

## **Preamble**

**Parents/carers, whose children are of compulsory school age (5 to 16) and are registered at a school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to legal sanctions.**

### **1. Purpose of the policy**

- To work effectively with children, parents/carers and agencies to promote very good attendance and high levels of punctuality.
- To ensure a punctual start to the school day.
- Punctuality is vital and a late arrival causes disruption to teaching and learning for all pupils and staff. It is therefore very important that pupils arrive on time.
- To fulfil the legal requirements regarding registration and attendance.

### **2. The School Day and Term Dates**

The school day for

- Infant children begins at 9.00am and ends at 3.15pm
- Junior children begins at 9.00am and ends at 3.20pm

Term dates for the current academic year are shown on the annual school calendar. This information is available in the June preceding the new academic year. Key dates are highlighted on the website and in the monthly newsletter.

### **3. Lateness**

A child is considered to be late for school if:

- he/she is not seated in class by 9.05am for Infants
- he/she is not seated in class by 9.05am for Juniors

The register will close at:

- 9.20am for Infant children.
- 9.20am for Junior children.

Any children arriving after the closure of the register will be coded as 'late after close of register' which is statistically an unauthorised absence.

Persistent late arrival after close of register could result in a Penalty Notice being issued.

#### **4. Absence from School**

In line with the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, all unauthorised leave of absence in term time of 5 days/10 sessions or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority. [In some cases and where it is felt necessary, the school will report the absence to the LA before this time period elapses.](#)

It is the parents'/carers responsibility to telephone the school daily before the start of the school day on any day of absence. If the duration of the absence is known, the parent/carer should inform school office of the expected length of absence.

If an absence is unexplained the school office will telephone the parents/carers on the first day of absence. If there is a further unexplained absence, the school will continue to telephone on a daily basis.

All absences due to illness should be followed by written confirmation via email to [info@stpauls-thamesditton.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:info@stpauls-thamesditton.surrey.sch.uk), addressed to the class teacher, when the child returns to school. An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

It is the responsibility of parents/carer of a child diagnosed with a notifiable disease to report this information to the school immediately. The list of notifiable diseases can be accessed at the Health Protection Agency (HPA) website.

Whilst the school will grant requests for absence for dental and medical treatments, parents/carers are encouraged, whenever possible, to book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the attendance officer should be notified in advance in writing, of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected. It is expected that the child will return to school after any appointment if before 3.00pm. Evidence of the appointment will be requested by the school.

Only in exceptional circumstances will absence be authorised.

Guidance as to what may be deemed to be exceptional circumstances and those circumstances not considered exceptional can be found in Section 5 below.

#### **5. Monitoring of Attendance**

The Headteacher will initiate action in the normal way for pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern, referring to Surrey's Education Welfare Officer as

necessary for advice and/or further intervention. In cases of continued ill health the SENCo will initiate a Medical Health Care Plan.

The school must inform the local authority of any pupil:

- who fails to attend school regularly.
- has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 sessions/5 days or more and there has been no contact with the pupil's family/carers during this time.

The Education Welfare Officer assigned to the school by the County undertakes a register screening every half-term identifying pupils with potential attendance problems.

100% attendance is the expectation for each pupil. The threshold criterion for consideration by the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) has been agreed between the EWO and the Headteacher as being attendance of less than 91 per cent. This information is calculated automatically through our SIMS database on an academic year basis.

The Education Welfare Service operates this screening procedure as a second line of defense to ensure that no absentee is missed, and that early preventative intervention can be made.

## **5. Leave of absence in Exceptional Circumstances**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There would be very few occasions where the Headteacher might consider absence to be exceptional.

In accordance with the above Regulations, requests for leave of absence are treated sympathetically, but only in exceptional circumstances can they be approved and not for more than 5 days or 10 sessions.

The Governing Body permits the Head teacher to grant discretionary **exceptional leave of absence**. Before deciding whether to authorise leave of absence the Head teacher will consider:

- the pupil's attendance over the academic year
- the impact for the pupil's academic progress of any absence
- the ability to catch up on missed schooling
- whether it falls within any key stage national tests or school assessments
- the reasons for the requested leave of absence
- the frequency of the request
- whether the parent gave advance notice

If parents/carers wish to request a leave of absence, they should complete a 'Pupil Leave of Absence request' form and submit it at least two weeks prior to the proposed absence, unless the request is urgent and last minute where less notice may be considered. Parents may be required to attend an appointment with the Headteacher.

Any absence taken without prior authorisation will be deemed unauthorised.

Please be aware that in the event of a period of unauthorised absence or failure to return from an agreed period of absence may result in the child being removed from the school roll and the place offered to a child on the waiting list.

**Leave of absence will not be granted for the following:**

- Visiting family/friends that have different half term holidays
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments
- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is very seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested
- Relatives coming to visit
- Family day trips
- Looking after other members of the family
- Birthdays
- Shopping
- A hair appointment

**Leave of absence is likely to be granted for the following:**

- Forces Personnel on leave from a foreign posting
- Significant family events or circumstances including attending close family member's wedding, funerals but does not include family parties and reunions.
- Out of school programmes such as music (including exams), arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA
- An unavoidable medical or dental appointment
- Taking part in a religious event

## **6. Unauthorised Absence**

A Penalty Notice may be issued as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and will be used by Surrey County Council in the following circumstances:

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

Leave of absence in term time (5 days or 10 sessions or more)

In such cases the Headteacher/Governing Body have to judge whether there are exceptional circumstances and may request that the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices when the absence is not authorised. Warnings will not be given where it can be shown that parents have been notified that such absences will not be authorised.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where it is judged that a parent/carer is failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance.

This will be considered if the attendance is below 91 % and there are 10 or more unauthorised sessions in the previous 6 school weeks, which may include a pupil arriving late after close of registration.

If parents/carers believe at any stage that their child's absence from school may leave them liable to receive a Penalty Notice, it is extremely important that they take action without delay to secure their regular attendance. If parents/carers have any questions or require further support to achieve an improvement, please contact the school or the education welfare officer.

## **7. Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions**

If a child is excluded from school, Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent/carer liable to a Penalty Notice. (Alternative education provision will be made available from the sixth day of any exclusion.)

## **8. Amount Payable for a Penalty Notice**

The policy of Surrey County Council, to which this school has agreed, states that parents/carers who take their child out of school for five days or more during term time, without the authority of the Headteacher, will each be liable to receive a penalty notice. Penalty Notices will be issued by the Local Authority.

The penalty is £60 **per parent/carer, per child** if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period the Local Authority must prosecute the recipient for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444, Education Act 1996.

Please be aware that each parent/carer is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who incurs unauthorised absences, for example, if there are two parents and one child, each parent/carer will receive one Penalty Notice. If there are two parents/carers, and two children incur unauthorised absences, they would each pay £120 up to the 21 days and £240 between 21 and 28 days.

## **9. Changing School**

It is important that if families decide to send the child in their care to a different school that they inform the Headteacher in writing immediately. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received:

- the dates the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next
- the address of the new school
- notification from the new school that the pupil is starting there
- the new home address, if it is known

School staff will then confirm with the parents/carers the leaving date for their child. Following this date the pupil's school records will be sent on to the new school as soon as possible and within ten days of the child leaving. The Pupil Tracking Office at County Hall will also be sent appropriate information within ten days of anyone leaving or joining the school. If no notification is received from a new school then the child's name will not be removed from the school roll until after an investigation by the Education Welfare Service.

## **Appendix One**

**The Pupil Leave of Absence Request Form** [will be] attached to this Policy.