# Attendance Policy

## New Seaham Academy

**September 2026**

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**Document History Log:**

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| **Author of document:** | Steve Bilton | **Job role:** | Headteacher |
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## Attendance Key Contacts

**Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.**

| Name | Role | Contact details |
|---|---|---|
| Mr Bilton | Headteacher | 0191 5813046 |
| Mr Richardson | Deputy Headteacher | |
| Mr O'Neill | Attendance and Behaviour Lead | |
| Board of Trustees | Responsibility for attendance | |

**If a pupil is going to be absent from school the person you should inform the school office immediately.**

**If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:**

| Name | Role / type of help | Contact details |
|---|---|---|
| Class Teachers | Support with initial barriers to attending school | 0191 5813046 |
| Mr O'Neill | Attendance and Behaviour Lead | |
| Mr Bilton | Headteacher – signposting access to services, family support, early help etc | |

### Help & Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

### Children Missing from Education

If pupils whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Pupils place in schools are at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treat as a safeguarding issue.

**Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos**

New Seaham Academy seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the Working Together to improve school attendance statutory guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. We expect everyone to attend every session they are able to, to benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer.

Communication is vital to ensure we are able to work with our parents and pupils and support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date are communicated to school as soon as possible as it is extremely important school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

**The school day**

The school day is from 8:30am – 4:30pm
Children enter the building via the main school playground from 8:15am

Registration is 8:30am – 8:45am. The register will close at 9am. Pupils must be in school to be marked present, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended).

Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (L code).

In line with government guidance the registers will close at 9:00am.

Pupils who are not present before the register closes but attend during the session will be recorded as a U code unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact Mr O'Neill if there are any issues which are affecting a pupils ability to attend school on time.

**If your child is late for school:**
All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded via Inventry and stored on SIMS.

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions Mr O'Neill will arrange a meeting to discuss and additional support needed from school.

**If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality a attendance support plan will be put in place. This meeting will be joint working with parents/carers and Mr O'Neill.**

**Term dates and planned Inset days**
Details on term dates can be found here: https://www.durham.gov.uk/schoolholidays Details of PD days can be found here: Holiday_List_25-26-27.pdf

**Leave of Absence in Term Time**
Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission must be requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with completing the form. Forms can be collected from the main school office.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

**The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance**.

**On the first day of absence**

If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to contact the School (via telephone or e-mail) providing a reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home to find out why the pupil is not in school via telephone call from the school office.

Appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should do.

**Periods of extended absence**

A parent must inform school of an absence, each day. The only exception to this is when a leave of absence has been requested.

**No reason for absence provided**

If no reason for absence is received a home visit may be carried out by a DSL. Where appropriate, referrals to other agencies may be made for example early help, police, First Contact. This is all outlined in our safeguarding policy.

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate and if so will refer the matter to the local authority.

**Absence authorisation**

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

**Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

Outline how the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance.

Examples

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters, website, letters home
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance;

**Attendance data**

We will use data we have such as whole school, year group, form/class and individual pupil level to analyse for patterns of absence which may require some support to improve.

We will also consider different pupil cohorts such as all pupils, those who have free school meals, those with special educational needs or disabilities, pupil premium, children who have a social worker or are looked after etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do.

We will communicate information to parents as appropriate via TAF meetings, safeguarding meetings and attendance support meetings.

**Absence concerns**

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so people can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

**Persistent absence**

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent

Mr O'Neill monitors attendance weekly. He will contact the parent/carer of any child who appears to be on track to become a persistent absentee. Mr O'Neill will support families to improve attendance and will refer to other agencies if and when appropriate.

**Severe absence**

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent

Mr O'Neill monitors attendance weekly. He will contact the parent/carer of any child who appears to be on track to become a severe absentee. Mr O'Neill will support families to improve attendance and will refer to other agencies if and when appropriate.

**National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention**

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 school-week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, this should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Penalty Notice or Offence investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. (DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. (DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet)

If penalty notices are not paid then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence. If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

**Pupils with specific needs**

This Policy must be applied fairly and consistently and consider the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance. If a child has a specific need which impacts their attendance, Mr O'Neill will meet with parents/carers to understand the reasons for this and a plan will be made to identify support needed from school and other agencies.

**This policy is supported by our policies on:**

Safeguarding
Anti bullying
Behaviour
SEND
Accessibility Plan

**The school and all partners will work together to:**

**EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

**MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

**FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

**FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

**ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

**Expect**

We all want the best for pupils and therefore aspire to have the highest attendance possible for each individual to allow them to access the education on offer to them in a culture they feel safe, part of the community and where they want to be.

**Monitor**

Mr O'Neill monitors attendance on a regular basis.

**Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance**

All staff are available in school to support with any barriers. For any concerns relating to friendships or support in the classroom, classroom teachers and SLT are available to support. Where there are concerns around attendance related to illness, parents are advised to arrange a meeting with Mr Cummings, Mr Richardson or Mr Bilton our leads for medical needs in school.

**Facilitate support**

Mr O'Neill will work with families to remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where there are wider issues affecting attendance.

**Formalise support**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract.

**Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.