1. **Introduction**

Regular and punctual attendance at school is essential if pupils are to receive the full benefits of the education system. The school is therefore committed to promoting regular attendance by all pupils and to working in partnership with parents to achieve this aim.

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Although the principal responsibility for ensuring regular attendance rests with parents, schools also have specific responsibilities with regard to attendance. These include the day-to-day administration of registration, monitoring attendance, reporting rates of absence and taking appropriate action to improve attendance.

The aim of this policy is to clarify for parents, staff and governors the school's procedures and practices regarding attendance, absence and lateness. By implementing the policy we would also expect to reduce rates of authorised and unauthorised absence and improve the punctuality of pupils.

1.1 **Levels of attendance**

Attendance may be affected by a number of factors, and most children will go through periods when their attendance is lower than usual due to illness or other reasons. 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 will be expected to achieve 100% attendance but when absence is unavoidable, parents/carers will be required to inform the school at the earliest opportunity.

2. **Authorised Absence**

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not the parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is required. All schools complete an annual return which details the overall levels of authorised and unauthorised absence in the school. Unauthorised absences are those which the school, operating within DfE and LA guidelines, does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given.

In deciding whether absences should be authorised, each case will be considered on its merits and in accordance with the guidelines established in this policy. The same principles will be applied in each case, although it is recognised that different factors (such as family circumstances and the child's attendance record) will also apply and may affect the decision.

Attendance is monitored on a regular basis, both by the school and the Education Welfare Officer, and parents will be contacted if there is a pattern of absence, either authorised or unauthorised, or if there is persistent lateness.

When a pupil is absent at the time of registration, the law requires all schools to indicate in their registers whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. An absence may be authorised if it has been approved in advance by the school or if it falls into one of the categories listed below. It is essentially a morning, afternoon or
day away from school for a good reason. No absence from school is ever automatically authorised.

Absences cannot be authorised by parents - only the school can do this. Notification of an absence by parents does not in itself guarantee that the absence will be authorised. Absences for the reasons listed below are more likely to be authorised, provided that parents provide an adequate explanation:

2.1 Illness

Absence through illness is the most common reason for pupils to be away from school, and such absence is authorised when parents provide confirmation of the illness. Absence through illness cannot be authorised if the only confirmation received is from the pupil.

In cases where absence through illness is excessively high or where there is a continuing pattern of such absence, this will be discussed with the parents.

2.2 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.

2.3 Religious observance

If a pupil is absent on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the family belongs, this absence may be authorised. This includes festivals.

2.4 Attending an interview

If a pupil attends an interview or makes a visit in connection with applying for a place at, or transferring to, another school, this absence may be authorised provided that prior notice is given.

2.5 Traveller absence

The special position of traveller families is recognised by the law, which protects traveller parents from prosecution if they can demonstrate that the child's absence is due to the nature of the trade or business of the family. This includes seasonal migration, and such absences may be authorised provided that the parents have indicated every intention of returning.

2.6 Absence for a public performance

Absence for amateur productions and one-off performances may be authorised at the school's discretion. Children's involvement in professional work is regulated by the LA under the Children (Performances) Regulations 1968, and parents must apply for a licence from the LA before an absence may be authorised.
2.7 Family Bereavement

The school will respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals. If the funeral takes place some distance away this will be accounted for in terms of the number of days to be authorised. This would be authorised under the category of ‘exceptional circumstances’.

2.8 Other circumstances and special occasions

There may be other occasions when absence from school is requested, and much will depend on the circumstances of the particular case in determining whether such absences are authorised. In general, only absence through exceptional circumstances or because of very special occasions will be authorised. In considering each case, the school will consider:

- the nature of the event;
- its frequency (i.e. is it a ‘one-off’ or is it likely to become a regular event;
- the overall attendance pattern of the child.

2.9 Holidays during term time

All holiday taken during term time will be considered to be unauthorised. Any appeal will be heard by the Governing Body, whose decision will be final.

2.10 Request for leave of absence

All requests for leave will be considered on a case by case basis by the Governing Body that will usually delegate these decisions to the Headteacher. Again, the decision of the Governing Body will be final. If a family needs to request absence in term-time then an Application for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances Form must, wherever possible, be completed prior to the leave date and preferably at least two weeks before. This form can be obtained from the website, the school office or by writing to the Headteacher.

Holidays taken without the permission of the Governing Body may result in legal action being taken against each parent, see Penalty Notices.

3. Unauthorised and Persistent Absence

3.1 Unauthorised absence

Absences are 'unauthorised' when they are either unexplained or unjustified. Unauthorised absences are those which, in general, do not fall into any of the categories listed in section 2.

Examples of absence which would not normally be authorised include:

- a day out or a birthday treat;
- visiting relatives (unless as granted under 2.7 or 2.8)
- going shopping
- looking after another child, a parent or keeping a family member company
Lateness after the close of the register may also be recorded as an unauthorised absence if no acceptable reason for the lateness is provided.

In determining whether absences should be authorised or not, each case will be considered on its individual merits and with reference to the principles outlined above.

3.2 Persistent absence

Persistent absence is defined as absence, whether authorised or unauthorised, of 10% or more. In ‘real terms’ this is the equivalent of 1 day’s absence from school per fortnight, and children with such low attendance are those who are least likely to benefit from school and whose attainment is likely to be lower. The school and EWO regularly monitor attendance, and will discuss with parents if their child’s attendance is causing concern.

There may be a number of factors which contribute to low attendance, and for some children their attendance may only be very low for a short period of time, for example due to illness. Although the attendance of these children is still tracked, it is those children whose attendance is low over a period of time who cause most concern and for whom a referral to the Education Welfare Service is likely to be made. The EWO, school and other support services will work closely with families with the aim of improving attendance.

4. Approved Educational Activities

Pupils who are engaged in programmed educational activities cannot be marked present since they are not on site. However, school visits, field trips, approved sporting activities and work experience are classified as 'approved educational activities' and do not, for the purposes of registration, count as absence. To qualify for authorisation under this category, activities would normally be attended by a member of staff or another individual authorised by the school.

5. Punctuality and Lateness

If children are late for school on a regular basis it can be very disruptive, not only for the children who are late but also for the rest of the class. If patterns of regular lateness are observed this will be referred to the Headteacher, who may also discuss the case with the Education Welfare Officer.

Registers are completed by class teachers, usually within the first five minutes of the morning or afternoon sessions, and if children arrive after the register is completed they will receive a late mark. There is a difference between children who arrive just after the register is completed and those who arrive some time into the morning session without an explanation for their lateness. The register is officially ‘closed’ at 9.30am and children arriving after that time will be recorded as late, with a note being made of the time of arrival. If no adequate explanation for the lateness is given by the parents, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
6. **Registration**

Registers are an important legal document and all staff involved in registration (teaching and administrative staff) complete registers clearly, to an agreed school format and with a common understanding of the definitions of authorised and unauthorised absence.

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. 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.

7. **Responding to Non-Attendance**

**Initial actions**

If a child is ill or will be absent for another reason, parents are asked to telephone the school as early as possible on the morning of the first day of absence, giving the child's name, class, the reason for the absence and the expected date of return. This will be recorded in a book in the school office and this information will be used to complete the register. Parents may follow this up with a note if they wish.

**First Day Calling Procedure**

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

1. Class registers are completed by teachers and returned to the School Office by 9.05am.
2. Teachers mark absent pupils with an ‘O’ in the register.
3. Pupils arriving late must enter through the front door and sign in at the school office. The pupil’s attendance is updated by the office staff and given code ‘L’ (arriving after 9.00am) or ‘U’ (arriving after 9:30am).
4. Emails, ParentMail and the school voicemail are checked for communication from parents regarding absence.
5. Office staff check with class teachers that those marked as absent have not since arrived.
6. Office staff attempt to telephone the parent / carers on the pupil’s contact list. Initially trying all contact numbers for the first named parent / carer and then all contact numbers for the second named parent / carer. Where there is no answer, the office staff will leave a message asking the parent / carer to contact the school regarding the pupil’s absence.
7. Office staff check with present siblings (if applicable) of the absent pupil if reason for absence is known.
8. At 9.45am, if no response has been received, the office staff will attempt to telephone the other contacts on the pupil’s contact list.
9. At 10.00am, if no response has been received, inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead of absence.
10. Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead risk assess a home visit.
11. Home visit to be made if appropriate by school staff (as a pair) or other agency already involved with the pupil.
12. If no contact is made after all steps are completed, Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead contacts police by phoning 101 to initiate a ‘safe and well’ check.

Notification by another child (e.g. a sibling), or by the child on their return, is not acceptable for the purposes of authorising an absence. Notification must come from a parent.

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 a 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.

Persistent Absence (PA)
A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Any absence has an impact on a child’s educational achievement and we need parents’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

8. The Role of the Education Welfare Service

The school has an attached Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who visits the school on a regular basis. The principal role of the EWO is to ensure regular attendance through working closely with schools in identifying attendance and behavioural problems. The Education Welfare Service also has more general responsibilities for the welfare of children, and the EWO therefore has an important role in liaising between various agencies.

The EWO will monitor registers and record:

- patterns of illness or other authorised absence which may be causing concern
- any instances of unauthorised and/or persistent absence (above the occasional day)
- any patterns of persistent lateness

The EWO will then liaise with the school and decide if any action is required. This may include home visits to offer support and guidance. In cases where there is persistent poor attendance (without justification), the Education Welfare Service is empowered to commence legal proceedings on behalf of the Local Authority.

8.1 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/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.

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 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 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.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where attendance has fallen below 90% and there are no less than 10 unauthorised session 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.

9. **Roles and Responsibilities**

**All Staff**
- to encourage good attendance and punctuality.

**Governing Body and Headteacher**
- to promote the attendance policy and ensure that it is implemented effectively.

**Attendance Officer –**
- to check pupil registers
- to monitor pupil attendance on a regular basis
- to meet the education welfare officer on a half-termly basis
## Appendix - Register Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>School Meaning</th>
<th>Statistical Meaning</th>
<th>Physical Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Present / = am \ = pm</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>In for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Educated off site</td>
<td>Approved Educational Activity</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Other authorised circumstances</td>
<td>Authorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Dual Registration (attending the other establishment)</td>
<td>Approved Educational Activity</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td>Authorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Holiday not authorised or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher</td>
<td>Unauthorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Holiday authorised by the school</td>
<td>Authorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Illness (not med/dental appointments)</td>
<td>Authorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Approved Educational Activity</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Late (before register closes)</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Late for session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Medical/dental appointments</td>
<td>Authorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>No reason yet provided for absence</td>
<td>Unauthorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code)</td>
<td>Unauthorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Approved sporting activity</td>
<td>Approved Educational Activity</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Religious observance</td>
<td>Authorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Study Leave</td>
<td>Authorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence</td>
<td>Authorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Late (after register closes)</td>
<td>Authorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Educational visit or trip</td>
<td>Approved Educational Activity</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>Approved Educational Activity</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>DfE #: Non-compulsory school age absence</td>
<td>Attendance not required</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>Attendance not required</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Pupil not on admission register</td>
<td>Authorised Absence</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Planned whole or partial school closure</td>
<td>Attendance not required</td>
<td>Out for whole session</td>
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</tbody>
</table>