

PUPIL ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Review Period: Annually Status: Statutory Next Review: Spring 2023

2021/2022 Target – 95% (although official target has not been set by Inclusion Service)
2020/2021 Actual Attendance – 75.74% (this includes 2021 lockdown. Although attendance is low, the majority of pupils were learning remotely during lockdown so this attendance percentage does not reflect the actual student engagement)

The staff of Sunnydown School are committed, in partnership with the parents, pupils, governors and the Local Education Authority, to building a school which serves the community commendably, and of which the community is proud.

The school staff firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. Children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse and harm, exploitation and radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later on in life. Where possible, the school will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. To this end, we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. We also refer to the guidance on attendance set out at <https://www.gov.uk/schools-colleges/behaviour-attendance> - 'Behaviour and Attendance' section and also at <http://surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/at-school/attendance-and-absence>.

Covid-19 Pandemic Update (September 2021)

During enforced lockdowns, students studying at home were engaging in remote learning and offered live lessons.

Although lockdowns were nationwide, those more vulnerable students were able to attend school as all students at Sunnydown have an EHCP.

The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. We know that school is a vital point of contact for public health and safeguarding services that are critical to the wellbeing of children and families.

Lower academic achievement also translates into long-term economic costs due to having a less well-qualified workforce. This affects the standard of living that today's pupils will have over the course of their entire life. For many households school closures have also affected their ability to work. As the economy begins to recover, we need to remove this barrier so parents and carers can return to work.

In relation to working in schools, whilst it is not possible to ensure a totally risk-free environment, the Office of National Statistics' analysis on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) related deaths linked to occupations](#) suggests that staff in educational settings tend not to be at any greater risk from the disease than many other occupations. There is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults.

Given the improved position, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19).



The Government expects schools, Local Authorities and parents 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 to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly;
- ensure all pupils are punctual to their lessons.

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school regularly;
- attend school punctually;
- attend all of their timetabled lessons;
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day; and
- discuss promptly with their form tutor/class teacher any problems that discourage them from attending school.

We expect that all parents/carers who have day-to-day responsibility for the children will:

- encourage regular school attendance through working in partnership with the school and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that any child in their care arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- ensure that they contact the school whenever the child is unable to attend school (in advance if possible);
- contact the school on each day of the child's absence (by 9.30am), unless duration is confirmed in writing and send a note or email on their return to school explaining the absence;
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school;
- if your child accesses transport, parents will ensure they are ready for the agreed pick up time. All such arrangements are between family and transport, but it is important for the family to notify school of any changes as well;
- Notify the school immediately of any changes to contact details; and
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect behaviour and learning of your child.

We expect that school staff will:

- Meet at least once every half term with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality;
- Support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of high levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Provide a challenging and stimulating learning environment;
- Encourage excellent attendance and punctuality through our House Point system and attendance certificates;
- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily (pupils arriving late due to transport issues will not be penalised);
- monitor every pupil's attendance regularly and by publishing attendance statistics half termly;
- contact parents when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence. If we are unable to contact the primary contact, we will contact the secondary contact;
- provide a sympathetic response to any pupil or parent/carer concerns;
- ask for verification from a GP or other medical professional in the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions;

- inform parents in writing of irregular attendance, arrange meetings with them if necessary and refer the family to the Education Welfare Service if the irregular attendance continues;
- attendance below 90% triggers an automatic referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if absences are unauthorised. Attendance below 95% is monitored closely.

Attendance and Punctuality

School starts at 9.00am (9.30am on Mondays) BUT the school is open at 8.30am (9.00am on Mondays). Please try and have your child already in the school playground by 8.55am (9.25am on Mondays).

Children should not arrive before 8.30am as supervision is not available and we cannot accept responsibility for them. Children arriving after 9.00am will be given a late mark in the register (unless this is due to transport issues). Entry is then only gained by going to the front entrance of the school and reporting in to the school office.

Our Covid Contingency Plan has thorough instructions regarding changed arrival and departure times. During any implementation of our Covid Contingency Plan, all children are asked to wait in the main car park until a member of staff allows them entry to the school site. This is to enable social distancing and hand sanitising measures to be maintained.

Pupils leaving with a parent/carer for an appointment during the school day

Pupils are not allowed to leave with a parent/carer during the school day without prior permission from the Headteacher. Wherever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of the school day. Parents are requested to inform the school at least 24 hours in advance of an appointment that will require absence from school by sending an email to office@sunnydown.surrey.sch.uk. Parents/Carers must provide an appointment card or letter to support the absence, within 24 hours of the appointment taking place. Parents/Carers must sign out the pupil at the school office on leaving the school and sign back in on their return. Where a student is being collected from the school, parents/carers are requested to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.

Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances

Parents who wish to take their child out of school during term time must request a 'Leave of Absence' form whether it is for a day or longer. This should be returned to the school for the Headteacher's attention and as far in advance as possible. Permission for authorised leave of absence may be granted in exceptional circumstances only and NOT for holiday leave. The school is routinely checked to ensure that we are following these procedures.

Holidays

It is Sunnydown's policy not to authorise holidays in term time. However, in exceptional circumstances (this means being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time), the school may consider a request, providing the child has an attendance level of 96% or above. The normality will be that requests will be refused. We will not authorise any absence for pupils for Key Stage 4.

Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school, we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent by 10.30am, the school will endeavour to contact them that day. If the family is not reachable by telephone, a letter and ParentMail will be sent.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent. If by the end of the second day there has still been no contact (third day of waiting for a response to a letter), the school will send a letter of concern to parents or invite them into school to discuss their concerns. If the absence persists

or other concerns are raised, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) and possibly Children's Services.

- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the EWS may result in further action, an application for an Education Supervision Order or Court prosecution.
- Whilst it is understood that a child may have specific medical needs, the school reserves the right to seek evidence to support such absences.
- It is appreciated that there can be difficulties obtaining appointments with specialists, such as Orthodontists, but we do request that you endeavour to arrange these for out of school hours.

Recognition and Response

If a member of school staff becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they will try to establish with the parents what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the designated safeguarding teacher (DSL) will, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability.

From the first day that a child does not attend school and there is no explanation or authorisation of the absence, the following steps will be taken:

- A trained staff member will make contact with the parents to seek reassurance that the child is safe at home.
- The outcome of the contact should be assessed and if there are any concerns, a consultation with the school's designated safeguarding advisor will take place to consider the child's vulnerability.

In the following circumstances, a referral to children's social care and/or the police will always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime;
- The child is subject of a Child Protection plan;
- The child is subject of s47 enquiries;
- The child is looked after;
- There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;
- There is a history of the family moving frequently;
- There are serious issues of attendance.

Notifications and Actions in line with SSCB Requirements

Day one

If the answers to any of the points set out in the previous section indicates that there are concerns about the child's safety, then a referral should be made to the police and children's social care on day one. The education welfare service should be informed and requested to assist in locating the child.

Step one:

- Contact the local police station (24 hour response);
- Any suspicion/evidence of crime must be clearly stated;
- The circumstances and all available information regarding the child and family will be required.

Step two:

- The missing person report will be risk assessed and the local police response team will carry out immediate actions;
- The investigation will be progressed by the police response team, in conjunction with either the local Missing Person unit and/or the CID.

Step three:

- The missing person report will generate a notification to the police;
- The police will work with, and refer information to, LA children's social care;
- LA children's social care, who must be contacted as soon as possible in these circumstances, will also liaise with the Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) in order to identify, and act upon, any suspicion of child abuse or child related crime.

Step four:

- The school will work in collaboration with Children's social care and the police and a safeguarding education representative will participate in any strategy discussions, s47 enquiries and Child Protection Conferences which may arise.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send a child in their care to a different school, they inform Sunnydown School staff and their Case Officer as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until all are satisfied that the child is accepted onto the roll of an alternative, appropriate school.

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 the pupils at all times. Parents need to support these views 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:

Headteacher, governors and designated member of school staff with overall responsibility for attendance to:

- adopt the whole policy;
- ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided;
- initiate a scheme for contacting parents on the first day of absence;
- ensure that key staff have timetabled periods for liaison and follow-up work with the EWS and appropriate access to attendance data;
- consult and liaise closely with the EWS on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay;
- work in close collaboration with the EWS during the half termly register analysis;
- Advise Form Tutors every half term of their class attendance figures and individual pupil attendance figures;
- institute an attendance award scheme with assemblies, certificates and rewards; and
- monitor and evaluate attendance with the EWS.

Form Tutors to:

- complete registers accurately and punctually at least **twice** daily;
- follow up any unexplained non-attendance and inform the school office of all reasons for absences so they can be recorded in the School Information Management System (SIMS); and
- inform the designated person in charge of overall attendance and report these concerns as soon as possible to the Senior Leadership Team.

Penalty Notices

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 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 for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued:

- Pupils identified by Police and Education Welfare Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 states 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 5 days 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.