



BLETCHINGLEY VILLAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Aiming high • Working together • Achieving our best

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

To be read in conjunction with Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Rationale:

All children have the right to the best possible education, and this means attending school on time every day unless they are too unwell or there are exceptional circumstances for absence.

Good attendance is a shared responsibility between home and school.

The law delegates the authorising of absence to the head teacher of the school but sets strict guidance about whether absence should or should not be authorised. The school follows this guidance and completes attendance registers using the codes set by the DfE.

Aims:

To raise overall attendance and improve punctuality for the school, for groups and for individual children in order to raise standards of achievement.

Summary:

Attendance at school is a legal requirement, until the age of 16, unless an alternative, appropriate alternative has been agreed.

All children are expected to be in school, on time, every day, unless too ill to do so. The expectation is that all children are in school every day.

Poor attendance has a direct impact on a child's academic attainment.

Reasons for absence must be reported to the office each day.

Absence during term time cannot be authorized by the Head Teacher, unless for exceptional circumstances.

All attendance and punctuality is monitored by the school, in partnership with the Surrey Inclusion Team.

Support is available for parents facing challenges, including struggling to ensure good attendance and punctuality.

Poor attendance may lead to a Fixed Penalty fine or prosecution.

Absence from school

Children's absences are classified as authorised or unauthorised. The DfE expects all children to attend school every day it is open. School attendance is monitored by the Local Authority, and nationally.

If parents and carers are experiencing difficulties in ensuring good attendance, support is always available through the school.

Holidays and special events

Missing school always has an impact as the time can never be made up, and so children should only be taken out of school in exceptional circumstances. In September 2013, the government updated its guidance to schools and removed any reference to term-time holiday. It stated that a request for term-time leave **should only be granted where there are exceptional reasons**. Bletchingley Village Primary School's interpretation of this guidance is in line with the majority of Tandridge schools and with new advice from the NAHT, supported by the government. Therefore, we do not authorise any leave for term-time holidays taken for reasons of price or availability.

All requests for exceptional leave of absence must be made in writing to the head teacher, and permission will only be granted if the following criteria are met: -

- The leave is for an exceptional reason
- Permission is requested and granted prior to any bookings being made.

Any leave that has not been authorised by the head will be classed as an unauthorised absence or unauthorised holiday, and the relevant code will appear on the child's attendance record (O or G). This may result in the parent/carer facing a penalty notice. (See below).

Other Planned Absences

Parents and carers are asked to contact the school by telephone, email or in person if their child needs to be absent for part of the school day. Medical appointments should be arranged if possible outside the school day. Where this is not possible it is expected that pupils only miss part of the day.

Where the child needs leave for a whole morning, afternoon or more, permission must be requested from the head teacher beforehand. In the case of leaving school early, the request needs to be before 2.30, at the latest.

For medical appointments, we encourage parents to bring the child to school for registration and return them to school as quickly as possible so that they do not incur a whole session's absence.

Unplanned absences

- We ask that parents and carers notify the school by telephone as early as possible if a child is ill, using the Study Bugs app or a phone call to the school office. A member of the Attendance Team will then call back to discuss the reason for the absence.
- We ask that parents and carers keep the school informed about the child's illness and phone the school each day, unless the length of absence is already known.
- If a child is absent and no telephone call is received, the school will contact the parents/carer both to establish the reason for absence and to ensure that the parent/carer is aware that the child is not at school.
- If there is no explanation, or an unsatisfactory reason, for absence, or the school is unable to make contact with the parent/carer, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Where contact cannot be made, and there is cause for concern for the safety of the child, the school may contact Surrey Children's services.

We recognise how poor attendance over time can adversely affect a child's academic career and so leave them vulnerable to future exclusion, academic failure and a range of other negative social situations such as knife crime and gang exploitation. We strive to embed good attendance habits from a young age and educate families in these potential negative outcomes.

We recognise poor attendance as a Level 2 Early Help need and offer appropriate support.

We recognise poor attendance over time as Level 3 Child in Need and offer appropriate intervention. If parents and carers do not engage, a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Officer or Surrey Children's Services in order to protect the right of the child to enjoy a full time education.

Lateness

The school day

Nursery: 9.00 – 12.00 and 12.00 – 3.00

Reception: 8.45 – 3.15

KS1 Years 1 and 2: 8.50 – 3.20 Register closes at 9.00

KS2 Years 3 and 4: 8.45 – 3.15 Register closes at 8.55

KS2 Years 5 and 6: 8.40 – 3.20 Register closes at 8.55

Children will be marked as 'Late' if they arrive after the register has closed.

Children will be marked as 'Absent' if they arrive more than half an hour after the register closes.

Poor attendance/punctuality

We understand that there are often unexpected challenges that arise. There is an identified member of staff, in addition to the existing school staff, who offers support to families facing challenges.

School staff will monitor attendance closely and where there are concerns, will try to address attendance issues informally and supportively in order to resolve them by working together. School staff will listen and understand, facilitate support where possible and formalise the support when needed. There is a range of support available and external services that can be signposted.

Our Attendance Team are responsible for monitoring attendance, first-day calling, and for working with parents to address attendance issues. However, where this is not effective and a child's attendance and/or punctuality continue to cause concern, the school will make a referral to the Inclusion Team at Surrey County Council, who may enforce legal action if he/she feels this is necessary. In addition, the Inclusion Team carries out regular register checks as part of his/her statutory duties and will use these checks to identify pupils whose attendance is below acceptable levels and take appropriate action.

Persistent Absence Register and Safeguarding

The national threshold for persistent absence has been lowered year on year as attendance has improved. It is now classified as attendance below 90%.

In order to closely track and monitor worrying attendance, children whose attendance falls below 90% will be placed on our Persistent Absence register until attendance improves sufficiently. This register also forms part of our Safeguarding register. Educational Neglect is when a parent or carer does not ensure a child receives an appropriate education. Attendance that falls below 90% is considered a Level 2 cause for concern, according to the Levels of Need document issued by Surrey Children's Services, requiring an offer of Early Help support.

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/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school or for persistent lateness, 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/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

- A Penalty Notice may be issued to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are failing to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Education Welfare Officer.
- Where a child is taken out of school for a holiday during term time for 5 days or more without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child**. 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.
- Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

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

The school will ensure that parents are aware of our attendance policy through the website, newsletters and induction meetings with parents. We use the following additional strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality: -

- Celebratory photographs and keyring each half term and once a year for 100% attendance; photographs for children who show improved or outstanding attendance rates; a special weekly award (the Emperor Penguin Award) for the class with the best attendance of the week.

- Children's attendance and punctuality are recorded on their termly reports and discussed during termly parent meetings
- Governors monitor attendance and punctuality through the head teacher's report.

The reason Attendance is monitored so closely by Government, County and school, is because it is vital to children's success. If a child is not in school, they are not attending lessons and can quickly fall behind, or attain far lower than their potential. We, home and school, are all working towards the same goal: that the children in our care do the very best that they can. If there is any support we can give that helps this happen, we are here to provide it, so please ask.

Appendix: Monitoring and actions

When	Action
<p>A parent or teacher has requested support for any reason.</p> <p>A child has been absent on more than one occasion.</p>	<p>Phone call or meeting with most appropriate staff member to explore possible support.</p>
<p>When attendance levels begin to cause concern. Depending on the time of the year, this may be when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance drops below 95% <p>There are multiple, short periods of absence.</p>	<p>Initial cause for concern letter.</p>
<p>When there are further periods of absence since the first letter.</p>	<p>Second letter detailing continued concern. This letter will explain that further absences are unable to be authorised without medical evidence.</p>
<p>When there are further periods of unauthorised absence since the first letter.</p>	<p>Third letter requesting a further meeting to discuss attendance concerns.</p>
<p>When there are sustained, frequent session of unauthorised absence within a short period of time, despite letters and meetings with school staff.</p>	<p>Referral to Surrey County Council Inclusion Service.</p>

The timings of these are flexible based on individual circumstances.