



SOUTH CAMBERLEY PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

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Attendance and Punctuality Policy

2023-2024

Date of Approval		Date of Review	
January 2024		January 2025	
Status and Review Cycle		Statutory Annual	
Signed	Executive Head Teacher	Signed	Chair of Governors



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1. Introduction/Aim

Our Vision: A relentless ambition to raise standards and create a school of excellence where all are safe and want to learn

Our Mission: Our aim is to provide opportunities for every child to succeed through high quality teaching and the development of an engaging and relevant curriculum. We nurture each individual to become confident, ambitious lifelong learners who are responsible, kind and are prepared for the future.

At South Camberley Primary and Nursery School we firmly believe that excellent attendance and punctuality plays a crucial part in helping our pupils to reach their full potential and expand their future life choices. We will do all we can to support parents to ensure their children achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any issues that prevent full attendance are identified and acted upon promptly.

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information appropriately. We will work in partnership with other agencies and professionals to ensure our pupils are safe and that they are participating in education.

Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is supported by our policies on safeguarding, behaviour and inclusion.

2. Legislation

2.1. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him or her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday and ceases to be so on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

2.2. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present
- Present at approved educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

3. Roles and Responsibilities

At South Camberley Primary and Nursery School, we believe that improved school attendance is a responsibility shared by governors, school staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

3.1 The Local Advisory Committee

The committee members will:

- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Ensure relevant legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets
- Monitor the school's attendance through termly reporting at Governors' meetings

3.2 Our staff

Our staff will:

- Promote and encourage excellent attendance and punctuality through positive teaching and learning experiences that support all pupils to attend and achieve their potential
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere and a safe learning environment for pupils
- Nurture positive relationships with pupils and their parents
- Monitor every pupil's attendance and follow agreed school attendance management strategies
- Consult with parents regarding their child's attendance and welfare
- Work in partnership with parents to resolve any difficulties relating to their child's attendance
- Utilise appropriate interventions to support pupils and parents with improved attendance
- Comply with current legislation and regulations when recording the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner
- Refer irregular attendance or unjustified patterns of absence to the school's education welfare provider and/or Surrey County Council

3.3 Parents

The school expects parents will:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and on time
- Promote the values of a good education and excellent school attendance within the home environment and to be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure any child in their care arrives at school appropriately prepared for the day (including extra-curricular activities) and having completed any homework they have been given
- Contact the school office on their child's first day of absence and each subsequent day to notify the reason for the absence and the expected date of their child's return to school
- Provide medical evidence, or other documentary evidence, to support their child's absence, where this has specifically been requested
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making all non-urgent medical and dental appointments outside of school hours
- Notify the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance or welfare
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of school or home life
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss their child's attendance and welfare
- Inform the school of any change of address and/or telephone number

3.4 Pupils

The school expect pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- Speak to their class teacher, or another member of staff, if they are experiencing any difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance or welfare
- Follow the school procedure if they arrive late

4. Attendance Procedures

4.1 Expected absence procedure for parents

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly however, if a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to:

- Telephone the school office on 01276 63870 by 9.30am on the first day of absence and each subsequent day to report the reason for the absence and the expected date of return
- When requested, provide medical evidence, or other supporting documentation, that supports the level of absence. Examples of medical evidence include a dated medical appointment card, a photocopy of a signed and dated prescription, labelled medication packaging, a note or computer printout from a GP/Hospital confirming your child has been seen, together with the reason.

If there is no contact from the parent, the Attendance Protocol will be instigated.

4.2 Attendance Protocol

Where a pupil is absent without explanation, the school will respond as follows:

- The first day contact procedure will be activated for all pupils who are not in school by the close of register.
- If there is no response following the first day contact procedure, the school will contact the pupil's named first & second contact.
- If, by the end of the school day, the school has not had communication with the parent or carer, the absence will be marked as an unauthorised absence.
- If any pupil leaves the school site without permission, the school will contact parents and take appropriate action to ensure the pupil's safety and welfare. If the child is not found the police will be informed.

In certain circumstances the school may also:

- Carry out a safeguarding home visit, or contact the police and/or social services where there are concerns for the immediate safety and welfare of the pupil.
- Write to the parents to highlight attendance or punctuality issues
- Require parents to provide medical evidence, or other documentation, to support the level of absence.
- Invite parents to a meeting to discuss how the school can support improved attendance.
- Refer parents to the school's Inclusion Team for informal intervention.
- Refer to an external agency to offer support, guidance and advice.
- Refer to Surrey County Council requesting a penalty notice or to consider prosecution

4.3 Late Arrival in School

South Camberley Primary and Nursery School expects all pupils to arrive on time every day of the school year. The school registers open and close at the following times

- James Road Infants opens at 8.50am and closes at 9.20am
- France Hill Drive Infants opens at 8.50am and closes at 9.20am
- Frimley Road Juniors opens at 8.45am and closes at 9.15am

Registers will close 30 minutes after the official start time.

The school day begins promptly and we advise parents to ensure their child is in school on time for registration as above. Any pupil arriving after this time is required to report to the reception with their parent, who will be expected to enter the reason for their child's late arrival on the school's Inventory system.

If the pupil arrives after the register has been taken they will receive a late mark (L code - late before the close of register). Any pupil arriving on or after the close of register will be marked as absent for the entire morning session (U code - late after the close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Parents will be contacted to discuss any pattern of late arrival. Repeated late arrival after the close of registration may result in a Penalty Notice or prosecution being pursued by Surrey County Council.

4.4 Support Systems

The attendance of all pupils at the school is monitored and where concerns are identified, the school will work with families to explore the reasons for the absences and to try and resolve any difficulties.

The school recognises that irregular attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

The school understands that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance and will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance.

Strategies used may include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages
- Parenting contracts
- Engaging the support of other agencies
- Referral to Surrey County Council

We aim to work in partnership with families by offering support that is child focussed and planned in discussion and agreement with parents.

4.5 Threshold for formal intervention

As a school we have high expectations around attendance and have an overall goal of 96% across the school. To better monitor attendance and offer support to parents, we have set attendance goals for each term of the academic year. If a child's attendance drops below this threshold they will be contacted by the school to implement measures to improve attendance to prevent children missing a significant part of their learning.

The thresholds are 90% for the Autumn Term, 92% for the Spring Term and 94% for the Summer term.

Should attendance remain a concern, a call will be made to the parent by the class teacher to offer support. Followed by a second letter, which requires medical evidence to be provided for any absence so that any future absences from illness are authorised. Should there be no improvement; the parents will be invited to an informal meeting with the Inclusion team to implement strategies to improve attendance. If there is still no improvement to the child's attendance, the parents will be invited to a formal panel meeting with potential referral to Surrey County Council if no improvement is seen thereafter. Examples of when the school may require a parent to provide medical evidence are as follows:

- Pupils whose attendance was below 90% at the end of the previous academic (Persistent Absentee)
- Pupils whose attendance is currently below 90% (Persistent Absentee)
- Pupils who have had 3 separate periods of illness in a 6 week period
- Pupils who are absent from school immediately preceding or following a school holiday.
- Pupils who have a pattern of absence on a specific day
- Pupils who are absent for 3 or more consecutive days
- Pupils who have been late twice or more in a 2 week period

If a parent fails or refuses to engage and attendance remains a concern, a referral will be made to Surrey County Council for consideration of legal sanctions, which may be in the form of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1996, parents found guilty in a Magistrates Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school will receive a criminal record and a fine of up to £1000 for an offence under a Section 444 (1) or a fine of up to £2500 or a maximum of 3 months imprisonment for an offence under Section 444 (1a).

4.6 Penalty Notices

In accordance with Government Regulations, 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 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 Penalty Notices may be issued

- The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** is 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.

- The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 7 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. This includes absences and late arrival to school after the close of registration without good reason. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, a Penalty Notice warning letter will be sent to parents by the school's Education Welfare Officer informing them that if their child incurs further unauthorised absences during the following 15 school days monitoring period, a Penalty Notice will be issued. The parents' 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.

Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

5. Leave of Absence

5.1 Legislation

Amendments made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into effect in September 2013 and prohibit a Head Teacher from granting a leave of absence unless in "exceptional circumstances". This includes holiday taken during term time.

Any leave of absence granted due to "exceptional circumstances" is done so entirely at the discretion of the Executive Head Teacher or Head of Site who will determine the number of days your child can be absent. The regulations do not allow for retrospective approval to be given and therefore a written application must be made to the Executive Head Teacher or Head of Site in advance of the leave being requested.

Should a leave of absence be taken without having obtained the prior permission of the Executive Head Teacher or Head of Site, or your child is kept away for longer than was approved, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and the matter may be referred to the Local Authority for consideration of prosecution or a Penalty Notice may be issued.

A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 **per parent per child** if paid within the first 21 days of issue, which rises to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The Local Authority will consider taking legal action if the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days of the date of issue. Legal action may result in a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record for each parent.

5.2 Requesting a leave of absence

Parents who need to request an absence for their child during term time should complete the form entitled, "Application for leave of absence for exceptional circumstances". This must, *wherever possible*, be submitted to the Executive Head Teacher or Head of Site at least 2 weeks prior to the leave date. The Head of Site, who may consult with the Executive Head Teacher and Education Welfare Officer, will consider the circumstances of the request and decide whether or not to authorise the absence. Each request will be considered separately and any decision to grant a leave of absence is done so entirely at the discretion of the Executive Head Teacher or Head of Site.

School holidays are published a year in advance and are available from the school office and on the school's website. Family holidays are not deemed to be exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised.

6. Deletions from the Register

A pupil can lawfully be removed from the school's roll when it has been established that one of the specified criteria under Section 8 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, has been met.

6.1 Moving School

Where parents decide to send their child to a different school, it is important that they inform South Camberley Primary and Nursery School as soon as possible. The pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will leave South Camberley Primary and Nursery School
- The name and address of the pupil's new school
- The pupil's new home address (if applicable)

An in-year transfer form is available to download through the Surrey County Council website and should be completed by the parent and Head of Site.

6.2 Children Missing from Education

All professionals working with children have a responsibility to ensure a child's wellbeing and to remain vigilant to their safety and welfare both inside and outside of school. When a pupil is absent from school for a substantial period of time and their whereabouts is unknown, South Camberley Primary and Nursery School will follow Surrey County Council's Children Missing from Education (CME) procedures. This will involve carrying out joint enquiries with Surrey County Council to establish the whereabouts of the child.

6.3 Elective Home Education

If a parent wishes to Electively Home Educate (EHE) their child, the school will de-register the child at the point written notification is received from the parent expressing their intention to do so. School will then notify Surrey County Council and after 10 days the child will be taken off roll. If a child has an Education Health and Care Plan, school will notify Surrey County Council of the parents' wishes to Electively Home Educate and the Surrey County Council Inclusion Team will carry out their enquiries before advising school to off roll the child.

The school will meet with relevant agencies and parents prior to a decision being made on whether to electively home educate the child.

7. Legal Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- School Attendance, Department for Education (May 2022)
- School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures: Statutory Guidance, Department for Education (January 2017)
- Surrey County Council's Children Missing Education Practice & Procedures
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, Department for Education (September 2022)

Annex A

8. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

8.1 Regular Attendance:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised

8.2 Absence:

- Not attending school for any reason
- Arriving at school after the register has closed

8.3 Authorised Absence:

The school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence. Examples of authorised absence:

- An absence due to illness or significant injury
- Urgent medical or dental appointments
- Religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances or unavoidable cause
- Formal exclusion from school

8.4 Unauthorised Absence:

The school has not been provided with an explanation for the pupil's absence or is not satisfied with the reasons given. Examples of unauthorised absence:

- Absences that have not been properly explained
- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy, or an unwillingness to attend school.
- Shopping, birthdays or looking after other children.
- Holidays in term-time which have not been agreed.
- Illness where medical evidence has been requested but not provided.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Due to parent illness/ can't bring child to school/ appointments during school time.

8.5 Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil is classed as a "persistent absentee" when their attendance falls to 90% or below for any reason. Over the course of an academic year this equates to 38 missed sessions (19 school days)

8.6 Parent:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person as defined by the Children Act 1989
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child