

Seaton Sluice First School



School Attendance Policy

2026-27

Policy Consultation & Review

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office.

We recognise the expertise our staff build by managing school attendance daily and we therefore invite staff to contribute to and shape this policy and associated attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed in full on at least an annual basis. This policy was last reviewed, adapted and agreed by the Governing Body **[March 2026]**. It is due for review on **July 2027**.

Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called “[Working together to improve school attendance](#)” and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions.

Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance including the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing education or absent from school

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

We believe that attendance is a collective responsibility, involving the whole school and wider 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 considers the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Equality Act 2010

Statement of Intent

At Seaton Sluice First School, we believe that improving attendance is everyone's responsibility. We recognise the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, as well as being specific to individual pupils and families.

Attendance begins with the school's commitment to being a place where all pupils want to be. We strive to establish a foundation where school life is calm, orderly, safe and supportive; an environment where pupils are understood and encouraged to achieve, being motivated and ready to learn.

We acknowledge that for some pupils, attending school may present challenges. At all stages of monitoring school attendance, we will work in partnership with pupils and parents to collaboratively build strong, trusting relationships and work together to establish the most appropriate level of support. We believe that improvement can only happen as part of an effective partnership with schools' efforts in considering:

- The curriculum including opportunities for enrichment
- Behaviour and relationships between staff, pupils, families and supporting stakeholders
- Special educational needs, required support and consistency in approach
- A strong pastoral, mental health and wellbeing whole school core offer.
- Consideration of individual circumstances such as medical needs, family events or other relevant information shared with the leadership team.
- Effective use of resources including finance, such as Pupil Premium funding

Rights/Roles/ Responsibilities

Seaton Sluice First School values the importance shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents/carers, pupils and the wider school community in terms of improved attendance. Furthermore, we recognise that a positive learning culture is essential for promoting a healthy attitude to attendance.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents/carers
- 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 Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007* (and subsequent amending and related legislation,) is complied with together with statutory and non-statutory guidance such as *Working together to improve school attendance, 2024* issued by the Department of Education
- 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

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers
- Be approachable and form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with a rich, diverse curriculum that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and are adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that statutory and non-statutory guidance such as *Working together to improve school attendance, 2024* issued by the Department of Education
- Have a named Attendance Lead Teacher as well as support from the school administrative assistant sufficient time and resource allocated
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and Department for 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 accordingly
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Class Teachers 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
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions

Parents/Carers will:

- Talk to their child about school life and show a positive interest in their child's work, activities, opportunities and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home
- Encourage their child to look to the future and aspire
- Contact the school office if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return
- Avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Actively seek help if their child is experiencing difficulties at school or home
- 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
- Avoid taking their child on family holidays during term-time

Legal Framework

Under the requirements of s7 of the Education Act 1996 ("the 1996 Act") it is the duty of a parent to ensure that every child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education suitable

to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs or additional learning 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 1996 Act, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary and appropriate, consider and use legal enforcement. This responsibility is undertaken by Education Welfare team.

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether each registered pupil is physically present in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school by using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

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 usually be categorised as set out below, however, this is not an exhaustive list and should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation and statutory guidance (for example - The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 / [Working together to improve school attendance](#))

Illness

In most cases a telephone call or an email from the parent/carer informing the school that their child is ill will be 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 text, email or letter.

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 medical evidence to school. There will be some pupils who have individual SEND needs that impact on attendance and may include medical appointments. The school will work in partnership with such families to provide understanding and additional support for the pupil.

Other Authorised Circumstances

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances which will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Headteacher.

Excluded (No alternative provision made)

Suspension or exclusion from school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will plan for work to be sent home. For further information, see the school's Behaviour and Relationships Policy.

Religious Observance

Seaton Sluice First School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

Traveller Absence

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils are among the lowest achieving groups of pupils at every key stage in education, although some GRT pupils achieve very well at school. We recognise that there are many complex and interwoven factors that may influence the educational attainment of GRT pupils. At our school, we have high expectations of all pupils, regardless of their background whilst recognising the lifestyle and cultural traditions of GRT communities. In line with The Education Act 1996, Section 444(6) the school will authorise the absence of a pupil who is a mobile child^[1] and is unable to attend school because:

- the parents/carers are engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place,
- that the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits, and
- if the child has attained the age of six, that they have made at least 200 attendances during the period of 12 months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted

This provision applies *only* when the family has no fixed abode and 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. In these circumstances, parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When a family is trading or otherwise conducting their business 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 Sluice First School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when he or she is not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended Seaton Sluice First School in the last 18 months. Parents can register their children at other schools temporarily while away from their base school; in such cases, the pupil's school place Seaton Sluice 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.

To ensure we can effectively support all our pupils, we ask that parents advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen; and inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Late Arrival

Registration begins at 8:45am; pupils arriving after 8:50am will be marked as present but arriving late. (L) The register will close at 9:15am; (*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). If a pupil has a medical appointment and arrives after 9:15am, their late arrival will be marked as 'medical' (M).

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 (after 9:15am) without justifiable cause.

Un-authorised absence.

Absence will not be authorised unless parents/carers 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
- Having hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for training day (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

- Any deletions from the Register will be in accordance with regulation 9 of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024,

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 (EXAMPLE 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 Sluice 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.

Persistent and Severe Absence

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' (**PA**) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Over a full academic year this would be 19 school days (38 sessions) missed. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent**' (**SA**). Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

The attendance of all pupils at our school is monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in our policy. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support

Support Systems

School recognise that poor attendance is often a sign that there could be more complex issues presenting in a child's life. 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 Sluice First School recognises 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, pupils from migrant or refugee backgrounds and cared for children.

The school will implement strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussions with parents/carers and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies, including family support (Early Help)
- A circle of friends group
- PSHE class discussions
- Family learning such as THRIVE
- Time limited part time timetables
- Additional learning support, detailed on individual pupil plans
- Behaviour support planned within school and involving other agencies
- Reintegration support plans (if a child is suspended)
- Ongoing monitoring and a curious, proactive approach

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

Where communication breaks down, the school will work collaboratively with the family, the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority to seek guidance and offer extra support.

Legal Sanctions.

Where intervention by school and the Education Welfare Team fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, enforcement will be considered. A referral may be made to the Local Authority for enforcement action as appropriate. Parents do need to understand their own responsibilities in ensuring regular attendance and most importantly, about returning children to education if not currently in school.

Enforcement action may include (but is not limited to):

- (a) the issue of a **Penalty Notice**, (*see below for further information relating to Penalty Notices*) which would require payment of a sum of **£80** (if paid **within 21 days** from receipt of the Notice), or **£160** (if paid **after 21 days** and **before 28 days** from the date of receipt);

(b) **prosecution** in the Magistrates' Court for an **offence** under section 444 of the 1996 Act, for which the penalties on conviction are:

(i) a fine of up to **£1,000** for an offence under section 444(1); or

(ii) a fine of up to **£2,500** for an offence under section 444(1A) **and/or** a **custodial sentence** of up to **3 months**;

(c) an application to the Magistrates' Court for a **Parenting Order** of up to **3 months** should the Local Authority be successful in a prosecution under section 444;

(d) an application under section 36 of the Children Act 1989 for an **Education Supervision Order** to authorise the Council to take responsibility for advising, assisting and giving directions to you and the Child to secure that the Child is properly educated. Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the 1996 Act.

Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice which would require payment of a sum of **£80** (if paid **within 21 days** from receipt of the Notice), or **£160** (if paid **after 21 days** and **before 28 days** from the date of receipt).

A **second Penalty Notice** issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of **£160** per parent, per child.

If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court.

As stated above if prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, the penalties on conviction are:

(i) a fine of up to **£1,000** for an offence under section 444(1); or

(ii) a fine of up to **£2,500** for an offence under section 444(1A) **and/or** a **custodial sentence** of up to **3 months**;

Penalty Notices will be issued in accordance with Northumberland County Council's Code of Conduct.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity

in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.”

Should a penalty notice be issued, it should be noted that this is a direct alternative to prosecution, non-payment of the penalty notice may lead to a prosecution under section 444 of the 1996 Act

Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised with assistance from the Education Welfare Team. Relevant legislation and statutory guidance have also been considered.

- [Working together to improve school attendance, DfE \(August 2024\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [Children missing education, DfE \(August 2024\)](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education, DfE \(September 2024\)](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children, DfE \(December 2023\)](#)