



# NEW SWANNINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mrs Judy Ramsell

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Dear parents/carers

## WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The Department of Education (DfE) have recently announced that they will be actively focusing on improving children's attendance in school.

The recognised benchmark for achieving a good academic performance is attendance of above 97% and there is clear evidence to support this. **Indeed, results have shown that children with no missed sessions in KS2, 83.9% achieve the expected standards at GCSE level compared to 40.2% of children who were persistently absent.**

As part of their announcement, the DfE published its expectations for schools to firmly focus their attention on improving attendance throughout a child's education. Schools are expected to:

- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance;
- have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand;
- accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow up absence;
- regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place;
- build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them;
- share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and partners when absence is at risk of become persistent and severe.

In their efforts to monitor attendance levels in all schools, the expectations of the Local Authority (LA) have also been significantly raised. They are now expected to rigorously track local attendance data through their School Attendance Support Team via:

- communication and advice;
- targeted meetings on a termly basis to discuss attendance data and identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions;
- multi-disciplinary support for families in the form of support workers who will work intensively with families to provide whole-family support, where needed, to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock barriers to attendance;
- legal intervention: take forward attendance legal intervention;
- monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their virtual school.

To clarify the term **legal intervention**, this could potentially involve the use of:

- *parenting contracts*
- *education supervision orders*
- *attendance prosecution*
- *parenting orders*
- *fixed penalty notices*

Our parents and families also have a responsibility within this and are expected to adhere to the following:

- ensure their child attends school every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies;
- notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent through sickness. In this case, parents/carers must call the school absence line as early as possible on 01530 832656 and provide details of the child's name and the reason for absence. Simply stating that a child is 'ill' or 'unwell' is no longer sufficient and a fuller explanation is required otherwise we will be required to follow this up;
- only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. Exceptional circumstances do not include holidays, family events, birthdays etc. We completely understand that booking holidays in term time has a financial impact, however, please do not underestimate the impact this time away from school has on your child's education;
- book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.

In view of the above, we intend to completely refocus our attention on improving the attendance level in school. Although the regulations outlined by the DfE will not come into law until the beginning of the Academic Year 2022/23, we will begin to adopt the principles required with immediate effect. Therefore, please be aware of the following.

- Attendance of all children at New Swannington will be carefully monitored with immediate effect.
- Mrs Smith is our Attendance Officer in school and will contact families where we have identified a concern about the level of absence or where a pattern of absence has been detected.
- If your child is unwell then, of course, we do not expect them to come into school. However, **there is an expectation that their absence is reported as early as possible via the school absence line (tel: 01530 832656) and that a clear reason is given for their absence. As previously stated, it is not sufficient to simply report them as 'ill' or 'unwell'. If we do not receive any communication, this will become a safeguarding issue and as we have a duty of care, we are required to visit your home to confirm that your child is safe.**
- Absence will also consider children who arrive persistently late. Once again, I would like to clarify that school **starts at 8.50am and the registers close at 9.00am**. If your child has to press the buzzer to gain access to school, this means that they are late and will receive a late mark which will impact on their attendance percentage.
- If you remove your child from school during the day to attend a medical appointment, for safeguarding reasons, they are signed out of school (and back in, if appropriate), this will also show as an absence (as they have been out of school for that period of time).
- If you remove your child from school due to a family holiday, this will be recorded as unauthorised. On their return to school, you will be provided with all the learning material that was missed during this period of absence and there will be an expectation for this to be completed and returned, in full, by the end of their first week back for marking and recording purposes.
- We fully recognise that this year's absence may look lower than expected due to Covid isolation (which is recorded as an absence but as an authorised absence), however, we do not expect this to be in issue moving forward. As previously stated, each case will be considered on its individual merits, although this does give a clear indication about the significant impact any absence has.
- With immediate effect, we will be communicating your child's year to date attendance to you at the end of each half term. This will be in the form of a letter and will state whether your child has achieved attendance of:
  - 99% and above (excellent)
  - 95 - 99% (good)
  - 90 - 94% (poor)
  - Below 90% (persistent absentee).

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As of today, our school's attendance percentage for the week to date is 94.05% which, based on the above criteria, is **poor**.

Ofsted and the LA are actively reviewing our attendance. They have effectively taken the control of persistent absenteeism out of the hands of schools and will follow up on individual cases. As much as we try to support and manage this situation, this will only improve if we can engage our families and work together.

New Swannington Primary School is a great school. Without exception, we care about every single one of our children and their academic development and outcomes. Please work with us to ensure that their future achievements can be assured by establishing high and consistent attendance levels.

Thank you for your support.



Judy Ramsell  
Headteacher