Small school, big heart, aiming higher together

Our vision is to value everyone to enable them to develop curiosity, ignite a love of learning, discover talents, reach their full potential and live life in all its fullness. This vision is rooted in our Christian values of respect, compassion, friendship and perseverance that are at the heart of our school.

School Attendance Policy 2026

Approved by Governing Body: November 2026

Review Date: September 2027

Attendance Lead: Headteacher

Policy based on: Department for Education, *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (July 2026).

1. Statement of Intent

At Sutton, we believe that excellent attendance is fundamental to educational achievement, wellbeing, safeguarding and positive life outcomes. We are committed to creating a culture where all pupils feel welcomed, valued and supported to attend school regularly and arrive on time.

We recognise that attendance barriers can be complex and that effective attendance improvement is achieved through strong relationships with parents, carers, pupils and external agencies. We will work collaboratively with families to understand and remove barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity.

Attendance is everyone's responsibility.

2. Legal Framework

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives an efficient full-time education and attends school regularly when registered at school.

This policy operates in accordance with:

- Education Act 1996
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Department for Education *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (July 2026)
- National Framework for Penalty Notices (August 2024 onwards)

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

Governors will:

- Promote the importance of good attendance.
- Monitor attendance data and trends.
- Challenge and support school leaders where attendance concerns arise.
- Ensure that statutory duties relating to attendance are fulfilled.

Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- Lead the school's attendance strategy.
- Promote a culture of high attendance.
- Ensure attendance data is regularly reviewed.
- Authorise or refuse leave of absence requests.
- Work with families and agencies to improve attendance.

School Staff

Staff will:

- Encourage excellent attendance.
- Identify attendance concerns early.
- Record attendance accurately.
- Report safeguarding concerns linked to attendance.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school every day unless an authorised absence applies.
- Contact school promptly when absence occurs.
- Attend meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns.
- Work in partnership with the school to overcome attendance barriers.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive punctually.
- Engage positively with support offered to improve attendance.

4. School Day and Registration

The school opens at **8.50am**.

All pupils are expected to be in school by **9.00am**.

Registration

Time	Outcome
Before 9.00am	Present (/)
9.00am-9.15am	Late (L)
After 9.15am	Unauthorised absence (U) unless an acceptable reason is provided

Registers close at **9.15am**.

Where a pupil arrives after 9.00am, they must be signed in through the school office by a parent or carer.

5. Reporting Absence

Parents/carers must notify school by **9.00am** on each day of absence.

The reason for absence should be clearly explained.

Where no explanation is received, the school will follow first-day absence procedures.

6. First-Day Response

If a pupil is absent and no reason has been received:

1. The school will contact parents/carers.
2. Emergency contacts may be contacted.
3. Further enquiries may be undertaken where necessary.
4. If concerns remain regarding a child's whereabouts or welfare, appropriate agencies may be contacted, including Children's Services or the Police.

Attendance monitoring forms part of the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

7. Medical Appointments

Medical and dental appointments should be arranged outside school hours whenever possible.

Where this is unavoidable:

- Parents should notify the school in advance.
- Evidence of the appointment may be requested.
- Pupils should attend school before and after the appointment wherever practical.

8. Promoting Good Attendance

The school will:

- Celebrate and recognise good attendance.
- Celebrate significant improvements in attendance.
- Communicate attendance information regularly with families through the school newsletter.
- Promote positive relationships and a sense of belonging.
- Encourage pupil engagement and participation.

9. Attendance Monitoring and Early Intervention

Attendance is reviewed regularly to identify emerging concerns before absence becomes entrenched.

Monitoring includes:

- Whole-school attendance
- Year groups
- Persistent absence
- Severe absence
- SEND pupils
- Disadvantaged pupils
- Pupils eligible for Pupil Premium
- Vulnerable groups and cohorts

Attendance Thresholds

Attendance	Classification	School Response
Below 95%	Cause for concern	Attendance monitored and from 1st December onwards, contact with parents/carers to alert that they have dropped below 95%. This is used with caution with children with known medical conditions.
Below 90%	Persistent absence	Attendance meeting and support plan implemented

Below 85%	Significant concern	Enhanced intervention and possible agency involvement
Below 50%	Severe absence	Intensive multi-agency support programme considered

Persistent absence is defined as attendance below 90%. Severe absence is attendance below 50%.

10. Attendance Support

The school's primary approach is support rather than enforcement.

Where attendance concerns arise, the school will seek to:

- Understand barriers affecting attendance.
- Listen to the views of pupils and families.
- Work collaboratively to identify solutions.
- Provide practical and emotional support.
- Refer families for additional support where appropriate.

Support may include:

- Attendance meetings.
- Early Help referrals.
- Healthy Child Team involvement.
- SEND reviews.
- Mental health support.
- Multi-agency working.
- Attendance Support Plans.

11. Attendance Support Plans

Where attendance falls below 90%, an Attendance Support Plan may be implemented.

The plan will include:

- Current attendance information.
- Identified barriers.
- Agreed support strategies.

- Attendance targets.
- Review dates.
- Named school staff member responsible for monitoring progress.

12. Support for Vulnerable Pupils

The school will be particularly mindful of pupils whose attendance may be affected by:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Mental health difficulties
- Physical health conditions
- Young carer responsibilities
- Involvement with social care services
- Family circumstances affecting school attendance

Additional support will be considered on an individual basis.

13. Repeated Illness Absence

Where repeated illness absence occurs, the school may:

- Meet with parents/carers.
- Seek evidence of medical involvement.
- Refer to the Healthy Child Team.
- Work with health professionals.
- Provide appropriate learning support where suitable.

14. Lateness

Punctuality is essential.

Repeated lateness before register closure may result in:

- Communication with parents.
- Attendance monitoring.
- Attendance Support Plans.
- Consideration of additional support services.

Repeated arrival after registers close may be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

15. Leave of Absence During Term Time

Leave of absence cannot be granted as an automatic right.

Applications must:

- Be made in advance.
- Be submitted by a parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides.
- Demonstrate exceptional circumstances.

Examples that may be considered include:

- Service personnel returning from active deployment.
- Exceptional employment circumstances.
- Medical or emotional recovery supported by professional evidence.
- Significant family crisis situations.

Reduced holiday costs or availability do not constitute exceptional circumstances.

16. Penalty Notices and Legal Intervention

The school will always seek to support families and remove barriers before considering enforcement, unless safeguarding concerns require immediate action.

Where unauthorised absence occurs, the school may refer cases to the Local Authority in line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices.

Penalty Notices are administered by the Local Authority and are not issued at the discretion of the Headteacher.

17. Attendance Data and Reporting

Attendance data will be reviewed:

- Weekly by the Headteacher.
- Termly by governors.
- As part of ongoing safeguarding and pupil progress monitoring.

The school will use attendance data to identify trends and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

Letters sent home.

First letter sent when attendance has dropped below 95%

Dear [Parent/Carer's Name],

We are writing to share a copy of [Child's Name]'s current attendance record, as their attendance has recently dipped below our expected level of [insert school target, e.g., 96%].

Regular attendance makes a big difference to how confident and settled children feel at school. When a child misses days, it can become harder for them to keep up with their learning, build routines, and stay connected with their friends. Because we want [Child's Name] to get the very best out of their time with us, we like to flag these dips early so we can work together to get things back on track.

We understand that there can be many reasons why a child misses school—from seasonal illnesses to anxieties or challenges at home—and we are here to help. If there is anything affecting [Child's Name]'s attendance that you haven't already shared with us, please do get in touch. We would welcome the chance to chat and see what support we can put in place for you and your family.

Over the next few weeks, we will keep a close eye on [Child's Name]'s attendance and hope to see it improve. As a routine reminder to all families, parents and carers have a legal responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.

If you would like to talk through the attached record or discuss any support you might need, please contact [Name/Role, e.g., our Pastoral Team / the school office] on [Phone Number] or reply to this email.

Thank you for your ongoing support in helping [Child's Name] thrive at school.

L**etter we send to invite parent/carer to an attendance meeting when drop below 90% attendance.**

Dear [Parent/Carer's Name],

Following on from our previous correspondence, I am writing to invite you to an informal meeting with Mrs Pye to look at how we can best support [Child's Name]'s school attendance.

As shown in the attached attendance record, [Child's Name]'s attendance has now dropped below 90%, which is classed nationally as persistent absence. We know that missing this amount of school makes it much harder for children to feel settled, keep up with their

learning, and avoid gaps in their knowledge. Because we want [Child's Name] to have every opportunity to thrive, it is really important that we look at this together now.

This meeting is a supportive space for you to share anything that might be making it difficult for [Child's Name] to get into school every day—whether that is health issues, worries about school, or challenges at home—so we can explore what practical help or adjustments we can put in place.

We have arranged a time for you to meet with Mrs Pye:

- **Date:** [Insert Date]
- **Time:** [Insert Time]
- **Location:** [Insert Location, e.g., School Reception / Meeting Room]

Please let us know if this time works for you, or contact the school office on [Phone Number] if you need to rearrange. We ask that you make every effort to attend, as working together is the best way to get things back on track.

As part of our statutory duties, we also have to remind all parents and carers that ensuring regular and punctual attendance is a legal responsibility under the Education Act 1996, and continued absence without improvement can eventually lead to formal legal procedures. However, our priority right now is to support you and [Child's Name] so that it doesn't reach that stage.

Thank you for your cooperation, and we look forward to speaking with you soon.

18. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, statutory guidance or local authority procedures change.

Policy Written: November 2026

Next Review Date: September 2026

Approved by Governing Body: November 2026