



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**For distribution to: All school staff, governors, parents/carers, pupils and the area education welfare officer**

All West Surrey Foundation schools, along with other local schools and Surrey County Council, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from 100% school attendance. Full attendance at school is crucial for a child's/student's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. Pupils will be expected to achieve 100% attendance unless the absence is authorised by the headteacher or delegated person in school.

Further information on encouraging attendance and individual school procedures can be found in individual school policies and procedures which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

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 whenever it is open. If they do not do so they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or to be served with a penalty notice.

In line with the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, all unexplained absences of 10 days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority. In addition, schools are required to report all absence figures to the local authority and the Department for Education and to ensure they are recorded on a child's/student's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by Ofsted as part of a school's inspection.

### **Expectations**

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

- Attend school 100% of the time
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss with their class/form teacher, house head or headteacher any problems preventing them from attending school.

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

- Ensure 100% school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and have completed any homework they have been given
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

- Contact the school office on the first day of a child/student's absence, giving the reason for the absence.
- Discuss with the class/form teacher, house head or headteacher any problems preventing their child/children from attending school.

**We expect that school staff will:**

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, as required by current legislation
- Monitor every pupil's attendance
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Encourage good attendance
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere and a safe learning environment for children
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns
- Make initial enquiries to parents/carers of pupils who are attending irregularly, expressing the school's concerns and clarifying the school and the local authority's expectations regarding regular school attendance
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the attached Educational Welfare Officer
- Fulfil, where possible, the requirements of the UN Convention – The Rights of the Child, by ensuring that children are consulted in all decisions that relate to them

In order for this Attendance Policy to be successful, **every** member of staff in every school must make attendance a high priority and convey this to pupils at all times. Parents/carers should also need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

**Dental and medical treatments** – Parents/carers should book routine medical and dental appointments outside of the school day or during the school holidays. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the school should be notified of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected and/or returned to school. Children should be taken out of school for the minimum amount of time. Evidence of the appointment may be requested.

**Lateness**

Please note that, if pupils arrive after the school start time they will be recorded as late. School registers are closed 15 minutes after the school start time and pupils arriving after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session. The pupil's name will be recorded in line with school procedures in case of emergency procedures/fire drills etc.

**SEARCH Group Attendance**

The law allows for the dual registration of pupils at more than one school. Surrey policy for children attending nurture groups expects dual registration in cases where the children do not register at their own schools.

Children attending SEARCH are generally collected from their own schools and transported to SEARCH and so should be registered at their own schools prior to them undertaking the journey and so dual registration is not necessary.

SEARCH group is based at Ash Grange School and so a register is taken and given to the Ash Grange office for health and safety/fire reasons.

If there is a child who is taken directly to SEARCH group by parents/carers and not registered first at his/her own school the child will be dual registered at both Ash Grange Primary School and his/her own school. Both schools will share responsibility for the child and failure to attend either school at the proper time without good reason will be unauthorised absence. The school where the child is expected to attend is responsible for accurately recording the pupil's attendance and chasing up non-attendance. The school where the pupil is not expected to attend will record the child as D.

### **Requests for leave of absence during term time**

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence during term-time for their child as a right and authorisation cannot be given retrospectively. Permission for absence during term time is at the headteachers discretion and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

**Family holidays** - The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and are available from the school office and on the individual school websites. Family holidays need to be booked within the school holiday dates. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 remove references to extended leave and holiday and make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Family holidays are not exceptional circumstances and so are deemed as "unauthorised leave of absence".

**Family weddings or significant events** – The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 require headteachers to determine the number of school days that a child can be away from school if leave is granted and this would be for a *maximum* of 3 days.

If a family needs to request absence in term-time then an **Application for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances** must be completed at least two weeks prior to the leave date. The Headteacher, who may consult with the Chair of Governors and other local schools (in cases where siblings attend a West Surrey Foundation school), will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence requested. Each request will be considered separately and a decision made based on the reasons for each request.

### **Traveller Absence**

The aim for the attendance of Traveller pupils, in common with all other pupils, is to attend school 100% of the time.

To protect Traveller parents/carers from prosecution for failing to ensure regular attendance, the Education Act 1996, section 444, sub-section 6, states that a Traveller parent/carer is safe from prosecution if their pupil accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days or 100 full days) in a year. A Traveller absence code can therefore be used if a Traveller child is absent when their parent/carer is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature that requires them to travel from place to place. When travelling a parent/carer has the right to enrol their child at another school in the area they are engaged in their trade. Schools will require evidence that Traveller parents are travelling for work.

### **Penalty Notices**

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council, will issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer 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 per parent per child, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 per parent per child, 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/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

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### **Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued**

- 1) 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 becomes law on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 state that 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 absence is granted.**

- 2) 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** may be 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) A Penalty Notice will also be considered where attendance has fallen below 85% and there are no less than 10 unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parent's failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or the Educational Welfare Service 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 taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.**

Parents will be reminded of this policy on a termly basis.