



Attendance Policy 2018-2019

1. Introduction

The Governors and the professional senior leadership team of Southfield Park Primary School, in common with Surrey County Council and other local schools, firmly believe that all children benefit from regular school attendance. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child'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. Children will be expected to achieve 100% attendance unless the absence has been authorised by the Headteacher.

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 attend at all times when the school is open, 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 (Child Registration) Regulations 2006, all unexplained absences of 10 consecutive days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority, although schools may wish to discuss such an absence sooner with their Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if the absence is unauthorised, parents/carers cannot be contacted or there are other concerns. Schools are required to report all absence figures to the local authority and the DFE and to ensure they are recorded on a child's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by Ofsted as part of a school's inspection.

2. Registers

Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 (s434) and the Student Registration Regulations 1995 the school must keep an attendance register.

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Categorisation of Absence

Any child who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

Unauthorised absence

This is for those children where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. This includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence.

Authorised absence

This is for those children who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

3. Expectations

3.1 We expect that all children will:

- attend school regularly
- attend school punctually
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- discuss with their class teacher any problems preventing them from attending school

3.2 We expect that all parents/carers and persons who have day to day responsibility for the children and young people will:

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually at 8:45am and are prepared for the school day
- ensure that they contact the school whenever the child/children is unable to attend school
- contact the school on the first day of absence by 9.00am, explaining why your child is off
- call in on a daily basis to update us of your child's condition, unless otherwise agreed with the school office
- send a note on their return to school
- contact the school whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child from attending school

3.3 We expect that school staff will:

- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all children, at least twice daily
- monitor all children's attendance and publish attendance statistics
- contact parents/carers via the school calling system as soon as possible when a child fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence
- encourage and reward good attendance and punctuality
- make initial enquires to parents/carers of children who are not attending school regularly

3.4 We expect that the Headteacher and Deputy Head will:

- Work with families to resolve attendance issues
- Provide Pastoral Support for attendance issues with the Family Support Worker
- Meet regularly with the EWO to identify and action any attendance concerns

4. Lateness

The school day starts at 8:45am. The registers will remain open for 20 minutes and any child who arrives after the register has been taken but during the 20 minutes will be marked late (L code used in the register). Any child who arrives after the register closes at 9:05am should sign in at the School Office and will be marked as late after the close of the register (U code used in the register), which statistically counts as an unauthorised absence. If a reason is given for the late arrival, for example, attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. The child's name will be recorded in the late book in case of a fire drill.

5. Exceptional Leave of Absence

Parents/carers have no legal right to take children out of school during term time. If a family considers a leave of absence in term time is unavoidable, an application form for Application for Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances, (which can be obtained from the School Office or the website) must be completed at least two weeks prior to the starting date of the proposed absence. The school publishes term dates one year in advance and does not authorise absences during term time apart from in exceptional circumstances. If unauthorised absence of five days or more is taken a Penalty Notice will be served. If an unauthorised leave of absence is taken without

prior notification to the school, it will be automatically recorded as an unauthorised absence, Education Welfare will be notified and the parents may be liable to a Penalty Notice.

All requests for leave of absence will be considered on a case by case basis by the Headteacher to whom the Governing Body of Southfield Park have delegated this responsibility. Any appeals against these decisions will be heard by the Governing Body and the decision by the Governing Body will be final.

6. Changing schools

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

- The date the child will be leaving this school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- The new home address, if it is known

The child'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 Education Welfare Service.

7. Encouraging Attendance

Southfield Park Primary School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- by providing a welcoming atmosphere for children, provide a safe learning environment and provide a sympathetic response to any child's concerns
- accurate and punctual completion of the registers during morning and afternoon registration
- rewards and incentives are offered to celebrate good and improved attendance
- a Southfield Park teddy 'Sparky' is presented to the class with the best overall attendance each week. On a termly basis the class with the highest attendance for the term is rewarded with a class treat chosen by the children (with support from the class teacher)
- individual postcards are sent to the children with 100% attendance at the end of the autumn and spring terms and special badges are awarded for children with 100% attendance for the whole academic year at the end of the summer term
- SLT will monitor children's attendance and inform parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arrange meetings with them if necessary where the school's attendance agreement will be signed and attendance targets set
- if attendance is 90% or below, without a valid reason, the child may be referred to the Education Welfare Service

8. Responding to Non-Attendance

If a child is absent for any reason, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school. However if the child is absent and no reason has been provided the following procedure will apply:

First Day Absence

The school will telephone the parent/carer to request reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. A message will be left where no contact can be made.

Second Day Absence

The school will telephone the parent to request reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. A message will be left where no contact can be made.

Third Day Absence

The school will telephone the parent to request reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. If no response is received the school will send a letter and the attendance lead will be informed.

Ten Days Absence

Any child, who is absent without an explanation, for 10 consecutive days, will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to Education Welfare as this is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action that they have taken. For a child on a Child Protection Plan or defined as a 'Child in Need', contact with social care and/or Education Welfare will be made at an earlier stage.

Where a child is absent from school the following procedure will be followed for welcoming them back. If they have been off for one day, the class teacher welcomes them back and checks they are ok. If they are off for a few days, further communication from the class teacher will be made and provision made for the child catching up with work. For longer term absences a more formal reintegration will take place with a plan to catch up, some sessions may be provided where the student is given support by the Family Support Worker.

Frequent Absence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

In cases where a child begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/carer by:

1. Phone call to parent/carer by a member of the Leadership and Management Team and issues discussed with student within school if appropriate.
2. Letter sent to parent/carer stating concerns.
3. Meeting at school with Head or Deputy Headteacher.

If this is unsuccessful the school will make a referral to Education Welfare (see below)

Persistent Absence (PA)

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is considerably damaging a child's educational prospects and we need parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA children are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Parent/carer will be notified by a letter if their child becomes a persistent absentee and be invited to a meeting where an action plan will be drawn up to address the issues identified.

The Education Welfare Officer

Education Welfare Officer (EWO) monitors the attendance of all children and meets with school staff on a termly basis to discuss attendance issues and concerns unless the Headteacher requests more frequent contact. The EWO will work with school staff and parent/carer to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence.

If attendance problems cannot be resolved by school, then a referral will be made to the EWO, who will try to resolve the situation. If attempts to improve attendance have failed, but unauthorised absence persists, the EWO can use sanctions such as parenting/carer contracts, penalty notices and prosecution.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, to a fine not exceeding £2500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months, or both.

9. 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 and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per child, per parent, 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 Notice may be issued to parents/carers

- Where parents/carers 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 a penalty notice may be issued.
- Where a child is taken out of school for an unauthorised leave of absence during term time for 5 days or more without the authority of the head teacher, **each** parent/carer 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/carers had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised.
- Where children are identified by Police and Education Welfare Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have previously incurred unauthorised absences.
- Where attendance has fallen below 90% and there are no less than 7 unauthorised sessions during the preceding six school weeks. The parent/carer failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Education Welfare 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 of absence taken in term time, parents/carers will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

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 and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Agreed by staff: September 2018

Agreed by Governors : September 2018

Review: September 2019 (unless legislation changes)