



# Attendance Policy

Hurst Green Infant School and Nursery

**Last Update: September 2021**

**Review Date: September 2022**

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

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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 Hurst Green Infant School and Nursery 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.

## **Expectations**

### **We expect that all pupils 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 if they are able to do so.

### **We expect that all parents/carers and persons who have day to day responsibility for the children will:**

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and have completed any homework they have been given
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.
- Contact the school office by 9.30am on the first day of a child's absence, giving the reason for the absence and then on a daily basis until the child returns to school.
- Discuss with the class teacher or Head teacher any problems preventing their child/children from attending school.

### **We expect that school staff will:**

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, as required by current legislation
- Monitor every pupil's attendance
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Encourage good attendance
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere and a safe learning environment for children
- Provide and provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns
- Make initial enquiries to parents/carers of pupils who are attending irregularly, expressing the school's concerns and clarifying the school and the local authority's expectations regarding regular school attendance
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the attached Educational Welfare Officer

### **Timing of Registration**

Children are welcome in the school playground from 9.00 am every week day morning in term time. Register will take place at 9.15 am. If a child arrives after 9.15am she/he will be registered as L (late before registers closed) and after 9.30 am as U (late after registers closed). The child's parent/carer will be required to sign a late book and give reasons for the child's late arrival. If a child is late because of a medical appointment she/he will be marked with an L and an explanation will be added regarding the appointment. Medical evidence may be requested.

### **Keeping the Register of Attendance**

At the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions the registers are marked by class teachers and totals of children present are recorded. Any child who is noted as absent has a dot marked after their name. The registers are then sent to the school office and the school office staff will mark the absence with the appropriate code, if the reason for absence is known at the time. The codes are available from the school office.

The Head teacher examines the school attendance record every week and notes any unusual absences. She will then follow this up individually with the family concerned and, if necessary, seek advice from the Education Welfare Officer.

The expectation is that parents/carers will aim for their children to reach 100% attendance – though the school understands that children do fall ill and absence through sickness is sometimes unavoidable.

### **Procedures for authorised absences such as sickness**

Parents/carers are asked to notify the school on the first day of any absence, stating the reason. This may be by telephone call, email or letter. On receipt of the reason for absence the appropriate symbol is placed in the child's attendance record and a note recorded for the reason of absence.

For planned absences, e.g. doctor's appointment, parents are asked to notify school prior to the date and the register is marked with the appropriate code. If a parent wishes to remove a child from school during the day, e.g. for a medical appointment, parents must complete the signing in and out book as appropriate. Medical evidence may be requested.

### **Requests for leave of absence**

It is expected that families will take their main holidays in the school holidays and parents new to the school are told this at the new admission morning. If families are planning to remove their child from class for any reason other than illness or a medical appointment the parent/carer must complete a form provided by the school, explaining the reasons for the request. It is very unusual for permission for leave of absence in term time to be given, this only occurs in EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES. Once a request form is received, parents/carers will receive written notification as to whether the request will be authorised. If the request is unauthorised and the child is taken out of school the absence will be recorded with a G (unauthorised holiday absence). PENALTY NOTICES MAY BE ISSUED – SEE BELOW.

### **Following up Unexplained or Unusual absences**

In the event of an explanation for absence not being received by 9.30am the office staff will contact the family concerned to find out what has happened. Most unexplained absences can be resolved in this way. On rare occasions where the absence remains unexplained, or where

the explanation is considered, by the Head teacher, to be unsatisfactory, the absence will be recorded as being unauthorised.

If a pattern of unusual absence begins to emerge, the class teacher and/or the Head teacher will speak to the family concerned to discover more directly the reasons behind it. Help can be offered, e.g. where a family has difficulty arriving on time due to a short term change in family circumstances it can be suggested that the family approach other parents to bring the child to school, in the short term. Again, usually the situation can be resolved by both the school and the family working together, but it remains important that the family are reminded of the need for regular attendance. In appropriate cases the role of the Educational Welfare Officer will be highlighted with the family. In the case of repeated or long term unexplained absences a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Officer.

The Educational Welfare Officer visits the school on a termly basis to examine the registers. Any children who are persistently absent or whose absence rates are particularly high (above 10%) will be discussed with the Head teacher and advice given.

### **Reporting to Parents**

In our annual written reports to parents/ carers of all children, individual attendance rates and any lateness is recorded.

### **Reporting to Governors**

The Head teacher reports to the governors on attendance levels every term.

### **Penalty Notices**

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council will 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 a Penalty Notices may be issued**

**The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1<sup>st</sup> September 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 5 days or more (10 sessions) 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 attendance has fallen below acceptable levels and there are no less than 10 unauthorised sessions during the preceding

6 school weeks. 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. 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 will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.**

Section 23 of the Act gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of, but is failing to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

### **Why has it been introduced?**

Reducing absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others. Above all, missing school can seriously affect children's longer term life opportunities.

### **What is a Penalty Notice?**

Under existing legislation, each parent/carer commits an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as 'unauthorised' (those absences for which the school has not given permission). Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in Court but is used as a means of enforcing a pupil's attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure an improvement.

If the Penalty Notice is paid in full and on time, then you will not be prosecuted for this particular offence.

The Authority does not take the decision to issue a Penalty Notice lightly and would prefer to work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions.

Poor school attendance can affect a child's future employment and life opportunities, and the Authority will use the powers if this is the only way of securing school attendance. Each parent is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who is failing to attend school regularly.

### **How are they issued?**

By post or are hand delivered to your home.

### **Is there an appeal process?**

There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning you can make representation should you wish.

***Please remember every day of school missed is a day a child is disadvantaged.***