

St John's C of E Infant School

Attendance Policy

Aim

It is our aim to promote and support our children's learning and enable each one of our pupils to achieve their full potential. We endeavour to provide a school day that excites and motivates each child, and allows them to develop as independent learners. Our organisation of their learning promotes enjoyment, perseverance and challenge. We aim to foster in our children a real love of learning and encourage them to have "Enquiring Minds and Open Hearts".

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 real 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.

Key Objectives

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school regularly;
- attend school punctually;
- attend school appropriately prepared for the school day.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that the child in their care arrives at school punctually, prepared for the school day;
- contact the school on the first day of the child's absence by 9.30am.
- discuss promptly with their child's class teacher or Headteacher, any problems that deter their child from attending school;
- avoid taking holidays in term time.

To encourage attendance we expect that the school staff will:

- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily;
- monitor every child's attendance using SIMS;
- contact parents as soon as possible when unexplained and/or prolonged absence occurs and obtain notes authorising the absence;
- provide a welcoming and safe learning environment for children;
- meet with the school's Inclusion Officer (IO) regularly to discuss any new concerns and work together to sort out any problems;
- work with the parents and child if it appears that a child is anxious about coming to school to try and alleviate this anxiety. Where this is more extreme the HSLW will also become involved and help formulate strategies to support the child;
- meet with the parents of children whose attendance causes concern;
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Inclusion Service.

Annual School Holidays

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and we strongly recommend that parents/carers book their family holidays during those times. All holidays will be classified as unauthorised as from 1 November 2010 on the advice of the Inclusion Officer and in agreement with the Haslemere TEAM Confederation Policy.

In exceptional circumstances when leave in term-time is unavoidable, a Request for School Absence Form (Appendix 1) must be completed prior to the absence. This can be obtained from the school office. No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for their child as a right. If holidays are taken, without prior authorisation, the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the school register.

The Headteacher, on behalf of the governors can authorise leave at their discretion having considered the exceptional circumstances requiring a leave of absence:

- The reason for the request;
- The child's record of attendance;
- Whether leave has been taken in term time previously;
- The time of the leave, ensuring that it would not prevent the child from missing any important assessments.

Surrey County Council guidance gives Headteachers the power to authorise absence only in exceptional circumstances. Examples of exceptional circumstances, quoted by the Department for Education (DfE), are: **service personnel and family crises**. Family holidays taken during term time due to affordability or work restrictions do not meet the DfE criteria for authorisation.

On the advice of the Inclusion Service (IS) if any parent requests extended leave of absence of more than 20 days, the school will notify the parent in writing that this may result in being taken off-role. Once leave has started, the school will notify the parent in writing of the expected date of return of that child, and that failure to return to school by that date will result in being taken off-role. The case will then be referred to the Inclusion Officer. If the child does not return to school by the date specified the school will take their name off role.

Penalty Notices

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of the school and 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 requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 42 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996. **Each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child**.

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 Inclusion Officer.

- Where a child is taken out of school for a **second time** for a holiday during term time for 5 days or more without the authority of the Headteacher. 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 they persist in taking the holiday.
- The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where attendance has fallen and there are no less than 10 unauthorised sessions during the preceding half-term. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Inclusion Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice.
- Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration (9.15am) without good reason, on 7 occasions in any six week period. In this instance a warning will be issued, and attendance monitored for improvement for 15 days prior to issue of a Penalty Notice.

- When an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours within the first 5 days of exclusion without justifiable reason. No written warning will be given where it can be shown that the parent/carer had previously been warned of their liability to receive a Penalty Notice.

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.

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 note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer, the school will endeavour to contact them that day by phone by 9.30am;
- if there is no response to the call on that day or the absence remains unexplained, the Headteacher will be informed and further investigation and action will be made accordingly. In some situations this may involve a home visit from the Headteacher;
- if there is persistent non-attendance, the school will keep records of the contact with home during the period of absence and this will be discussed with the IO when a formal referral can be made;
- if a child has persistent absence 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 IO/LA to decide whether a Penalty Notice should be issued;
- failure to comply with the expectations set by the IS may result in further action, an application for an Educational Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

Responding to lateness

When a pupil is late for school they should enter the building via the front office so that they can be recorded as being present. Registers open at 8.40am for Year 2, 8.50am for Year 1 and 9.00am for Year R and are taken promptly. Children will be recorded as being late if they arrive after this time but before 9.15am. The office will record any absence after 9.15am as unauthorised.

Persistent lateness will be monitored and the parents will be spoken to. If the problem continues a letter will be sent home to parents to inform them of learning time lost. If lateness remains a problem a referral may be made to the Inclusion Service.

Changes to legislation empower the Inclusion Services and schools to issue Penalty Notices (£60 - £120) where a pupil's attendance falls to unacceptable levels. It will be for each individual case, in consultation with the IS, to decide when these will be invoked.

Changing School

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

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- the address of the new school;
- the new home address (if appropriate and 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.

Reviewed:	October 2023
To be reviewed:	October 2024



Appendix 1

REQUEST FOR SCHOOL ABSENCE

Dear Parents

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their children are in school and we do consider, here at St John's, that every day is a valuable opportunity for learning.

Please be aware that the Education Regulations 2013, which became law on 1 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.

Please complete the form below if you would like your request for your child's leave of absence – **due to exceptional circumstances** – to be considered.

NAME OF CHILD:CLASS:

1st date of absence: Date of return:.....

Total number of school days included in this application:

Has absence been granted already this academic year? If so, how many days?

Exceptional Circumstances (reason) for your request to take your child out of school in term time:

.....
.....
.....

Signed: Date:

Headteacher's signature: Date:

For school use:

Attendance %:

Total sessions pupil absent this academic year:

Total unauthorised absence this year:

Evidence submitted: Yes / No

This absence will be recorded as: Authorised / Unauthorised