



SOLWAY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

School Values

These values are shared by the staff, governors and students in the school and underpin the education we offer at Solway Community School.

We have the moral purpose and courage to do the right thing for our students, to allow and inspire everyone to be what they are meant to be; to reach their potential; to be happy, safe and hardworking. We work together as a community to make learning exciting and inspirational.

We have high expectations of everyone - students, staff and governors.

We are creating an environment which is free from cynicism and does not put limits on what our children can achieve.

Our values:

- Courage and compassion
- Inclusion and equality
- Respect and courtesy
- Optimism and perseverance
- Forgiveness and tolerance

These values inform our work. We share these values constantly through our day-to-day ethos and actions, through our assemblies, through our curriculum and through excellent teaching which provides rich opportunities for learning. We show our responsibility for others through our compassion, courage and determination to change things for the better.

Version No	Author/Owner	Date Written	Note of amendments made	Signature	Review Date
			Approved on 15/05/2011		
			Approved on 07/02/2012		
2014-01	AQ		Approved on 25/3/14 Initiatives hyperlink		2015
2016-01	JR	Nov 2015	Reviewed Nov 2015		
2018-01	GW	Sept 2017	Updated and revised in line with new attendance approach		

1 What Solway Community School believes and intends to do about attendance

Good attendance is essential if students are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills which will equip them for life.

The school aims to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy within which students, staff, parents and Attendance Manager can work in partnership.

The expectation is that a pupil will have an attendance over the school year of 95% or above. This is equivalent to **only 9 ½ days** absence over the school year.

The school will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.

All staff will encourage punctuality and good attendance and pastoral staff will liaise with home and other agencies about a child's attendance when this is appropriate.

Good attendance will be seen as an achievement in its own right and recognised as such with awards such as certificates and prizes. See attached 'Initiatives to Increase Attendance'

2 Principles

A child should come to school every day

i) A child should only be absent if the reason is "unavoidable.". Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required. School does not have to authorise an absence if they have any doubts about the validity of the excuse.

ii) Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness or other unavoidable causes.

iii) Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. This includes:

- going shopping
 - minding the house
 - truancy
 - absences which have never been properly explained
 - children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Providing a note may not be sufficient if the reason given is not "unavoidable."

Not every illness needs to keep a pupil from school. For example a pupil may be ill but is well enough to do the activities of the school day? See the NHS Livewell website (<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Yourchildatschool/Pages/Illness.aspx>) for advice on whether your child is too ill to attend school.

iv) Some children need encouragement to attend regularly. Any problems are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. It is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from school. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the

staff in resolving problems together.

v) If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the LA Inclusion Officer. They will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement or by a further referral to Inspira, School Nurse or other agency. However, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, court proceedings can be used to prosecute parents.

vi) Parents or children may wish to contact the Inclusion Officer themselves to ask their advice. They are independent of the school.

3 Procedures

If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the school on the first day, in person or by telephone. When the child returns, he or she must bring a written note, signed by a parent and handed in to the office, for each period of absence. Alternatively parents may email the school office (parents@solway.cumbria.sch.uk). Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which are unavoidably in school time, provided a written explanation is received. Students need to bring a note to show the Tutor and Office as they sign out. Copies of all medical appointments are stored in the child's PF.

Tutors must ensure that registers are completed correctly as they serve as a register in case of an emergency and for Fire Drills. The regulation covering this – Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

If a child is found to be absent with no prior notice from home, this will initiate a call from school before 10am where practicable.

Any child who leaves school in a vulnerable state outside normal leaving times will initiate a call home and possibly to the Police.

If a child is absent for longer than 3 days without a valid reason, this will initiate a welfare check request by the Police.

Parents will receive information about their child's attendance with each report sent home.

Where attendance is a concern the school will contact parents to discuss how attendance could be improved, this may take the form of a meeting in school and may involve a governor as well as the Attendance Officer. An Early Help Assessment may be carried out to identify other agencies that may support the pupil and family.

If attendance remains a concern the pupil may be referred to the Inclusion Officer who may arrange an Attendance Review Conference, where the consequences for continued low attendance will be discussed and targets set.

The ultimate result of continued poor attendance may be legal action being taken by the Local Authority against the parents.

4 Holidays and other circumstances in which a child could be absent

All holiday leave and other circumstances for absence in term time are at the discretion of the Head. The

appropriate forms can be found on the school web site or can be picked up from the school office. Provided the request is made in advance in writing by the parent looking after the child, exceptional leave may be granted, provided the child's attendance record is otherwise satisfactory (greater than 95%). (Exceptional includes parents who work in the holiday industry, farmers, fishermen and those employed on shift work at the local factory who cannot change their shift pattern) The Head decides the length of the leave. Leave may be refused where children have already missed a lot of work in the past or at crucial times of the year (eg during exams). If the child is then taken on holiday this would be classed as an unauthorised absence and the Inclusion Officer would be involved.

Unauthorised holidays

New guidance has been issued to schools regarding absences from school, in particular holidays in term time. Since September 2013 Headteachers have not been able to authorise term time absence except in exceptional circumstances, which would not normally be for holidays. From September 2015, I am further required to inform all parents that a fixed penalty notice may be issued if unauthorised absence is taken, and indeed parents should be aware that they would be committing a criminal offence. There are particular circumstances in which this may happen:

- If there have been 5 consecutive days or more of unauthorised absence over one academic year
AND
- If the student's attendance is below 95%
- If the holiday is in September, or was taken during exams
- Is the second leave taken in any academic year
- The student is in year 6 or 11

I know that all parents try not to take their children out of school during term time; as you know, such absences are detrimental to their learning. I am also aware that there are sometimes mitigating circumstances. If you wish to request a leave of absence, please complete the appropriate form (on the website or available from the school office), and return to school together with a letter which explains the exceptional circumstances and why the leave of absence is required (for example where parents' seasonal work prevents them from taking time off in school holidays).

Illness

Procedures and reasonable adjustments for pupils recovering from injury, medical or surgical procedures, who have a long term or recurring illness, or a clinically defined mental health disorder which causes them to be absent for a period in excess of 15 days where medical opinion states they are still unable to access mainstream school are covered in the Medical Needs Policy.

More common illnesses, for example those outlined on the NHS Living Well Website (<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Yourchildatschool/Pages/Illness.aspx>), will usually be an authorised absence. If a pupil is building up a high number of absences for illness over the year then a higher level of certification may be asked for before the absence can be authorised. Ideally this would be a note from a doctor indicating how long the pupil will be expected to be absent from school. Alternatively, an appointment slip, a dated prescription for medication, a note or compliments slip from the reception (this could take the form of a screenshot of the appointment on the surgery computer), signed and dated, to say he attended.

5 Lateness

Children must attend on time to be given a mark for a session. Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration. Arriving more than thirty minutes after the start of the session without good reason is counted as unauthorised absence. Students need to arrive before 9.15 am and 1.20 pm after which the register will be closed. Students who arrive after registration but before 9.15 am or 1.20 pm must sign in at the Office to get their mark. Parents will be notified if there is a recurring pattern of lates and the Inclusion Officer will be involved by the school. After 3 lates a detention is issued.

A late gate may be run.

6 Missed Work

It is expected that in all cases of absence students will catch up with work missed at the earliest opportunity. If the student has a lengthy illness the parent should contact the school and the tutor will ensure that appropriate work is sent home.

7 Special Circumstances

It is recognised that there may be circumstances when a child may arrive late for a period of time because of transport difficulties or because of prolonged illness. The school could adopt a flexible approach in these instances and work with the student and parents to help in any way possible.

8 Rewards

- i) The school will celebrate 100% attendances on a monthly basis holding a prize draw. See the attached 'Initiatives to Increase Attendance'
- ii) The school will present a weekly cup to the form group with the best % attendance and the House with the highest attendance. These details will be posted on the Attendance Board.
- iii) A high level of attendance would merit a strong and supportive reference from the school to future employers.
- iv) Pupils with 100% attendance over a 3 week period will receive a reward and a reduction to the cost of their Prom ticket. Pupils with 100% attendance will be able to attend the Prom free of charge.

9 Attendance Registers

The school will follow the guidance on completion of attendance registers usually on SIMS but paper copies are in all form folders to be picked up by staff each morning. New staff will be given induction on their role and legal obligations.

10 Annual Strategy

The school and the Inclusion Officer will develop a strategy for the forthcoming year which will detail any new initiatives and deadlines so that regular monitoring of the DfE target of 95% is in place

11 This policy

This has been formulated after consultation with students, staff, governors, parents and the Inclusion

Officer.

It will be reviewed every three years or sooner if the need arises, so that changes, additions and amendments can be made after consultation with all parties.

Alternative providers (Lakes College, WCAZ) monitor students' attendance and forward this to the school on the morning of the days that students attend. Any issues are dealt with by the providers in consultation with school. Other situations are dealt with on a case by case basis (for example one student going out two days a week on a work placement registers in school first and is then delivered to the placement by a member of staff).