of these principles is explained in full detail in the following guidance.

## Rights/Roles/ Responsibilities

There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement. Of pupils who miss more than 50 per cent of school only three per cent achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including Maths and English

Seaton Delaval First School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents/carers, pupils and the wider school community.

**The Governing Body will**:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Have a named senior manager to lead on attendance (SAL)
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time
- Have clear systems in school to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

A positive learning climate is essential for promoting good attendance

**The Leadership Team will**:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers**.**
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Make staff aware of the Attendance Policy and are adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Have a named senior manager (SAL) to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Have systems in place to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.

- Collate and analyse attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to develop solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Involve Education Welfare and develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

**School Staff will:**

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve. A positive learning climate is essential for promoting good attendance.
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with the Education Welfare Officer and other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

**Parents/Carers will:**

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on family holidays during term-time.

## Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. This responsibility is undertaken by Education Welfare.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, expect schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- un-able to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## Categorising absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation and or evidence for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents/carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

### Illness

In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent/carer informing the school that their child is ill is acceptable. Where there are repeated absences due to reported illness

parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

**Medical/Dental Appointments**
Parents /carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

**Other Authorised Circumstances**
This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, wedding of immediate family member, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package. These will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

**Excluded (No alternative provision made**)
Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher/form tutor/Head of Year will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

**Leave of absence during term time.**
Amendments to the 2006 pupil regulations remove references to family holiday, extended leave and the statutory threshold of ten school days .(Authorised at the discretion of the Head Teacher)
The amendments make clear that:
'**Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted'**

Leave of absence during term time is entirely at the discretion of the Head Teacher and is not a parental right.

It is at the Head Teacher's discretion to request the Local authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice

All decisions in relation to whether leave of absence is granted (authorised) or not (unauthorised) should be applied consistently and equitably.

**Application Process**

- A parent/carer requesting leave of absence during term time should make the application in writing at least two weeks in advance
- School may invite the parent/carer into school to discuss the reasons for the application and the impact the absence may have on the child's education
- The school will reply to all applications. All replies will be signed and dated by the Head-teacher/Acting Head.
- If leave is not granted, the reason for not authorising a request will be clearly stated, explaining why exceptional circumstances have not been met, in addition to the possible consequences of disregarding the refusal to grant absence. i.e. a request to the Local

Authority to issue a Penalty notice. All replies should be signed and dated by the Head-teacher/Acting Head

- If leave is granted, the length of authorised absence will be clearly stated including the date the child is expected to return to school including possible consequences if the child fails to return on that date. All replies will be signed and dated by the Head-teacher.
- If a parent /carer remove their child from school without requesting leave of absence or without authorisation from the Head Teacher **and** the Head Teacher wishes the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice; the parent will be informed in writing that a request to the Local authority to issue a Penalty Notice is being made.

**N.B. A minimum absence of ten sessions (five school days) which are unauthorised must be recorded against the pupils name within a 6-12 week period.** This guidance is in accordance with the Local Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices which was reviewed and revised in September 2013

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents /carers has not been made or received, school **may** take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child will lose their school place.

**Religious Observance/Wedding**

Seaton Delaval First School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals and weddings may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent/carer to request their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's/carer's religious body.

Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival or wedding and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

**Traveller Absence**

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents/carers from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their

child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Northumberland, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Seaton Delaval First School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at Seaton Delaval First School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Seaton Delaval First School can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents/carers must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Seaton Delaval First School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

**Late Arrival**

Registration begins at 8.50am, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (L). The register will close at 9.20am *(no more than thirty minutes after the opening of the register)* pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late after registration (U), this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

Absence will only be **authorised** if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, evidence of attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry.

**Un-authorised absence.**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms/shoes
- Having hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Leave of Absence taken without the authorisation of school

**Deletions from the Register**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority

Seaton Delaval First School will follow Northumberland County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

.

**Using Attendance Data**

Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Indicators next to a pupil's name will show if their attendance has, stayed the same, improved or deteriorated This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention ( Appendix 1).

.

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school/partnership strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Seaton Delaval First School will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the local authority as required.

All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Support Systems**

Seaton Delaval First School recognise that poor attendance is often a sign that there are more serious issues going on in a child's life. This may be linked to problems at home and or in school. Parents/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Seaton Delaval First School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

Schools will implement strategies in their individual ways to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels/ School Attendance Contracts (Appendix 2)
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Family learning
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and pupils.

Where parents/carers fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Seaton Delaval First School will refer to Education Welfare and the use of legal sanctions will be considered

**Parenting Contracts** (Used in conjunction with Fast Track to Attendance) (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school, the parent/ carer and the Local Authority (EWO). It can also be extended to include the child depending on age.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Northumberland County Council's Protocol

**Legal Sanctions**

**Prosecution**.

Where intervention by school and the Education Welfare Officer fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide Education Welfare / Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are; Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

**Penalty Notices**

(Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered in accordance with Northumberland County Council's Protocols

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £60 fine is paid within 22 days or £120 if paid within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

## PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE (Appendix1)

| | First Schools | Middle Schools | High School |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1st trigger – letter/contact advising parents/carers that attendance is approaching an unacceptable level. | 96.1% | 95.1% | 94.1% |
| 2nd trigger – 2nd letter/contact advising that unacceptable absence level has been reached and reported to Education Welfare Officer for monitoring. | 95% | 90% | 90% |
| 3rd trigger – 3rd letter/contact advising of action from Educational Welfare Officer has been requested. | 90% | ------ | ------- |

**ALWAYS RECORD PHONE CALLS, MEETINGS AND ACTIONS**

**Appendix 2**

## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CONTRACT

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of Child: | DOB: AGE:<br>School Year Group: |
| Home Address: | |
| School :<br>Address: | |
| | |
| Parent/Carer (1): | |
| | |
| | |
| Parent/Carer (2): | |
| | |

**CONTRACT:-**

For your child to gain the greatest benefit from her education it is vital that he/she attends regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that Name attends regularly.

WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT

Any absence affects the pattern of your child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect her learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring NAME regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

UNDERSTANDING ABSENCE

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (NOT BY THE PARENTS), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. 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, such as emergencies or other unavoidable cause.
Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.
This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after registration has closed.
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

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 NAME is reluctant to attend, it is not acceptable to cover up his/her absence or to give in to pressure to excuse him/her from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. If NAME attendance at school is affected by persistent illness the school will not authorize the absence until they are satisfied the absence is valid.

PERSISTANT ABSENTEE (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year FOR WHATEVER REASON. Absence at this level damages your child's educational prospects and we need your fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. If NAME is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark you will be informed of this immediately.

PROCEDURES

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in to school on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence and the dates of the absence – you should do this even if you have already telephoned.
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child's attendance deteriorates we will:

- Write to you.
- invite you in to school if absences persist to discuss the situation with the appropriate staff
- Refer you to the Education Welfare Service

CONTACT DETAILS

There are times when the school and Education Welfare need to contact you about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact details at all times. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, Education Welfare will become involved. The service will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve NAME attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, then sanctions such as Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court will be used. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Education Welfare Service/ Local Authority.

LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If NAME misses the start of the day he/she can miss work and time with his/her class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

The school day starts at? and we expect NAME to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by twice a day and NAME will receive a late mark if he/she is not punctual.

In accordance with the Regulations, if NAME arrives after the close of registration she will receive a mark that shows her to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with staff in school to resolve the problem, but you can approach staff at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time

Leave of Absence in term time.

Any applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the head teacher. In making a decision the Head Teacher will consider the exceptional circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave or absence in term time.

Full details of policy and procedures are available from the school.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the School Attendance Contract.

Signed PARENT/CARER

SCHOOL

Date