

Attendance Policy



This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment

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Introduction

At St Peter's we recognise that the best way to ensure students achieve the best they can is by being in school every school day. Absence has a significant and detrimental effect on learning. Parents have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis. Pupils are expected to attend 100% of the time, unless the absence is authorised by the Headteacher.

Regular and punctual attendance at school underpins successful learning and sets good habits for the future world of employment. The expectation of the governors and staff at this school is that children will be in school unless they are unwell or an unavoidable appointment prevents them attending. This policy states our procedures which, we believe, help achieve good attendance rates for our children.

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

The school aims to:

- ensure every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected
- support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality
- ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning
- make parents/carers aware of their legal requirements.
- ensure all the stakeholders, receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance which is acted upon.
- work with external agencies in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them

The school expects all pupils to:

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

The school expects parents/carers to:

- make their child's attendance at school the highest priority and share this belief with them
- contact the school promptly whenever any problems occur that may keep the child away from school
- ensure their child arrives in school ready for the register at 8.55am, wearing the correct school uniform and well prepared for the school day
- collect their children on time and/or telephone the school office in advance if there are any problems or changes to the usual arrangements.

The school expects that school staff will:

- make attendance a high priority and convey this to pupils at all times
- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils,
- monitor every pupil's attendance
- contact parents on that day when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- provide a welcoming environment
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain reason for the absence
- encourage good attendance
- make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the LA's expectations regarding regular school attendance using a system of standard letters
- to contact the parent if no note or telephone call is received from parents. If contact is not made, a letter will be sent informing the parent / carer of any further actions
- alert the Headteacher and/or Attendance, Advice and Intervention Officers (AAIOs) in situations of continued non-attendance or lateness

Attendance Register

The presence or absence of all pupils is recorded in a class Attendance Register at the beginning of every morning and afternoon session. Teachers will complete registers in accordance with the guidance contained in the staff handbook and this information will be entered on SIMS by school office staff.

Children are expected to arrive at school between 8.45 and 8.55 am. The school day begins at 9am and ends at 3.15pm. Children should be brought to the school gates by parents and carers where they will be greeted by members of staff and directed to the relevant classroom. Lateness is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the school day, they can miss work and do not spend the time with their class teacher in receiving vital information to complete work. Late arriving pupils disrupt lessons; this can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

If children are late, parents should bring their child[ren] to the school office to sign them in with a reason for the late arrival. The register will be closed at 9.05am. After this time attendance is recorded as late (L) and the total amount of minutes that the child was late for will be recorded on SIMs.

If a child arrives after 9.30am but before 11am they will be recorded as late using the 'U' code. If a child is **persistently** late then parents' co-operation will be sought to improve lateness, firstly by the class teacher and, if necessary, by the Headteacher. Parents of children who are persistently late and have been entered under a 'U' code on the SIMs system will be informed that they may be issued with a penalty notice. Every effort will be made however to find an acceptable solution, for all parties, to this issue before it reaches this stage.

Children arriving after 11am will have an 'O' entered in the register meaning that they have been recorded as having an unauthorised absence for that session.

If the problem persists, this may result in a Penalty Notice.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

UNPLANNED ABSENCE

Parents should ensure that, if their child is absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as sickness, they should contact the school **before 9am**. This should be done on the first morning of absence **and on EVERY day of absence thereafter**. Contact can be made by visiting the school office, a telephone call– where a message can be recorded or emailing: info@stpetersinfant.org. Parents are asked to provide a reason as to why the child is not in school. If no reason is given to the school after 10 days, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Parents may not authorise their child's absence, only the school can do this on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents. (Should parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence the school will record such absence as unauthorised.)

If a child is reported as absent due to illness and it subsequently becomes known that they were on holiday (and in the absence of any exceptional circumstances for which the leave may be granted, or medical evidence to show that he/she was too ill to attend school) the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

PLANNED ABSENCE

For any request for absence including holidays parents should complete an "Application for Leave of Absence" (available from the school office or downloaded from the school website) at least 3 weeks in advance of the period for which the leave is requested. Leave will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is very happy to discuss individual cases with the family concerned on a one-to-one basis. If permission is not granted, any such absence will then be recorded as unauthorised (G).

Authorised Absence

Absences such as illness and medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time will be authorised. However, we remind you not to make dental or medical appointments within school time wherever possible. The school may request parents to provide medical evidence, for example, in the form of a written note from the child's doctor, to support frequent or prolonged absence due to illness. If extenuating circumstances necessitate a child being absent for a longer period of time, the class teacher will discuss with the parents the desirability of carrying out suitable work whilst they are away.

Medical Appointments

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the child should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Parents are required to inform the school in writing (not verbally to the class teacher), by submitting an "Application for Leave of Absence Form" detailing the nature of the appointment for approval in advance if a medical appointment is required during the school day. Children who have an early medical appointment and arrive at school before 9.30am will be recorded with an 'L' and notice of the appointment will be placed on SIMs. This will therefore not affect their attendance record.

Early Collection

If a parent wishes to take a child out of school before the end of the school day, permission must be sought from the Headteacher giving adequate notice.

Children should not be taken from the playground or school field during the school day without the knowledge of the supervisor. Parents should report first to the school office, sign their child off the premises and then a member of staff will bring the child to the school office to meet the parent who should then leave the school premises via the main school entrance.

Emergencies

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships, and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

Unauthorised Absence and Holidays During Term Time

Parents should not book family holidays during term-time. Children spend only 190 days out of 365 in school, and we expect parents to use the remaining days for any family holiday and/or special days out. Holiday cannot be authorised by the Headteacher; however an "Application for Leave of Absence" form should be submitted in any case so that the absence can be recorded.

Where leave is denied - but the child is removed from school anyway – the school will classify the absence as unauthorised. Cases of persistent unauthorised absence will be reported to the Local Authority who may issue a Penalty Notice.

PENALTY NOTICES

The Inclusion 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.

If a parent/carer has 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 the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

If a parent/carer has 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 in the Magistrates Court.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued

- Pupils identified by police and Attendance, Advice and Intervention Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher 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 Headteacher, 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 threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (eg 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (eg 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (eg 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in one week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (eg 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer term and a further 8 in the Autumn term).

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

Two Penalty Notices and escalation in the case of Repeat Offences

If a parent/carers has incurred 2 penalty notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3-year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then the parent/carers will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution per parent/carers per child, in the Magistrates Court under S.444 Education Act 1996.

Using Attendance Data

Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Attendance data is used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Information on rates of unauthorised absence is included in the school prospectus and in the Headteacher's termly report to governors. New parents are reminded of their responsibilities regarding school attendance, and reminders are issued to all parents when necessary.

The Headteacher will regularly collect attendance data and will use this data during meetings with the school's Attendance, Advice and Intervention Officer (AAIO). These meetings will agree on

attendance thresholds and targets and will identify respective tasks and follow up actions for both the school and the AAIO.

If the school has concerns about a child's attendance or believes that there are safeguarding issues related to attendance, then the advice and support of outside agencies will be sought.

Without regular attendance our best educational efforts would come to nothing, and we therefore do everything possible to ensure that the procedures outlined above are adhered to.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

Where there are concerns about punctuality or a pattern of unusual absence begins to emerge, the school will work with parents/carers to try to improve the situation. If the concerns persist, the school may make a formal referral to the Surrey Inclusion Team.

Positive Measures To Encourage Good Attendance

Children will be rewarded for excellent attendance with certificates presented by the Headteacher at the End of Year Celebration Service.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Behaviour policy