

# South Marston C of E Primary School

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"Encourage one another and  
build each other up" 1 Thessalonians  
5.11

Headteacher: Mrs M Hendry  
B.Ed. (Hons) QTS

8<sup>th</sup> September 2026

## **Attendance Information for Parents and Carers – 2026/27**

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we begin the 2026/27 academic year, we would like to remind all families of the importance of regular and punctual attendance at school.

There have been updates to the legislation, statutory guidance and national attendance expectations for this academic year. We therefore want to ensure that all parents and carers are aware of the current requirements and understand how attendance and unauthorised absence are monitored.

### **What are the attendance expectations?**

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education. Children should attend school every day and arrive on time, unless they are genuinely unwell or the absence has been authorised by the school.

Under the current national attendance framework, where a pupil has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period, the school and/or local authority must consider whether a Penalty Notice is appropriate.

There are normally two attendance sessions each school day, meaning that:

- 1 full day of unauthorised absence = 2 sessions
- 5 full days of unauthorised absence = 10 sessions

The 10 sessions can be made up of different types of unauthorised absence, including unauthorised holidays, absence for leisure activities and, in some circumstances, arriving after the register has closed.

### **Term-time holidays and other leisure activities**

The Blue Kite Academy Trust

10 Ferndale Primary and Nursery School

Wiltshire Avenue, Swindon, SN2 1NX

**The Blue Kite**  
Academy Trust



We would particularly like to draw parents' and carers' attention to term time holidays and other leisure activities.

During the latter part of the 2025/26 academic year, particularly as we approached June and July, we saw an increase in requests for and instances of children being taken out of school for holidays. The majority of these absences were unauthorised.

We also had a number of children absent from school last year because they were attending music festivals and other leisure or entertainment events. While we appreciate that these can be important and enjoyable family experiences, **attendance at festivals, concerts, sporting events, celebrations or other recreational activities does not normally provide grounds for authorising absence from school.**

We appreciate that families may have a range of personal circumstances and pressures to consider when planning holidays. However, schools are required to follow national attendance legislation and guidance when deciding whether leave during term time can be authorised.

Leave of absence during term time will only be authorised where the circumstances meet the requirements set out in national guidance and the school's attendance policy. The fact that a holiday is cheaper, more convenient, linked to work commitments, or that parents/carers are unable to take leave during the school holidays would not, in itself, normally constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Similarly, we recognise that families may experience a range of circumstances, including parental anxiety, family difficulties, SEND, sensory needs, anxiety or other emotional and mental-health needs experienced by a child.

However, these circumstances do not, in themselves, provide grounds for authorising a holiday or other leisure activity during term time. We are aware that specialist and SEND settings also operate within the same national attendance expectations and do not routinely authorise term-time holidays on the basis of SEND or additional needs. We will therefore apply the same expectations consistently within our school.

Other reasons such as avoiding peak-season travel costs, taking advantage of cheaper flights or accommodation, family members' availability, attending festivals or events, or extending a holiday around a weekend or school closure would also not normally be sufficient grounds for authorising leave.

Each request will be considered on its individual circumstances, and parents/carers should not assume that a request for leave during term time will be approved. Parents/carers are required to complete the Term Time Absence Request Form, which is available on the school website, and submit the completed form to the school office. The request will then be passed to the Leadership Team for consideration and processing. Parents/carers should not make or confirm holiday arrangements until they have received confirmation from the school that the request has been authorised.

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We maintain regular and ongoing contact with the Attendance and Welfare Team at the Local Authority and seek advice where appropriate to ensure that our decisions and procedures remain consistent with current legislation, statutory guidance and local authority expectations.

A holiday or other leisure activity during term time without the school's authorisation will be recorded as unauthorised absence. Where the relevant threshold is met, a Penalty Notice may be issued.

**Please also note that should we begin to identify patterns of regular absence from school, such as days taken off for family days out, extended weekends away or similar reasons, advice may be sought from the Education Welfare Officer. This could result in further action being taken.**

### **Safeguarding and verifying absence**

As part of our safeguarding responsibilities, we must always be able to establish the whereabouts of children who are absent from school, particularly where an absence is unexpected, unexplained or there are concerns about a child's welfare.

Where a child is absent from school due to a holiday, parents/carers may therefore be asked to provide details of where the child will be staying during the period of absence, including the name and address of the hotel, accommodation or other location. This information helps us to fulfil our safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that we know the whereabouts of children during periods of absence.

We would also like to make it clear that all information provided to the school regarding absence must be accurate and truthful. **Providing a false reason for absence, for example reporting that a child is unwell when they are actually on holiday, is a serious matter. Where information provided is found to be inaccurate, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised and further attendance action may be considered.**

Where there are concerns regarding the accuracy of information provided, or where a child's absence requires further clarification, the school may make telephone calls, request further information or, where appropriate, undertake an unannounced home visit to establish the circumstances and ensure the child's welfare.

For example, **if a child is reported as being unwell but information comes to the school's attention suggesting that the child may actually be away on holiday, we may make further enquiries, including a home visit where appropriate.**

### **Monday and Friday attendance**

From this academic year, the Government has placed an increased emphasis on schools monitoring patterns of absence and lateness, including particular attention to attendance on Mondays and Fridays.

This does not mean that absence on a Monday or Friday is automatically considered unauthorised, nor does it mean that families cannot have a genuine reason for absence. However, schools are expected to identify and monitor patterns that may indicate that a child is regularly missing school at the beginning or end of the school week.

We will therefore be paying closer attention to patterns of absence and lateness on Mondays and Fridays, particularly where these occur regularly or alongside other periods of absence.

### **Penalty Notices**

For 2026/27, the **national Penalty Notice (per parent, per child)** amounts remain:

- First Penalty Notice: £80 if paid within 21 days.
- If the first notice is not paid within 21 days, the amount increases to £160, payable within 28 days.
- Second Penalty Notice within a rolling 3-year period: £160.
- A third Penalty Notice cannot normally be issued to the same parent for the same child within that 3-year period. Further legal action may instead be considered.

Where appropriate, cases can ultimately be referred for prosecution. A court can impose a fine of up to £2,500.

### **If your child is unwell**

We understand that children will sometimes be absent because they are genuinely ill. If your child is unwell, please inform the school in accordance with our normal absence reporting procedures.

The school will consider the circumstances of individual cases and will work with families where a child is experiencing ongoing difficulties with attendance.

### **Punctuality Matters Too**

Arriving late can have a significant impact on a child's learning and can disrupt the education of other pupils.

Please ensure that your child arrives at school on time and is ready to learn at the start of the school day. Where a child arrives after the register has closed, this may be recorded as an unauthorised absence session and can contribute towards the national attendance threshold.

Patterns of lateness will also be monitored closely, including on Mondays and Fridays.

The updated national expectations place a clear emphasis on regular school attendance, identifying patterns of absence and early intervention where attendance begins to decline.

We will continue to monitor attendance carefully throughout the year and will contact families where attendance is becoming a concern. Where appropriate, we will work

with parents and carers to provide support and improve attendance before considering further action.

We ask all parents and carers to support us by:

- Ensuring their child attends school every day unless absence is genuinely necessary.
- Arriving at school on time each day.
- Avoiding term-time holidays and other leisure activities during school time.
- Providing a reason for every absence promptly and accurately.
- Providing accommodation details when requested for authorised or requested periods of leave.

Thank you for your continued support in ensuring that your child attends school regularly, arrives on time and is able to make the most of every opportunity to learn.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Hendry & Mr Conlan