



Surrey Heath schools' Attendance Policy

Introduction

All schools in Surrey Heath are committed to developing and implementing policies and practice which support good attendance in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and governors, with relevant departments within Surrey County Council and borough councils and with other organisations who have an interest in- or are affected by- attendance.

We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, regular school attendance is essential. We will consistently work with parents and pupils to achieve our expectation of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. Pupils are expected to attend 100% of the time. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving the goals set.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

School Procedures

Any child who is absent from school at morning or afternoon registration must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Head Teacher or other person acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Responsibilities of school staff:

- ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities
- liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality
- communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- support pupils who have been absent to engage with their learning once they are back in school
- regularly inform parents of the attendance of their children

Responsibilities of pupils:

- attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- arrive in school on time
- be responsible for registering with the main office if they are late (KS2 children)

Responsibilities of parents/carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- encourage regular school attendance by supporting the values of good attendance at home and to be aware of their legal responsibilities
- inform the school by telephone on the first day of their child's absence by 9.30am and on any subsequent days
- alert the school office of any planned absences/medical procedures well in advance
- support the school with their child in achieving 100% attendance each year
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually and prepared for the school day (including extra curricular activities)

PLEASE NOTE: holidays are not deemed exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised.

Surrey Heath school attendance leaders will liaise in the event of requests for authorised absence for families whose children attend a number of different schools.

Lateness

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of registration will be treated, for statistical purposes, as present but will be coded as late before registers close. Arrival after registers close will be marked as unauthorised absence.

At Frimley Church of England Junior School, school starts at 8.40 am
Registers close at 9.15 am.

First Day Absence

Parents are expected to contact the school via telephone leaving an appropriate message. This information will be collated and the registers adjusted to reflect the information. If no call is received, a phone call home will be made, usually by 10.30am.

Frequent and Continuing Absence

A courtesy phone call will be made if your child continues to be absent if you have not notified us further.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of lateness or absence, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/s. The school will seek advice from their linked Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Persistent Absence

If your child's attendance falls below 90% across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child's attendance level is falling towards 90% after the first half term, we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, may ask for medical evidence or suggest a meeting with the head teacher or relevant staff member.

Absence notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence will be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the student that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

Promoting attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education. The Home/School agreement recognises the importance of good attendance. The school will be particularly sensitive to the need to support families where attendance issues are related to a pupil's special needs.

Request for absence in term time

Request for absence during term time are actively discouraged. Parents will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a student's potential achievement. The school will not authorise term time absences, except in very exceptional circumstances.

Understanding types of absence

Students are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- 1. Authorised absence** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory (see Appendix 1 for guidance).
This requires an Application Form (available from the school office) to be completed and returned well in advance of the absence to enable the head teacher to reach a decision about such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- 2. Unauthorised absence** is when the school has not received a valid reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school following a parent's request.
This includes parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings or absences which have not been explained.

If you do not request and/or receive permission to take your child out of school and do so regardless, your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school we suspect that they have been on holiday.

Where there are several siblings across local schools, head teachers will always liaise with other leaders in the event of requests for approval of exceptional leave.

The school reserves the right to ask for medical evidence of an illness as stated by the parent/carers.

Penalty Notices

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carers for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carers for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a penalty notice may be issued:

Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 states that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for 5 days or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned (eg. through a newsletter) that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken. A reminder will be circulated to parents on a termly basis.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where unauthorised absences or late arrival after the close of registration, on 7 occasions in any six week period (not including school closures). The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Education Welfare will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a

Penalty Notice. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Education Welfare Officer – EWO

To help make sure that every child goes to school regularly and gets an appropriate education, each school has an education welfare officer who can act on enquiries from schools, other organisations, parents and members of the public. Where a child's absence from school gives cause for concern, the education welfare officer works with everyone involved to create an action plan supporting full-time attendance and will stay involved until this is achieved. Legal action may be taken to ensure your child attends school.

Changing Schools

An in-year transfer form is available to download from the Surrey County Council Website or school website (academies managing own in-year admissions) and should be completed by the parent and Head Teacher prior to transfer. Pupils' school records are sent to the new school. If they fail to attend on the anticipated start date the family will be referred to the local authority tracking officer.

Appendix 1

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

The legislation requires that all children, from babies until they cease to be of compulsory school age, be licensed by the local authority in which they live, when they take part in a performance on stage or in a broadcast.

A child remains subject to these regulations until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they turn 16. The academic year runs from 1 September – 31 August inclusive.

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Head Teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Head Teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sports players can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Head of School's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Head Teacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's form/class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons: difficulties with school work; friendship problems; family difficulties. It is important that the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school is identified early and work together to tackle the problem. For some children the extra support of familiar staff may be called upon. In addition it may also be helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. Let them know that there is support in school, either from their class teacher or other trusted adults. Encourage them to seek out a member of staff who they feel comfortable with to talk through any worries or concerns that they have which is preventing them from coming to school or as a parent/carer, contact the school and request this on your child's behalf.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, the friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

Links with other policies:

- Behaviour and Discipline

Reviewed by: Representatives from Surrey Heath schools

Date of Next Review: June 2020