September 2024

Attendance and Absence Policy and Procedure

This document relates to	
Shaftesbury Victoria School	✓
Shaftesbury Education	✓

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Introduction

Excellent attendance and punctuality is important if children are to benefit from everything school has to offer. There is a clear link between attendance, punctuality and achievement and we are legally required to report on absence. If a child is not at school, we have to find out the reason by law.

1. Statutory duty of care

As a school, it is our statutory duty to record students' daily attendance and we are accountable to the Department for Education through the School Census each term. A register is a legal document and may be required in a court of law in a prosecution for non-school attendance, so it is important this is accurate. More importantly, in the event of a fire or other incidents we must be aware which students are in school.

The whole school community has a responsibility to promote excellent attendance and we aim to provide an environment that encourages students to attend regularly and punctually.

1.1 School responsibilities

All staff should support a whole school ethos which places a high value on regular attendance and punctuality, and set a good example by their own attendance and punctuality.

1.2 Parents/carers' responsibilities

Parents/carers are responsible for notifying the school if their child is not able to attend due to sickness or another unavoidable cause.

Ideally, this should be by telephone or email, if appropriate, on the first day of absence and confirmed in writing. Wherever possible, parents should avoid making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours.

• An **authorised absence** may include sickness, medical or dental appointments which cannot be arranged outside school hours, days of religious observance.

• An **unauthorised absence** is an absence without any legitimate reason and may include truancy.

2. Illness

We recognise that many of our students have medical conditions and become ill on occasions, therefore some absence is unavoidable.

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Students may be away from school for a block of time due to a serious illness, at other times children have odd days of absence from school due to illness.

Absence from school due to a medical or dental appointment will be considered as an authorised absence. Parents/carers are requested to provide written confirmation of these appointments.

3. School Times

The timings of the school day are detailed below and the support of parents is sought in ensuring students are at school on time each day. Parents are asked not to drop off their child prior to our start time and if collecting their child to arrive in time for the end of our school day

Start of School Day 08.50

Registration 08.50-09.15 Students who arrive after this time are late.

End of School Day 15.15

After-School Clubs (optional) 15.15-16.30

Punctuality

Registration is at 08.50-9.15am. Whilst we are aware most of our students arrive at school on time, parents may not be aware of the difficulties experienced by their children, even if they are only a few minutes late each day. For example:

- A student is likely to miss the routine which signals the start of the school day and may miss his/her teacher's instructions for the first lesson.
- Arriving late causes disruption to the whole class, as well as to the child who is late.
- 10 minutes late a day = almost a whole hour of lessons missed each week for your child.

4. Family holidays during term time

Holidays during term time are discouraged and, where possible, holidays should be taken during the school holiday periods. We do however recognise that for some families, a holiday is important for enjoying quality time together, particularly if their child has experienced prolonged illness or extended post-operative care.

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Any family holiday request should be made in writing to the Headteacher using the form “Time Off in Term Time for Exceptional Circumstances”, which is available from Reception.

Holiday absences **will not** usually be authorised in the following circumstances:

- The student has planned examinations.
- The student’s attendance is giving cause for concern and there is no underlying medical problem affecting this.
- The holiday period exceeds 10 school days.

Staff

All staff should let their Head of Department/Line Manager know as early as possible if they are going to be absent. As soon as staff know a date for their return to school, they should telephone the office and let the school know. Please refer to Staff Absence Procedures for further details.

5. Children missing education

Local Authority guidelines are followed in relation to ‘children missing education’.

If we feel that one of our students is missing from education the school will make every effort to ascertain their whereabouts. This might include telephoning home, contacting the GP, friends or other relatives that are known, according to the emergency contacts that we hold.

If we have reason to believe that a child has transferred to another school, we will make every effort to contact that school to ascertain whether or not our information is true or false.

If any member of school staff has any reason to believe that there may be a child protection issue involved or if absence continues in accordance with statutory guidance, then we will discuss further with our Safeguarding team. If required, a referral to social care will be made or alerting the police.

6. Reporting to parents and carers

All absences, both authorised and unauthorised, and lateness will be reported to the parent/carer at the end of the academic year within their child’s report.

If requested, parents will be given an update on their child’s attendance at the end of each term.

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7. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Senior Leadership Team will monitor the attendance of students and work closely with the relevant Local Authority to support children and young people whose attendance levels are causing concern. The school will review this policy regularly and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

8. Attendance and absence procedures

8.1 Absences

All parents are asked to call the school office or, if appropriate, email their child's teacher to report absences. This can be done by leaving a message on the answering machine if no one answers the call.

The School Receptionist will investigate all unexplained/unauthorised absences and will contact parents/carers to ask why a student is not in school and when they are expected to return. They will do this on the first day of absence if the child's absence is not reported. If no explanation is given this will be marked as unauthorised.

If staff receive any further information regarding an absence they should pass it to the School Receptionist rather than altering any entries in the register, this will ensure that both the hard copy and electronic entry are identical.

8.2 School Responsibilities

School staff are responsible for ensuring that students have good attendance by:

- Completing attendance registers accurately.
- Differentiating appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Responding to absenteeism consistently and with care.
- Contacting parents when they are concerned about a student's absences and recording the contact on our systems (ARBOR).
- Consulting with the Education Welfare Service for the relevant Local Authority if a student's attendance continues to give cause for concern.

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8.3 Implementation

Morning and afternoon registration (Main School & Carmel House)

- **8.50am-9.15am**: Teacher/Senior Teaching Assistant should mark in registers which students are present or they know are not coming into school (info from parent or transport). **All other students should be left blank.**

- **9.00am-9.30am:** All registers completed on ARBOR, where the Receptionist can continue to complete the registers as students arrive. Receptionist can also enter the appropriate code as parents of absent students ring the school and if she finds the reason for their absence or lateness – *it is unfair to mark a student late if it is beyond their family's control, e.g. Local Authority transport problems*.

- **1.30pm**: All registers to be completed by Teacher/Senior Teaching Assistant.

In the event of a fire or other incident, whoever is on reception will ensure that the register is delivered to the appropriate assembly point.

The School Receptionist will:

- Complete registers with absence codes where required on ARBOR.
- Ensure there is a relevant code for all students for relevant registration periods.
- Become familiar with attendance reports and print out any requests received.

Illness

Please note that the **Code 'M' should be used for appointments only**; e.g. medical/dental/physio. If a student is having an operation/treatment it should be recorded with **Code 'I' for Illness.** Both are identified as being authorised absences.

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8.4 Procedure for monitoring absence

Number of days off school:	Procedures to be used to inform the school:	Potential consequences if procedures not followed:	Completed/ Coordinated by:
1-5 Days	• Parent/Carer notifies school by telephone call or email, if appropriate. • Parental note	• Phone call home after registration and after lunch. • Relevant code in register – no code if unauthorised.	Receptionist / Class Teacher
6-10 Days	• Letter from parent/carer, this could be within home-school book or separate. • Telephone discussion.	• Relevant code in register – no code if unauthorised. • Phone calls home (Class Teacher or Receptionist, Therapist, Nursing, Designated Safeguarding Lead. • Referral to Assistant Headteacher if unauthorised absences.	Designated Safeguarding Lead Receptionist / Class Teacher / Nursing Team / Relevant therapist
10+ Days	• Letter from parent/carer plus medical evidence e.g. copy of prescription, medical appointment, doctor's note. • Information provided from hospital.	• Relevant code in register – no code if unauthorised. • Letter sent to parents from Headteacher. • Local Authority Safeguarding (CME) procedures implemented. • Homework organised if relevant.	Designated Safeguarding Lead / Receptionist / Class Teacher / Nursing Team / Relevant Therapist
Extended Holiday:	Request by parents to Headteacher for authorisation. If unauthorised, meeting with parents to discuss further.		

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9. Local Advisory Board

The Local Advisory Board (LAB) has responsibility for school attendance and should be familiar with current legislation.

The LAB is acquainted with the registration system in the school and will request reports on attendance and procedures as necessary. A member of the LAB will usually be part of the Safeguarding sub-committee.

This policy will be reviewed annually or as deemed necessary and should be read in conjunction with the school's related safeguarding policies.

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Policy and procedure ownership

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V1.2	February 2022	Ray Lawrence	Revised
V2.0	April 2023	Ed Potterton, Gemma Milne	Revised
V3.0	September 2024	Helen Barnes	Updated branding

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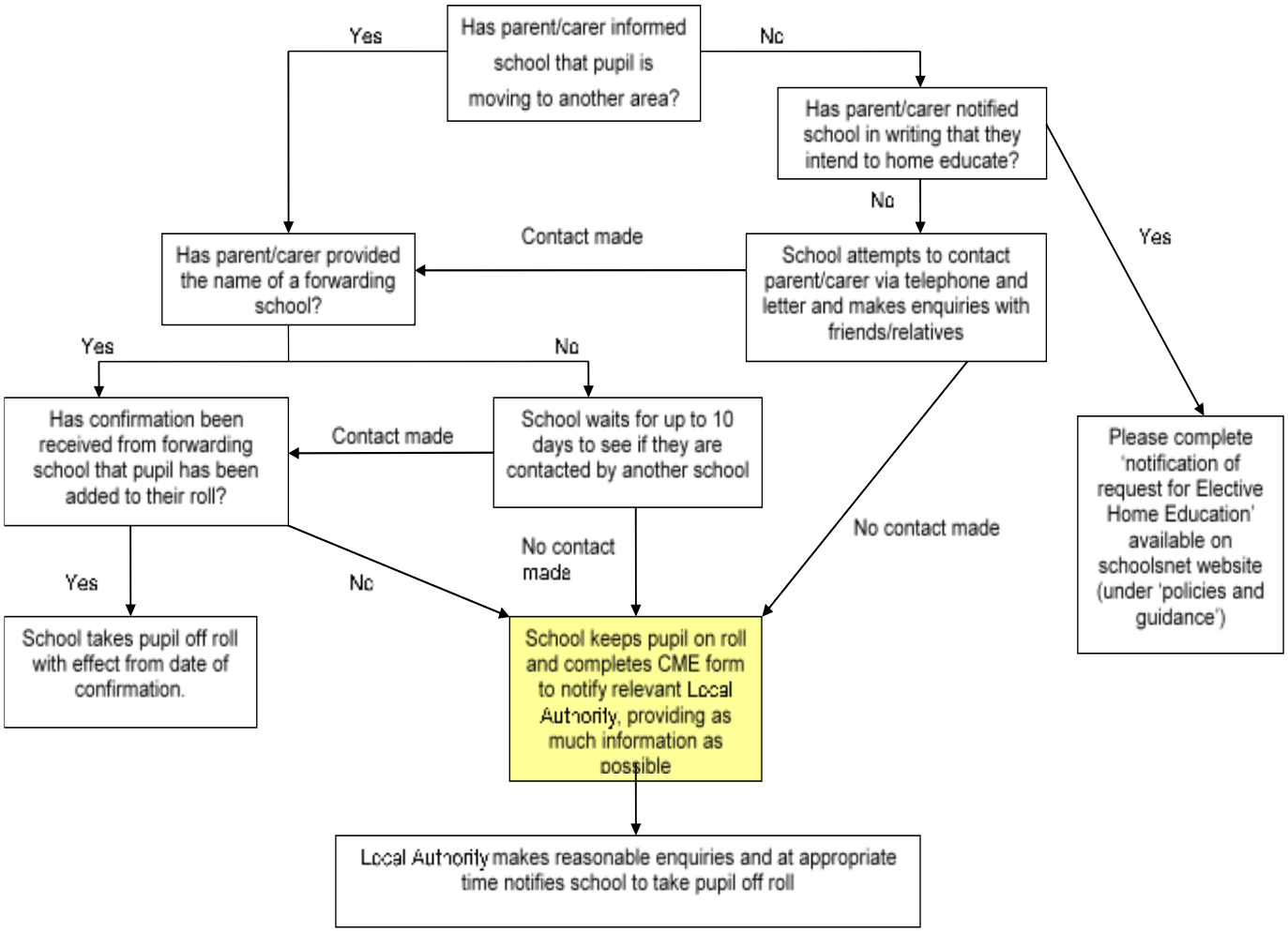
Appendices

Appendix 1: Flowchart



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