



Singleton Church of England Primary School



Good School Attendance Guide

Helping your child to make the most out of school



DfE Attendance Regulations – Effective from 19 August 2024

From August 2024, the Department for Education (DfE) introduced new national regulations to improve school attendance across England. These changes apply to all state schools and form part of the government's wider strategy to reduce pupil absence following the pandemic.

Daily Attendance Data Sharing

Schools must now share their **daily attendance registers** with the DfE, local authorities, and academy trusts. This helps identify pupils who may need support early and ensures consistent monitoring across the country.

National Framework for Fines

A new national system ensures fines for unauthorised absence are used consistently across England:

- A penalty notice **must be considered** when a child has **5 days (10 sessions)** of unauthorised absence.
- Fines are now:
 - **£80** if paid within 21 days
 - **£160** if paid within 28 days
- Fines apply **per parent, per child**.
- A second fine within 3 years is automatically **£160 with no discount**.
- After two fines, further unauthorised absence may lead to **prosecution**.

'Support-First' Approach (Statutory from August 2024)

The *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* guidance is now statutory. Schools and local authorities must:

- Work in partnership with families
- Hold regular meetings to support pupils at risk of persistent absence
- Prioritise early help before enforcement

Parents' Legal Duty

Once a child is registered at a school, parents must ensure they attend **regularly and punctually**. Children must attend every day the school is open unless:

- They are too unwell to attend
- The school has authorised the absence in advance

1.0 Introduction

Good attendance habits start early. Children learn from the adults around them, and parents set the tone for how important school is.

Attending school every day helps children:

- Settle quickly
- Build and maintain friendships
- Develop confidence
- Enjoy learning
- Make strong academic progress

We understand that starting school can feel daunting for both children and parents. Consistency, routine, and a supportive home–school partnership make a huge difference. Our staff are here to help. If your child shares a worry or something doesn't feel right, please speak to the class teacher as soon as possible. Early conversations prevent small issues from becoming bigger ones.

How much time do children spend in school?

- There are **365 days** in a year.
- Children attend school for **190 days**.
- They are at home for **175 days** — far more than they are in school.
- A 10-day holiday in term time reduces school attendance to **180 days**.
- Add illness, and a child may spend more time at home than in school.

2.0 Absence from school

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and on time. Establishing good habits early is far easier than trying to correct poor attendance later.

Types of Absence

Every half-day absence must be recorded as either:

- **Authorised** – the school has agreed the reason
- **Unauthorised** – the school has not agreed the reason

Examples of Authorised Absence

- Genuine illness
- Emergency medical or dental appointments
- Bereavement of a close family member
- Religious observance

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

- Keeping a child off unnecessarily
- Truancy
- Absences not explained
- Arriving after registers close
- Shopping, birthdays, or looking after siblings
- Term-time holidays not agreed
- Days beyond an agreed leave
- Parent illness
- Transport issues
- Non-urgent medical appointments
- School refusal without engagement from parents

Important

Only the **Headteacher** can authorise an absence. Parents cannot give permission for a child to stay at home.

If your child needs to leave school during the day

- Parents must inform the school office.

- The child must be **signed out**.
- Staff must know where every child is during the school day (legal safeguarding requirement).

Reporting Absence

Parents must:

- Contact school by **9:10am** on the first day of absence
- Provide the reason for absence
- Respond to follow-up calls from the office or Attendance Officer

If a child is frequently absent due to illness, school may request medical evidence and offer support such as:

- Referral to the school nursing team
- Adjusted timetables (e.g., mornings only)
- Meetings with the Headteacher or Family Learning Mentor

Non-urgent medical appointments should be made **outside school hours**.



3.0 The importance of good attendance

Attendance during one school year	Equals days absent	Which is approximately weeks absent	Which is this is the number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Children that have high levels of absence struggle with friendships, confidence and self-esteem. They also often feel that they have been left behind in aspects of learning, which often results in them not wanting to come to school.

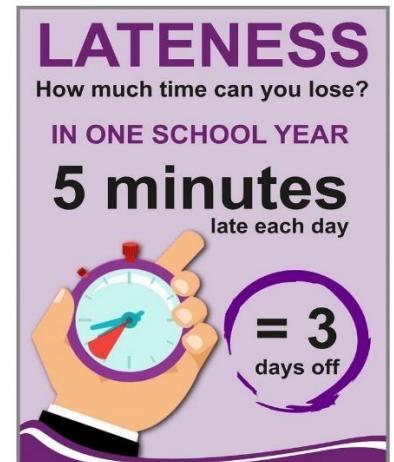
Help support your child and your school by keeping absence rates down. Children who are frequently absent are usually those who fall behind and find it hard to keep friendships, which can lead to being unhappy in school.

4.0 The importance of arriving on time

Being late disrupts learning and can be distressing for children.

School Times

- Whistle Blown and Doors open **8:40am**
- Registration closes at **8:50am**
- Lunch time registration closes at **1:05pm**
- End of school day **3:15pm**



Lateness Codes

- Arriving after 8:50am = **Late (L)**
- Arriving after 9:10am = **Unauthorised absence (U)**

Being 10 minutes late every day = **2 weeks of lost learning** per year.

Morning Procedures and Lateness Codes (Important – Please Read Carefully)

These details are essential so parents understand exactly what is expected.

- The school day **starts at 8:40am**. All children are expected to be in school at this time.
- Children **must not be left unattended** on the playground before 8:40am unless they are booked into Breakfast Club. Staff are not on duty before this time.
- Registers are taken at **8:50am**. Any child arriving after this time will receive a **late mark (L)**.
- Children arriving after **8:40am** must enter school **via the school office**.
- **Parents must accompany late children** to the office to sign them in and provide a reason for lateness.
- Children arriving after **8:50am** must still be accompanied by a parent/carer, and the reason for lateness will be recorded.
- At **9:10am**, the register officially closes. Any child arriving after this time will receive a '**U**' **code**, which counts as an **unauthorised absence**, even though the child is on site.
- Lateness is monitored by the **Family Learning Mentor**, who reports concerns to the Headteacher and Governing Body.
- If a pattern of lateness develops, parents will be invited into school to discuss this, and the **LCC Attendance Team** may be informed.

When a child arrives on time:

- Registration takes place quickly and smoothly
- An activity is put on the board or out around the classroom
- The day gets off to a good start for everyone
- Everyone hears the information given and is included in important explanations and discussions.

This ensures that everyone knows what to do and what is expected of them

When a Child Arrives Late:

- It interrupts concentration
- It wastes valuable learning time
- The teacher repeats information / instructions whilst others have to wait
- The late child is at an immediate disadvantage because they may have missed important teaching points, missed discussions where ideas are shared and will be generally unsettled
- Children feel stressed and anxious about having to walk into their lessons late, some children find being late very distressing.

5.0 Collection

- Children must be collected promptly at **3:15pm** (or **4:15pm** after clubs).
- Staff have commitments after school and cannot supervise children beyond this time.
- If a child is not collected at **3.15pm** the Family Learning Mentor will be notified and parents will be contacted. The expectation is that parents collect at **3.15pm** unless there is an extenuating circumstance.
- If children do an extra-curricular activity – the expectation is that they are collected promptly at **4.15pm** unless there is an extenuating circumstance. If the child/ren is/are not collected promptly, the Learning Mentor will be informed and parents will be contacted.
- All late collections will be monitored and logged and where applicable the late drop off and collection protocols will be implemented.
- At **3:15pm**, the children become your responsibility and it is imperative that you collect on time.
- Being collected late causes unnecessary anxiety and upset for children.

Full details of the Drop off and Collection Policy are available on the school website

6.0 Holidays in term time

Requesting Holidays During Term Time

Important Changes to Attendance Policy (Effective from 19th August 2024)

We aim to ensure that all parents and guardians are fully aware of the new attendance framework and how it affects holiday requests during term time.

Key Points of the New Attendance Framework

1. **Penalty Notices:** Penalty notices will be issued if your child's unauthorised absence reaches the national threshold of 5 days (10 sessions). Each case will be reviewed individually to ensure fairness.
2. **Prosecution for Unauthorised Leave:** Unauthorised leave of 15 days or more is considered excessive and may lead to prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
3. **Compliance with New Framework:** Our school follows the new framework and the advice of Lancashire County Council to meet statutory requirements.

Understanding the New Guidance

With the support of our Lancashire County Council (LCC) Attendance Officer, we have diligently worked through the new documentation to understand its implications.

Summary of Changes in Legislation (From August 2024)

- **New Requirements:** The Department for Education (DfE) has implemented new statutory guidance to improve school attendance.
- **Key Changes:**
 - Schools must monitor attendance more closely and act promptly on unexplained absences.
 - Greater emphasis on working with parents to support regular attendance.
 - Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly, except in allowable circumstances such as illness or pre-approved absences.
 - Stricter enforcement of attendance policies, including fines for unauthorised term-time holidays and prosecutions for excessive unauthorised absence.
 - Fines for unauthorised absences are now standardised nationally. A fine will be considered if a child misses 5 days of school without authorisation.
 - £80 if paid within 21 days
 - £160 if paid within 28 days
 - Fines are issued to each parent for every child.
 - A second fine within 3 years will be charged at £160 with no discount.
 - After two fines, further unauthorised absences may lead to prosecution.

Legislative Compliance

Our school is required to comply with the new DfE guidance, which includes the use of fines for unauthorised absences. The governing body will consider each case individually, applying fines where appropriate.

Holiday Requests in Term Time

Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are “exceptional” circumstances to warrant the granting of leave. In our school, the S.H.E. Committee supports the monitoring of absences and will consider applications for holidays in term time.

Exceptional Circumstances May Include

Lancashire County Council attendance department has explained that the following examples are classed as exceptional circumstances:

- **Parents in the armed forces** who miss school holidays.
- **Police** whose annual leave is dictated by circumstances such as riots, critical incidents, or special events like the Olympics.
- **Parents whose holidays are inflexible.** In this circumstance, parents would need to provide the contact names of their employers to clarify this (e.g., where a factory closes down for a set date each year and holidays cannot be taken outside this time).

As a result, the Governing Body had no choice but to enforce both national and county requirements as laid out in the school's attendance policy. Holidays will not be authorised in term time unless there is an exceptional circumstance.



Application Process

Use the county-recommended "Request for Leave" form (available on the school website). Submit applications **6 weeks in advance**.

- Provide supporting evidence.
- Parents may be invited to a meeting.
- Outcomes are confirmed in writing.
- Parents applying for an exceptional circumstance will be expected to provide evidence to support the application.
- The decision will be made by a governor representative of the S.H.E. committee in consultation with the headteacher.
- Parents may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the application for exceptional leave.
- Parents will be informed by letter as to the outcome.

Support from Lancashire Attendance Officer

Our LCC Attendance Officer visits each term to review our attendance data, discuss concerns, and advise on steps to improve attendance.

Respect for Staff

Please remember that our staff members who contact you or send out letters regarding penalty notices are following protocol. They are not responsible for making the rules. We kindly ask that you treat them with respect and understanding.

Thank you for your understanding and support as we implement these changes. If you have any questions or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

7.0 Attendance information for parents

Category	Attendance
Significantly above expectations	Above 99%
Above average expectations	97%–99%
Average	95%–97%
Below expectations	92%–95%
Significantly below expectations	Below 92%

As a school, we currently have attendance targets of 96%

Attendance Ladder

How close is your child to 100%?

0 days off school

100%

Perfection

Equates to 2 days off school each year

99%

Excellent

Equates to 5 days off school each year

97%

Good

Equates to 10 days off school each year

95%

Slight Concern

Equates to 20 days off school each year

90%

Concerned

Equates to 30 days off school each year

85%

Very Concerned