



## BLETCHINGLEY VILLAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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### **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

To be read in conjunction with Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Reviewed: September 25

Next Review Date: September 26

#### **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

KS1/2: 8.45 – 3.20

Registration closes 10 minutes after the start time.

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.

The following information from Surrey County Council provides more information about penalty notices and when they will be issued:

### **Penalty Notices to Address Poor Attendance at School**

A Penalty Notice may be issued as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school (absence without the agreement of the school or not covered by a medical note) and will be used by Surrey County Council in the following circumstances :-

1. Pupils identified by police and Attendance Advice Officers (formerly Education Welfare Officers) engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
2. Leave of absence in term time (5 days or 10 sessions or more).
  - Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 01 September 2013 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
  - The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.
  - In such cases the Headteacher/Governing Body must decide whether there are exceptional circumstances. They may request that Surrey County Council 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.

3. Finally, the issuing of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where it is judged that a parent is failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance. This will be considered when a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions in the previous 10 school weeks, which may include a pupil arriving late after close of registration.

If you believe at any stage that your child’s absence from school may leave you liable to receive a Penalty Notice, it is extremely important that you act without delay to support them with regular school attendance.

**Amount Payable for a Penalty Notice and Consequences for repeat unauthorised absences**

1. If you have not incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children in a rolling 3 year period 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.

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.

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"> <li>• Attendance drops below 95%</li> </ul> <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>

When there are sustained, frequent session of unauthorised absence within a short period of time, despite letters and meetings with school staff.	Referral to Surrey County Council Inclusion Service.
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The timings of these are flexible based on individual circumstances.