

## 2.35 SHEILING SCHOOL: ATTENDANCE GUIDANCE (SCHOOL STUDENTS)

This edition - June 2024

Review date: June 2027 or before, if required (every 3 years)

### 1. Aims

At the Sheiling Ringwood, we believe it is of vital importance that our students have high attendance at school as it contributes to the excellent progress that students make. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to be proud, to belong and achieve their best. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and should be at the Sheiling on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. We believe that high attendance at school has many other benefits besides supporting higher levels of learning and progress. Attending school as part of a routine can improve mental health and resilience and supports a healthier lifestyle. High attendance at school is an excellent way for students to grow and use their social skills. We want our students to be happy, as well as successful. Social connection is a key factor in determining levels of happiness and high attendance supports this.

**Attendance is everyone's responsibility. At the Sheiling Ringwood, we have robust procedures and practice to monitor attendance and to encourage high attendance.**

**For parents, ensuring your child's regular attendance to The Sheiling Ringwood is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from the school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.**

This policy demonstrates our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance on Working Together to Improve School Attendance (effective from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations around the attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of attendance.
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

Due to the nature of their learning difficulties, our students can struggle with transitioning from place to place and activity to activity and, therefore, we promote and support teaching skills to enable students to punctually attend lessons and learning activities.

### 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- It also refers to:
- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

### 3. Admissions Register (or 'School Roll')

The Sheiling is responsible for keeping the Admissions Register up to date. This contains specific personal details of every student along with the date of admission or readmission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, details of the last school attended and details of the placing Local Authority.

We also hold emergency contact numbers for each student. It is our policy to hold more than one such number, where possible, so that we have options to contact a responsible adult should the need arise.

A student's name can only be lawfully deleted from the admissions register in very limited circumstances and we follow the DfE guidance on this.

### 4. Attendance Register

The register will be taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion, the school will record whether every student is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Registers are maintained electronically using Databridge MIS. Teachers are given the appropriate access to records for the students for whom they are responsible. In each attendance 'session', the appropriate attendance code (see Appendix) is entered. A text field is enabled, to enter further details of the reasons given for any absence.

#### **Punctuality and Regular Attendance:**

The school day starts at 9AM and finishes at 4PM every day (unless specified otherwise in the school calendar). Students at the Sheiling are expected to be on time each day and ready to start learning by the beginning of school.

Registers are kept open until 9:30AM each morning and, at this point, any student not present is marked absent.

### 5. Absence

Parents must contact the school when their child is absent to explain that absence. This can be done as follows: By calling the school number on (01425) 477488 and leaving a message or by emailing [school.admissions@thesheilingringwood.co.uk](mailto:school.admissions@thesheilingringwood.co.uk) with the following details:

- Full name of student
- Full name of person reporting absence and relationship to child
- Reason for absence

Where a reason for the absence is not received by 9:15 AM on the day of the absence, the school will contact the parents on the same day to understand the reason for the absence.

Where unexplained absences occur, the school will continue to attempt further contact with the parent/guardian (including social workers where appropriate). This should be with the aim of understanding why the absence has occurred, and when the student will return.

The correct absence code will be inputted into the Attendance Register as soon as the reason is ascertained and within five working days of the absence. Where a student is on the school visit or trip, this will be coded correctly and will count positively towards attendance.

Granting leave of absence will only be made in exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered individually, reflecting on the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The school recognises that unique individual circumstances will pertain to students and that, for instance, the development of wider social relationships and inclusion within family life may precipitate circumstances where leave during term time is practically unavoidable for some families. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the Head of School to determine the length of time that the student can be away from school. It is unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. To request a leave of absence, please request and complete an absence request form from [school.admissions@thesheilingringwood.co.uk](mailto:school.admissions@thesheilingringwood.co.uk) at least two weeks before the intended absence, except in the case of an emergency.

Infrequently, students may be dual registered between the Sheiling and another educational provision, for instance, if medically unfit to come to school and attending a Hospital School. In such circumstances, daily attendance will be recorded on the register as Dual Registered.

## 6. Promoting and Incentivising Regular Attendance

The Sheiling Ringwood will:

- Treat all students and parents with dignity. Our staff will always seek to model respectful relationships to build positive relationships between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance.
- Set out expectations of attendance and ensure that the associated procedure is clear throughout the admissions process and in regular communications with parents.
- Keep parents informed regarding their child's attendance and absence levels and the impact of this on learning.
- Conduct meetings with parents and/or the Local Authority for students considered to be vulnerable or who are persistently or severely absent, in order to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Identify students who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
- Make the necessary statutory data returns to the Local Authority.
- Support students back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Endeavour to make contact on the first day of absence if no email, notes or telephone call is received by the school from the parent/carer by 9:15 AM that day. If the family is not available on the telephone, a message will be left where possible. Emails and text messages may also be used.
- Continue to try to contact parents/carers if there is no response. If unexplained absence persists, a referral may be made to the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (PDSCP).
- Follow-up on all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long-term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.

### **Students leaving during the school day:**

Due to the needs of our students, the Sheiling operates with a high adult to pupil ratio and students would not be permitted to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.

Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time. Where absences are required for medical appointments that cannot be held outside of school times, the school will grant permission for such absences, and they will be treated as Authorised.

### **Residential Students:**

Some students are residential and this provision includes learning in the settings of the residential houses as well as the school grounds, buildings and classrooms. Some students will struggle with transitions from place to place and this can include from houses to classrooms and vice versa. Curriculum learning is suitably adapted so that it is mobile and can be delivered, during school hours, in the residential house setting, if needed. Therefore, a student may not be in attendance in the classroom for registration yet would be marked present if they are completing their learning elsewhere.

Residential students may be on site at the Sheiling but 'absent' for learning for a variety of reasons. A student could be unwell and unable to attend to everyday learning and therefore would be marked as absent from education despite being present on the school site itself. Teachers will liaise appropriately with House Managers and other leaders in such circumstances so that an accurate attendance status is determined.

## 7. Absence Reduction Strategy and site-level procedures

The Sheiling will make appropriate use of attendance data, through data analysis, to support early identification and intervention around poor attendance. This includes production of data showing % attendance by a student over half-termly, termly, year-to-date and whole-academic year timeframes.

The context of the school is small numbers of students on roll (circa 35-37 students) and small class sizes (5-7 students) and the most useful analysis of attendance information is often on the basis of individual students where there is known or anecdotal information suggesting declining attendance, poor overall attendance or uncertainty around reasons given for any absences. Appropriate use of data analysis will be used to:

- Identify and provide immediate additional support to students and/or student cohorts that need it.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them, where needed.

The Sheiling recognises that some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who suffer from medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other student and therefore the attendance ambition for the students is the same as they are for any other student. We ask that all staff reinforce messages about the importance of attendance and create a welcoming environment which encourages students to attend.

In working with parents to improve attendance, we will be mindful of the barriers the students face and for additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This will include having sensitive conversations and developing good support for students with medical needs or those who may present with emotional dysregulation or anxiety. This can include making reasonable adjustments for a student who has a disability or putting in place an individual health care plan, where needed.

All students at the Sheiling have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Where there is emerging poor attendance or difficulties with attendance, the school will proactively take steps to meet with parents and representatives of placing Local Authorities, which may include SEND/Education team representatives and social workers, where applicable. This is in situations where absence is developing towards Persistent Absenteeism (PA- 10% or more sessions missed) or Severe Absenteeism (SA- 50% or more sessions missed). Such meetings are designed to formulate and implement appropriate strategies of support for students and their families, examples of which include:

- Social stories to enable transition.
- Changes to the structure of the day, for instance, altering transition arrangements into school by taking a different route.
- Increased or altered support around communication, for instance, additional symbols or pictorial resources, timetables or 'now and next' schedules.
- Development of routines to support transition, for instance, sharing information about which staff the student will work with on arrival, or activities taking place in advance of the day.
- Adjustments to the type or style of learning on offer, for instance, building programmes of learning around known interests or extrinsic motivators.
- Professional development or relationship-building activities, for instance, enabling Passenger Assistants or Escorts to shadow and develop a working relationship with the student during school time, to facilitate transitions with them to/from school.

The strategies above are examples only and strategies developed will be based on the views of key stakeholders and, where possible, the student themselves, and a sound knowledge of individual student needs and profiles.

Any strategies implemented will be monitored to ensure that they make the improvements expected and that improvements to attendance are sustained over time.

### **Reduced timetables:**

All students of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary/reduced timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents them from attending full-time education and a reduced timetable is considered as part of a reintegration package. Likewise, in some circumstances, students have begun their placement at the Sheiling coming from backgrounds of persistent non-attendance or having been out of education for considerable time. Students in such circumstances may also temporarily attend part-time whilst stepping up to full-time attendance.

Reduced timetable will only be considered for the shortest time necessary. This can only be agreed by the Head of School who will consider each case individually. Where this has been agreed, there will generally be clear expectation to return to full-time as quickly as possible and this will be reviewed regularly approximately every six weeks with parents and placing Local Authorities. In such cases, any absences from taught sessions will be recorded as an authorised absence.

#### Site-level procedures

Initial absence reported- authorised circumstances- recorded in registers

Child missing from school, no absence reported- school will follow up with families (including any emergency contacts) persistently to determine reasons for absence. If the reason for the absence cannot be established and there is no communication from the family then we will refer to social care teams and / or agency safeguarding.

Absence, unauthorised circumstances, eg. family taking holiday that is not authorised by school: such absence will be recorded as unauthorised in registers, Local Authority will be kept informed. School will be supportive of any LA-level procedures such as issue of Fixed-Penalty Notices where these apply.

Absences developing towards/into PA - status - letter is issued to family to highlight poor attendance. Meeting is arranged with family and LA representatives to establish any support needs and actions to improve attendance.

Following initial meeting, school will continue to write to parents/LAs where attendance fails to improve and where further absences are taken, if applicable, under unauthorised circumstances.

In any situation where the school have been unable to establish the whereabouts of a child over 5 days, and there is no update from the family, school will contact Dorset Safeguarding and report the child as missing from education.

#### 8. Appendix 1- Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances include:

- Going shopping with parents.
- Birthdays.
- Sibling unwell or staying at home because other members of the family are unwell.
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved in advance by the Head of School.
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (after the close of registration).
- School refusal/refusal to attend school.
- Death of a pet

Parents may not authorise any absence; only the Head of School may do this. All absences are treated as unauthorised until the school agrees and accepts an explanation as satisfactory. It is up to the parent to put a request in to the Head of School or provide an explanation for the Head of School to consider.

Registers are legal records and we will keep every entry in attendance or admission register for three years from the date of entry.

Students will be entered onto the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed with or been notified by the parents or placing Local Authority, that the student will attend school.

#### **Leave of absence for holidays:**

Schools may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there is an exceptional circumstance. Requests for holiday absences are dealt with on an individual basis and only after the parents have made a written request to the school. The school requires a period of notice (two term time weeks) to consider a request. The Head of School will make the decision and ensure that parents are communicated with, authorising or declining the leave of absence requested.

The school will work with placing Local Authorities and, where parents decide to take children on a leave of absence despite being informed that the absence will be unauthorised, the school will cooperate with placing Local Authorities where there may be grounds to issue a Penalty Notice. Failure to pay such a notice can lead to prosecution.

**Illness, medical and dental appointments:**

It is noted that some students at the Sheiling may have high numbers of such appointments because of complex medical needs and or needs arising from their Special Educational needs and Disabilities (SEND). Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is an authorised absence. Parents are encouraged, where possible, to make such appointments out of school hours. Sight of an appointment card (or other means of proof of appointment) is required for the absence to be authorised. If the student is present for registration but has a medical appointment letter, or goes home because of illness, no absence needs to be recorded for that session.

**Days of Religious Observance:**

This is an absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. The Sheiling will be sensitive to such requests and parents should be encouraged to give advance notice.

**Visits for potential placement in another education setting:**

Some students, for instance at Phase Transfer, may visit potential future providers/education settings, for instance, in circumstances where such settings wish to see the student in order to assess them and in consideration of offering a place. Such absences can be recorded as approved educational activity.

**Exclusions:**

A student who is excluded for a fixed period remains on roll and the absence should be treated as authorised as it results from a decision taken by the school. Similarly, the absence of a permanently excluded student is treated as authorised while any review or appeal is in progress. If an appeal process concludes without the student being reinstated, the parent has confirmed in writing to the Local Authority that they do not wish to appeal or the prescribed period for lodging an appeal is expired, the student's name should be removed from the school roll from the following day.

See Policy 1B - Exclusion Policy

**Traveller child when the family is travelling:**

To help ensure the continuity of learning for traveller children, dual registration is allowed. This means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling.

While the traveller is away, the school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

**Family Bereavement:**

The Sheiling will respond sensitively to requests to attend funerals or associated events and have the discretion to authorise such absences.

**Family prison visits:**

Schools should authorise requests which will enable a child to visit his or her parent in prison.

**Special occasions:**

The Sheiling will consider each request individually. Only exceptional occasions warrant a leave of absence. For example, attending the wedding of an immediate family member would be acceptable, but a day out of school for the student's birthday or for a shopping trip would not. The Sheiling will consider the nature of the event, its likely frequency (whether it is a one-off or likely to become a regular occurrence), whether advance notice is given and the student's overall attendance pattern.

**Lateness:**

The Sheiling actively discourages late arrival and is alert to patterns of lateness as unauthorised absences. Registers close 30 minutes after the beginning of school which starts at 9 AM. In circumstances such as bad weather or transport difficulties, the Sheiling may keep the register open for a longer period. If issues with Local Authority-provided transport cause issues of lateness, the school will liaise appropriately with transport departments in supporting families to address any issues.

## 9. Appendix 2: Register Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
<b>Attending a place other than the school</b>		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
<b>Absent – leave of absence</b>		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment

<b>S</b>	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>C2</b>	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
<b>C</b>	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>Absent – other authorised reasons</b>		
<b>T</b>	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a ‘mobile child’ who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>I</b>	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
<b>E</b>	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
<b>Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause</b>		
<b>Q</b>	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
<b>Y1</b>	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
<b>Y2</b>	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency



<b>Y3</b>	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
<b>Y4</b>	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
<b>Y5</b>	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In police detention</li> <li>• Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or</li> <li>• Detained under a sentence of detention</li> </ul>
<b>Y6</b>	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to, or attendance at, the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
<b>Y7</b>	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
<b>Absent – unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
<b>O</b>	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school is not satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
<b>U</b>	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
<b>Administrative codes</b>		
<b>Z</b>	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
<b>#</b>	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Review of this document

This guidance document is maintained by the Head of School and is reviewed every three years, or more frequently, in line with school needs, legislative requirements and developmental priorities.