Name of Policy:

Attendance Policy

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Attendance Policy

The Government, through the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), has stated in its guidance (July 2008) that "Schools must remember that they can only approve absence for family holidays if they consider that there are special reasons which warrant the holiday."

The school is committed to developing and implementing a consistent and transparent set of standards and approaches which improve and maintain attendance in local schools. In support of this, the Attendance Advice Officer (AAO) attached to local schools help monitor and improve attendance by supporting families who are causing concern.

The Standard Policy

The standard policy, which comes into immediate effect, **states that no authorisation will be given for any family holidays taken during term time.** Authorisation will only be given for absence, other than illness and medical appointments, in Exceptional Circumstances; for example compassionate reasons. **A Penalty Notice may be issued to parents/carers who 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 Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer (AAIO)**. This will be considered if the attendance is below 90% and there are 5 days (or 10 sessions) of unauthorised sessions (this can be cumulative and does not need to be consecutive days) in the previous 3 months, which may include a pupil arriving late after close of registration.

Wallace Fields Junior School, along with other local schools and Surrey County Council, firmly believe that all pupils 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. Pupils are expected to achieve 100% attendance but when absence is unavoidable, parents/carers will be required to inform the school at the earliest opportunity.

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 they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or to be served with a fixed penalty notice.

In line with the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, all unexplained absences of 10 days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority. Schools are therefore required to report all absence figures to the local authority and the Department of Education 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.

Commitment to Attendance

The staff of Wallace Fields Junior School are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, students, governors and the Local Authority, to building a school which serves the community and of which the community is proud.

Regular attendance is key to: staying healthy, enjoying and achieving, keeping safe, contributing to the community, and social and economic well-being. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. We are committed to encouraging and supporting parents in ensuring their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

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 or Headteacher any problems preventing them from attending school.

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.

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 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 Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer (AAIO)
- fulfil, where possible, the requirements of the UN Convention – The Rights of the Child, by ensuring that children are consulted in all decisions that relate to them.

Parent Responsibility and the Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- To his age, ability and aptitude and
- To any special needs he may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

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

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

   - Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
   - Absences which have never been properly explained
   - Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
   - Excessive illness without medical evidence.

2. **Authorised absence**
   This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. **Approved Educational Activity**
   This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

   Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

   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

Registration & Lateness

The school day begins at 8.50 am.
Morning registration will take place at 8.55 am. The registers will remain open for 15 minutes and any child who arrives after the register has been taken but during the 15 minutes will be marked late (L).

Any pupil who arrives after the registers close at 9.10 am will be marked as late after close of registers (U), 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 authorized absence code will be entered. (See Appendix 1).

The afternoon registration will be taken at 1.15 pm. In cases of persistent late arrival to school, parents will be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher.

Reporting Absences

Absences should be reported to the school office (via the answer phone) before 9.15 am on the first day of absence and thereafter on a daily basis.
If the school is concerned about a child's absence we may request a doctor's appointment card after 3 days of illness. If this is not provided any further absences could be marked as unauthorised.

Dental and medical treatments

Whilst the school will grant requests for absence for dental and medical treatments**,** parents/carers are encouraged, whenever possible, to **book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day**. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the school office should be notified in advance in writing, of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected and/or returned to school. Evidence of the appointment may be requested.

If a child needs to attend an appointment during the school day parents are asked to sign their child in / out on the Pupil Signing In/Out register at reception.

Lateness

If pupils arrive after the close of the school gates at 8.52 am they will need to report to the school office and a late mark will be recorded in the register. This is to ensure that all pupils are accounted for in the case of a fire.

If pupils arrive at the school after the close of register (9.10 am), without a written explanation, it will be recorded as a late absence and be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session.

Escalation Process - 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:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 9.30 am, the school will endeavour to contact them as soon as possible after morning registration and before midday. The absence will be marked as unauthorised until the school receives a valid reason for absence.
- Parents will be informed that if the absence persists a referral will be made to the attached Educational Welfare Officer
- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the Attendance Advice & Intervention Office Welfare Service may result in further action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

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.

The Surrey Attendance Service meets with school staff on a regular basis to discuss attendance concerns.

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

1. Phone call to parent by the school
2. Letter sent to parents stating concerns
3. Meeting at school with the Headteacher.

If this is un-successful the school will refer to the Attendance Service.

Process followed:

100%

Outstanding attendance

No absences or lateness – Children awarded certificate for each term of 100% attendance



>97% attendance – less than 6 days absence a year

Excellent attendance



95% - 97% attendance – 10 days absence a year

Good attendance

Understood that some childhood illnesses will lead to children having time off



91% - 94% attendance

Needs improvement

- Children monitored and letter sent to explain importance of attendance.



86% - 90% attendance

Cause for concern

- Children in this category are missing at least a month of school a year
- This is classed as Persistent Absence & letter sent to parents / carers & referred to AAIO
- Parents / Carers will be asked to come in to school for a meeting to participate in developing an action plan to address the issues



81% - 85% attendance – 29 days absence a year

- Children are missing at least 6 weeks of school a year, i.e. half a term
- - Parents / Carers will be asked to come in to school for a meeting & will be referred to the Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer (AAIO) for follow-up meeting



<80% attendance – 38 days absence a year

- Children are missing a year of school over 5 years
- Will be referred to the AAIO

Persistent Absence (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 considerably damaging a child's educational prospects and we need parents' 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 pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Parents 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.

Exceptional Leave of Absence

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

Any savings that you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

1. It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
2. Graduates earn nearly double that of young people who leave school with no qualifications.

School will only authorise leave of absence in term time in exceptional circumstances.

If a holiday is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, Education Welfare will be notified and the parent may be liable to a Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notices

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 states that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Surrey Attendance 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 for a Penalty Notice and Consequences for repeat unauthorised absence:

1. If you have 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 you in the Magistrates Court.

2. If you have 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 against you in the Magistrates Court.

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

Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued

A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued to parents/carers who 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 Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer (AAIO). This will be considered if the attendance is below 90% and there are 10 or more unauthorised sessions (this need not be consecutive) in the previous 3 months, which may include a pupil arriving late after close of registration.

Late arrival after the close of registration on 7 occasions during a six-week period. The lateness will be recorded in accordance with the 'Registration and Lateness' section of this policy.

If you believe at any stage that your child's absence from school may leave you liable to receive a Penalty Notice, it is extremely important that you take action without delay to secure their regular attendance. If you have any questions or require further support to achieve an improvement, please contact the school or the Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer (AAIO).

Where a child is taken out of school for a holiday during term time for 5 days or 10 sessions (this need not be consecutive) or more without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** 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 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.

Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

With the exception of unauthorised holidays taken in term time, parents 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.

Truancy Patrol

When a student comes to the notice of a Truancy Patrol, the student's pattern of school attendance is investigated. If there are unauthorised absences in the preceding 4 months, a warning letter may be sent to the parent / carers. If there are further unauthorised absences during the subsequent 15 schooldays, a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent / carer.

If there is no significant improvement in attendance in the 3 subsequent weeks, a Penalty Notice will be issued. Again, the Penalty Notice fines are as listed above.

Changing School

It is important that if families decide to send the child in their care to a different school that they inform Wallace Fields Junior School staff as soon possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received,

- the dates the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next
- the address of the new school
- the new home address, if it is known.

School staff will then confirm with the parents the leaving date for their child. Following this date the pupil's school records and CTF will be sent on to the new school as soon as possible and within ten days of the child leaving. The Pupil Tracking Office at County Hall will also be sent appropriate information within ten days of anyone leaving or joining the school. If no notification is received

from a new school then the child's name will not be removed from the school roll until after an investigation by the Educational Welfare Service.

All unexplained absences of 10 days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority in line with the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

The Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer (AAIO)

Attendance Advice monitors the attendance of all children on a regular basis. The Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer (AAIO) will work with school staff and parents to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence.

If attendance problems cannot be resolved by school then the school will make a referral to Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer. The AAIO will try to resolve the situation but if attempts to improve attendance have failed, but unauthorised absence persists, the AAIO can use sanctions such as parenting 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.

Encouraging Attendance

Wallace Fields Junior School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- by providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- by responding promptly to a child or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- by accurate and punctual completion of registers during morning and afternoon registration (see Lateness).
- by publishing attendance statistics
- by celebrating good attendance
- by presenting 100% attendance certificates at the end of each term
- by giving class attendance prizes
- by informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, including lateness
- by if necessary arranging meetings with parents/carers
- by referring the families to the attached Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer if the irregular attendance continues
- The Headteacher will monitor pupils' attendance with the school office staff with the attached Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer.

School Organisation

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to pupils at all times. Parents/carers should also need to support the Educational Welfare Service in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the School has the following responsibilities:

Head Teacher, Governors and to the School Attendance lead:

- adopt the whole policy
- ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently in line with current legislation and that appropriate resources are provided
- ensure that all absences are coded correctly in line with DfE guidance
- initiate a scheme for contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence
- initiate contact with parents/carers in cases of unexplained absence and lateness before referring to the Educational Welfare Service (unless there is a justifiable cause for concern

when contact is required speedily, in which case immediate referral to the Educational Welfare Service may be necessary)

- ensure that key office staff have dedicated and protected time for liaison and follow up work with the attached Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer (AAIO)
- consult and liaise closely with the attached Educational Welfare Officer on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay
- to work in close collaboration with the attached Educational Welfare Officer during their termly/half termly register analysis ensuring agreed action is carried out
- to set whole school attendance targets and to publish attendance data in the educational Welfare Service letters
- monitor and evaluate attendance with the attached Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer

Office Staff:

- to oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually
- to record reasons for absence
- to consult and liaise closely with the attached Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer regularly
- to share any concerns expressed about attendance or disaffection that might lead to non attendance with the Headteacher and attached Attendance Advice & Intervention Officer
- to ask parents to sign in/out any child who leaves school for appointments on the Pupil Signing in / Signing out system at reception (Inventory)
- to follow up any unexplained non-attendance or lateness with the Headteacher

Class Teachers

- to complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily
- to inform the Headteacher of concerns
- to be alert to signs of disaffection that may lead to non-attendance and report them to the office staff or Headteacher