



SURREY STREET POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE



We believe that high levels of attendance and a punctual start to the school day are essential if children are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

The school strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure. We believe that the most important factor in promoting excellent attendance is ensuring that children are happy in school and therefore want to be in school every day.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

Legal Requirements.

The law (Education Act 1996) requires all schools to record the attendance of each pupil at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Schools are required to follow up on absences to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their children attend school regularly and arrive at school on time. The duty for parents to ensure their child receives a suitable "efficient full-time education" is set out in section 7 of the Education Act 1996. Parents are guilty of an offence if their child fails to attend regularly.

Schools and local authorities have a duty to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence

Parents/Carers must

- Ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually
- Notify the school office by 9.30am if their child is absent from school and state the reason for their absence
- Provide school with medical evidence if their child's absence continues for more than one week
- Ensure that any routine medical/dental appointments are made out of school time where possible

School Procedures

- If any child is absent and school has not been notified on the first day, the Attendance Officer telephones the child's parents/carers.
- In the event contact cannot be made on the first day, the Attendance Officer records this on the register. An unexplained absence letter is sent home within one week requesting parents to explain the absence. In some cases, a home visit may be carried out.

- If the school is satisfied with the reasons provided, there is no further action. The school continues to monitor and expects no less than 95% attendance.
- If the school is not satisfied with the reasons provided, the absence is identified as unauthorised, and the parent/carer may be required to supply medical evidence.
- On the second day of absence, when there has been no contact from the parent/carer, a possible paired home visit takes place.
- Every half term (from April 2017 onwards) the Attendance Officer sends attendance certificates home to all parents identifying the level of attendance for their children.
- If there is no improvement in attendance by the end of the next half term, the Attendance Officer sends a second letter (appendices letter 2) notifying parents/carers that no further absence will be authorised without medical evidence. This letter also includes a requirement for parents/carers to contact the Family Worker to arrange a meeting. The Family Worker provides support and responds appropriately.
- If there is still no improvement the Attendance Officer informs the Headteacher, who will invite parents/carers in for a meeting.
- Continued persistent absences (attendance 90% or less) are followed up by the Education Welfare Officer.

Surrey Street Primary School uses an electronic registration system which maintains accurate data on an individual and whole school basis.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is unacceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they miss work and learning, and do not spend time with their class teacher, missing vital teaching, information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence.

The school gates open at 8.45am and close at 8.55am, and we expect all children to be in class at this time. Any children arriving after this time must report to reception accompanied by their parent/carer to sign in late. Registers are marked by 9.00am. If a child arrives after 9.15am they are marked as being on site but are counted as having an unauthorised absence for the entire morning session which affects their overall attendance record.

Authorised Absences

There are times where occasional absence from school is unavoidable and these would therefore be recorded as an authorised absence.

Absence from school will be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness
- Religious observance by the religious body to which the child's family belongs
- Unavoidable/emergency medical and dental appointments, extreme family emergencies
- Children from the traveller community travelling with parents/carers for occupational purposes – agreed by the Headteacher, and Luton Borough Council's Access to Education Officer.

Unauthorised Absences

Unfortunately, there are some occasions when parents/carers choose to take their children out of school for unacceptable reasons.

Where a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend school regularly, and the absence is unauthorised, the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444 of The Education Act 1996. This may lead to prosecution in the magistrates' court, and if found guilty parents may be liable to a fine of up to £2,500 or a period of imprisonment.

The following reasons for absence will be recorded as unauthorised:

- Day trips or holidays in term time not authorised by school
- Looking after siblings or unwell parents
- Unexplained absences
- Birthdays
- Children who arrive at school after 9.30am
- Shopping
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives
- Lack of child care provision before or after school
- Difficulties in transporting child to and from school

These are examples only and the list is not exhaustive.

Holidays During Term Time

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 have been amended and came into force from September 2013. The amendments make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The law does not give any entitlement to parents/carers to take their child on holiday during term time. Headteachers have the discretion to authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances only and it is only for the headteacher to determine what is truly exceptional.

It is acknowledged that time away with family is a much-valued childhood experience and the cost of holidays outside of term time are considerably higher than at other times; however, the headteacher has a legal obligation to fulfil statutory duties and has no alternative but to refuse term time leave in all but the most exceptional circumstances.

Parents/carers should complete a leave of absence form, which are available from the school office or on the school website to download.

Examples of exceptional circumstances:

- Close family member bereavement (up to 3 days)
- Immediate family member funeral (up to 3 days)
- Unavoidable delay in travel arrangements due to adverse weather conditions, e.g. volcanic ash
- Proven parental employment restrictions
- Unavoidable delay in travel due to being deemed unfit to travel by medical practitioner with proof provided to the school for the period of absence (provided leave of absence has already been granted)

For further information please refer to our school's Leave of Absence Policy, which can be downloaded on our website or obtained from the school office.

Religious observances

The Local Authority states that up to two days **per school year** are allowed for recognised religious celebrations. Any further days will be classed as unauthorised and penalty notices may be issued.

Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

The school acknowledges that good attendance should be recognised and rewarded.

- Weekly Class Attendance – each week the class/es with the highest attendance is/are presented with the attendance teddy in the Friday assembly. The class/es with the fewest 'lates' is/are presented with the punctuality cup. These encourage the children to work as a team towards good attendance and punctuality.
- Termly Class Attendance and Punctuality – at the end of each school term the classes with highest attendance and punctuality are given an end of term treat organised by the Wellbeing Team
- Weekly Individual Attendance and Punctuality – every child who has 100% attendance and no 'lates' has their name entered in a half-termly prize draw. At the end of the half term, two names are drawn and the two winners each receive a £20 shopping voucher.
- Termly Individual Attendance - at the end of each school term children with 100% attendance are awarded with an attendance badge: bronze for 1 term; silver for 2 terms; and gold for the whole year.
- Annual Individual Attendance awards – any child who has 100% attendance for the year also receives a £20 voucher which is presented in a celebration assembly.
- From April 2017 onwards, every half term all children will receive a certificate stating their level of attendance. For children with 95% or higher attendance, this will celebrate their achievement.

Attendance is kept high profile and is frequently a feature in the school's monthly newsletter.

From time-to-time the school will also use short term initiatives, such as Rise n Shine, to raise the profile of attendance and punctuality, and to encourage children to develop good attendance/punctuality habits.

The school's attendance policy is reviewed regularly and is monitored by the Headteacher and the Governors' Curriculum Committee.

April 2017