



# Witley C of E Infant School

*Learn, love and flourish together*

## Attendance Policy

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Our Attendance Policy should be read in conjunction with our current School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The school staff, alongside the LA, firmly believes that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. We know that every day lost to education can have a serious impact on children's attainment and overall progress in school. As a staff we do all we can to encourage parents and carers to ensure that the children in our care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

### **Aim:**

- To encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance in order to benefit fully from the education provided
- To ensure any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly

### **Expectations**

#### **We expect that all pupils will:**

- attend school regularly
- attend school punctually
- attend school ready to learn

**We expect that all parents/carers who have day to day responsibility for the children and young people will:**

- encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure that the children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and are collected on time
- ensure that they contact the school whenever the child/children are unable to attend school
- contact the school on the first day of the child's absence
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school
- not take unauthorised/holidays during term time

**To encourage attendance, we expect:**

- class teachers to keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, twice daily and monitor class pupil's attendance
- office staff to contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend when no message has been received to explain the absence
- office staff to promptly follow up all unexplained absences
- all staff to encourage good attendance and punctuality
- all staff to provide a caring and welcoming atmosphere for children in a safe learning environment
- all staff to refer children whose attendance is an on-going concern, despite their best efforts to resolve the situation, to the Headteacher who will decide on further action i.e. letter or meeting
- Headteacher/office staff to meet with the school's attendance advice officer regularly to discuss any new concerns and report on the progress of existing cases; work with the attendance advice officer and follow his/her advice once cases are referred to ensure that the legal process to address attendance concerns can be implemented if necessary

**Dental and Medical Treatment**

Whilst the school will grant requests for absence for dental and medical treatments, parents/carers are encouraged, whenever possible, to book dental and medical appointments outside the school day. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the school office should be notified via a medical form. Evidence of the appointment may be requested. Parents are asked to remove the child only for the duration of the appointment.

**Wellbeing and mental health**

As a school we are mindful that school absences occur for several reasons and some children are absent due to wellbeing/mental health issues including external medical appointments to meet these needs. Parents/Carers are asked to discuss their child's needs with the Headteacher.

**Leave of absence**

Attendance at school is one of the most important factors in educational success. The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and parents/carers are expected to book their family holidays during those times. Leave of absence will not be granted for holiday to be taken in term time.

In exceptional circumstances when leave in term time is unavoidable, a leave of absence request form must be completed as soon as possible once the dates of the proposed period of absence are known. The request form can be obtained from the school office. In the event that parental responsibility is shared both parents/carers will be informed.

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for their child as a right. If leave is taken, without prior authorisation, the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the school register.

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. Examples of exceptional circumstances, quoted by the Department for Education (DfE), are: service personnel and family crisis. Family holidays taken during term time due to affordability or work restrictions do not meet the DfE criteria for authorisation. The Headteacher will decide whether or not to authorise the absence having decided whether or not the circumstances are exceptional.

Parents/carers who take their children out of school without authority for 5 or more days (which do not have to be consecutive), they will be liable to receive a penalty notice. Please note that penalty notices are issued per parent/carer per child so a family of two parents and two children will receive 4 penalty notices.

Surrey County Council is not responsible for authorising pupil absence and therefore cannot withdraw any Penalty Notice requests without the written permission of the Headteacher.

Should absence be taken without the Headteacher's authorisation, parents may be issued with a penalty notice as a result, see below.

### **Penalty Notices**

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

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

1. Pupils identified by police and Surrey Attendance Advice Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
2. The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions 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 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.

3. The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 10 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school 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.
4. 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. 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.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time (Paragraph 2 above) parents will be sent a 'Notice To Improve' their child's attendance, warning them of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Amount Payable Under a Penalty Notice: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

1. If a parent/carer has not incurred a penalty notice relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, per parent/carer per child, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, the rolling 3 year period will be activated from the date of the first penalty notice and the second penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, per parent/carer per child, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
3. If you have incurred 2 penalty notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, per parent/carer per child, in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.

### **Responding to Non-Attendance**

When a pupil does not attend school, we will respond in the following manner:

- on the first day of absence, if no email, note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 9.15am the school office will contact parents for a response as soon as possible.
- if there is no initial response after trying all contact numbers or the absence remains unexplained or still a concern, the office staff will inform the Headteacher/DSL for further investigation and action. This action may involve the Headteacher/DSL visiting the home, contacting children's services or the police if the welfare of the child is a concern.
- if there is persistent non-attendance, the school office will keep records of the contact with home during the period of absence and this will be discussed with the attendance advice officer when a formal referral may be made.
- if a child has persistent absence or has been identified on truancy patrols and meets the criteria for a Penalty Notice to be issued; or has been taken out of school without the school's permission for 5 or more days; the school will liaise with the attendance advice officer/ LA to decide whether a Penalty Notice should be issued.
- failure to comply with the expectations set by the Inclusion Service may result in further action, an application for an Educational Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

### **Persistent Absence (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Any absence has an impact on a child's educational achievement and we need parents/carers full support and co-operation to tackle this. The Department for Education and the Local Authority monitor levels of PA children and levels of absence in all schools. Parents will be informed on a regular basis of their child's attendance when it is a cause for concern.

### **Responding to lateness**

Lateness into school causes disruption to learning in the class. It is paramount, therefore, that all pupils arrive at school on time.

We encourage parents to ensure their children arrive on time for school in order to access class early bird activities. The classroom doors open at 8:45 am and the register is taken at 8:55 am.

If pupils arrive at school after the close of the register at 8.55 am, parents should bring them to the main office so they can be recorded as being late, denoted by L on the official Arbor register, but present in school.

Children will be recorded as being late, denoted by L on the official Arbor register, if they arrive after 8:55 am but before 9.15 am, with a valid explanation.

Any child arriving after 9.15 am, without a valid explanation, will be recorded as late after close of register and this will be denoted with a U (unauthorised late after registers close) on the official Arbor register.

Persistent lateness will be monitored and letters sent to parents to inform them of learning time lost, encouraging them to arrive at school on time. If lateness remains a problem and this lateness is after close of register a referral may be made to the Inclusion Service.

Children should be collected at 3:15 pm. If a child is not collected by 3:25 pm the class teacher/LSA should take them to the office and parents telephoned. Parents/Carers will be asked to sign their child out in the late collection book.

### **Changing schools**

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform the school as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from our school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the date the pupil will be leaving our school and starting the next
- the address of the new school
- the new home address, if it is known

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Inclusion Service.

### **Elective Home Education**

If a parent/guardian elects for their child to be home educated then it is recommended that they inform the school and the Local Authority. In this instance we will refer to DfE guidance on Elective Home Education.

### **End of policy**