

South Molton United Church of England Primary School Attendance Policy

2022-2023



Uniquely Different, United Together, Universally Prepared

At South Molton United Church of England Primary School, children have a sense of belonging in a supportive, happy environment, where their range of talents will be nurtured, enabling them to flourish and achieve excellence. Every child is valued as a unique person and can develop their sense of discovery, expectation and wonder. We embrace Christian values, which enable us to be compassionate and responsible members of our community and make positive contributions to society.

South Molton United Church of England Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive an education which enables them to maximise opportunities for each child to reach their full potential. Research shows there is evidence of a strong link between good attendance and increased attainment. Pupils who regularly attend school make much better progress both socially and academically. Regular attendance enables pupils to adapt better to routines, school work and friendship groups. As a consequence those pupils will have a positive experience of learning and have more successful transition from primary to secondary and beyond to further education and training.

South Molton United Church of England Primary School aims to work in partnership with parents and other agencies and will actively promote and encourage every child maximising attendance to ensure that each child can get the best out of the educational opportunities provided.

By working in partnership with parents and other agencies we are able to ensure that we have clear and robust strategies in place to manage and promote regular attendance, for all students at South Molton United Church of England Primary School.

The national average attendance in primary schools has been just over 96% and, as a school, we aim to be above this consistently. We would like all pupils to be as close to 100% attendance as possible.

In order to manage and promote regular attendance School/Academy will:

- Keep parents updated on the South Molton United Church of England Primary School's overall attendance and individual pupil's attendance, via letters home, newsletters, social media the website.
- Follow the DfE and Government guidance in relation to school attendance and COVID-19.

- Follow Public Health guidance should any local lockdowns or outbreaks in school occur.
- Report to parents how their child is achieving in school and how their child's attendance is impacting on this, via regular parent evenings.
- Monitor individual students attendance in order to:

a) Celebrate good and improved school attendance and reward this through certificates and recognition within the school community.

b) Notify parents when we are worried about their child's attendance by following the school procedures. This will be done via regular monitoring of attendance (half termly for all pupils and fortnightly for those pupils where attendance has been a concern).

From our half termly monitoring of attendance, we will notify parents/carers if their child's attendance is below

- 1) 95% - this will be a notification to let parents/carers know that attendance has fallen below this level
- 2) 90% - a more formal letter will be written outlining concerns and offering support. Pupils with attendance below 90% will have their attendance monitored fortnightly to support improvement.

Parental responsibilities to help manage and promote the regular attendance of their children:

- Understand their legal responsibilities by ensuring regular school attendance with regard to the Section 444(1) and 444 (1A) Education Act 1996 and Section 36 of the Children Act 1989.
- Understand their responsibility to keep the South Molton United Church of England Primary School up to date with at least 2 emergency contact details as required by the Children Missing Education requirements and in line with the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance 2018.
- Impress on their children the importance of regular school attendance by keeping absences to a minimum and ensuring that children are only out of school when they are too sick to attend.
- Establish effective communication with the South Molton United Church of England Primary School and swiftly address any worries their children may have about coming to school, so that we can work together to resolve this.
- Contact South Molton United Church of England Primary School on every day of absence to inform school of reason for absence and when the child is expected to return keeping school informed if the absence is likely to continue so that school and partner agencies can ensure that amendments or alternatives can be made to provision if required.
- Provide the South Molton United Church of England Primary School with any medical appointment cards and where possible make appointments out of school hours. If this is not possible parents should ensure that children attend prior to or following their appointment.
- Attend any meetings called by South Molton United Church of England Primary School and partner agencies to discuss attendance.

Registration periods for South Molton United Church of England Primary School

School gate/classroom opens at 8:30am for Reception and Key Stage One and 8:45am for Key Stage Two. Your child must arrive at school prior to this and will remain the responsibility of the parent.

Morning Registers will be taken at 8:30-8:45am for Reception and Key Stage One and 8:45-8:55am for Key Stage Two

Afternoon Registers will be taken at 12:45-12:50pm for Key Stage One and 1:15-1:20pm for Key Stage Two

Any pupils arriving after these times should report to reception so that they can be given a late mark. By law the school has to 'close' their registers, therefore any pupils arriving after 9am will be registered with a 'U' code. This is an unauthorised absence and we will ensure the number of minutes late are recorded in order to measure the impact of lost education due to the late arrival. These unauthorised absences could lead to appropriate action being taken by the school and the Education Welfare Service.

Punctuality is a critical factor in the smooth running of a school, not only because arriving late for class has a disruptive effect for both staff and students, but also installing an ethos of good timekeeping is important for pupils later in life, especially when embarking on the employment ladder.

Absences

Parents are expected to inform school of the reason for absences, however, it is school that makes the decision whether to authorise or unauthorise the absence. School will make this decision based on the information available to them. Parents are encouraged to provide as much information as possible and information such as appointment cards, medication or application for leave of absence will assist school in making this decision. If parents do not let the school know why their child is absent, the school will unauthorise the absence. All parents have a duty to make sure their child attends school regularly and we understand that children are likely to have short absences from school when they are ill. However, if these absences are deemed excessive the school may decide to unauthorise future absences. Until they are sufficiently satisfied that the reasons for the absence were completely unavoidable. Parents will be invited to provide the school with additional information or documentation to enable us to make an informed decision regarding authorisation for each absence.

Re-occurring unauthorised absence should be referred to the Education Welfare Service and this could lead to legal interventions.

Schools also have a safeguarding duty, under **section 175 Education Act 2002**, to investigate any unexplained absences

Request for leave of absence in term time

South Molton United Church of England Primary School have adopted the Local Authority code of conduct (September 2019) in respect of leave of absence in term time. All parents who wish to take their child out of school for any reason (other than medical reasons) should complete a leave of absence request form. Please note, that only in exceptional circumstances will a leave of absence in term time be authorised. Therefore, the vast majority of holiday requests during term time will be unauthorised. If parents proceed with

the leave of absence in term time, South Molton United Church of England Primary School may refer to the Local Authority for a fixed penalty notice. Penalty notices may be issued due to the deliberate taking of leave of absence in term time without or against school permission, (where it can be demonstrated that the parent/carer understood that permission had not or would not be given), and where this has created a period of unauthorised absence of at least 10 sessions. The Request for Leave of Absence in Term Time form is available from the school office or our school website.

Appointments

We encourage parents to make Doctors or Dentist appointments outside of school hours, however we do appreciate that sometimes this is not possible and you must inform the school as soon as you have an appointment booked.

South Molton United Church of England Primary School procedure for following up attendance concerns.

South Molton United Church of England Primary School has a duty to keep you informed if at any time we start to become concerned of absences. The procedure we follow is below, but you must not wait for a letter from us if you wish to talk about any concerns you have about your child's attendance;

By 11am on first day of absence – school to text/email parent regarding absence if the school has not already had contact from parent/carer to explain the absence.

Half Termly – attendance for each pupil is analysed. If there are concerns regarding length of absence, frequency of absence, pattern of absence or punctuality an initial letter will be sent to the parents/carers to inform them of concerns. There will also be the opportunity to discuss the concerns and any support that can be provided to improve attendance. There will then be more frequent monitoring of attendance for those pupils.

Where concerns are ongoing over a longer period of time, this will be discussed with the parent/carer by a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team. There will then be fortnightly monitoring of attendance.

Should these concerns persist and where attendance doesn't improve, the school will engage with partners such as the Educational Welfare Officers to support improved attendance.

Consideration is always given to any medical or educational needs of the child. This will be explored with you during the attendance processes. We must stress that our aim will always be to support you and your child in improving attendance. However, we understand that sometimes this does not work, therefore we will need to have a discussion with the Education Welfare Service to explore the next steps.

What if attendance does not improve for your child?

South Molton United Church of England Primary School may contact the Education Welfare Service to support you and the school in managing and promoting regular attendance of your child. This could involve:

- An introductory Letter expressing concern
- Exploratory supportive meeting to ensure all concerns and worries have been considered by the school and yourself.
- These meetings may include suggesting Outside Agencies that may be able to help you and your child.
- Agencies could include:
 - Early Help
 - Child and adolescent mental health service
 - Social Care
 - 0-25 team
 - Public Health Nursing
 - Any other agencies that are deemed appropriate
- Home visits

If the level of absences continue to cause concern, the Education Welfare will consider taking legal action.

In situations where all other strategies have failed to improve school attendance, the Education Welfare Service will enforce Section 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and the Children Act 1989, which may result in a fine up to £2,500; a Parenting Order; a community order; or a custodial sentence. Consideration will also be given to the issuing of a Penalty Notice in case of unauthorised absence where appropriate [School absence penalty notices: code of conduct - Education and Families \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/school-absence-penalty-notice)

Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. The Attendance Policy has a direct link to Safeguarding policy; the Behaviour policy; Anti-bullying strategies and the Health and Safety Policy. South Molton United Church of England Primary School have also adopted the Local Authority Policies on Children Missing Education, Elective Home Education. The *school* also follow Local Authority guidance in relation to coding absence for families who travel as part of their culture.

All these policies have been endorsed by our governing body, which support the school in all attempts to improve the attendance and safeguarding agenda.