



GODSTONE VILLAGE SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY STATEMENT

The Governors and staff of Godstone Village School are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, pupils and Local Authority, to building a school which serves the local community.

Regular attendance is key to achieving these outcomes: 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. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. As a school, we will encourage parents/carers to ensure that 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 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.
- Contact the school office by 9.20am 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 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

Punctuality/ Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial and registration at the beginning of the day with the class teacher is one of the most important periods of the day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other students in the class. It is paramount therefore that all students arrive to school on time.

- Children are able to enter the school from 8.40am
- Registration takes place at 8.50am and students who arrive after this will be recorded as late
- A record sheet is kept in the office specifically for parents to sign in their child, if they are late. If a child walks into the school unaccompanied, they will have to sign themselves into school.
- Registers close at 9.20am and after this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence for the morning session
- Persistent lateness by a student will be investigated and an appropriate action taken in conjunction with the parents and if there is no further improvement may be referred to Education Welfare.

Procedures

The names of all pupils attending the school are entered in the School Admissions Register. The destination of each pupil is also entered in the Admissions Register when they leave the school. Details are also entered and sent electronically.

The presence or absence of all pupils is recorded on a class Attendance Register Sheet at the beginning of every morning and afternoon session. A clear distinction is made between '**authorised absence**' (an absence for exceptional circumstances which has been authorised by the Head Teacher) and '**unauthorised absence**' (absence without leave). All absences are coded in line with Local Authority requirements.

Information on rates of unauthorised absence and late arrivals is included on children's annual reports. Statistics are also included in the School Profile.

New parents are reminded of their responsibilities regarding school attendance, and reminders are issued to all parents when necessary.



Parents are expected to inform the school by 9.20am on the first day of absence and then on a daily basis by 9.20am until the child returns to school. This can be done by leaving a message on the school answer phone or via Parentmail. However if the illness is 3 consecutive days or more, you must contact the school by telephone. A book is kept in the office specifically for the purpose of noting absences. If school is not informed about the reason for absence, a member of the administrative staff contacts the parents. The child will be marked as having unauthorised absence until a reason is given for absence. Parents may be requested to provide medical documentation if a child is absent from school.

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 should be notified 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.

Requests for leave of absence during term time - Every effort is made to ensure that parents realise the potential educational consequences of such absences during term time, and term time holiday absences are not authorised except in exceptional circumstances.

Parents must complete the “Application for Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances” and send to the Head Teacher at last 2 weeks prior to the requested absence.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance

The Local Authority retains control of the Education Welfare Service, and every effort is made to maintain close links with the Education Welfare Officer attached to the school. Where school interventions have failed to secure regular attendance, an official referral may be made to the Education Welfare Officer.

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.



Circumstances when a Penalty Notices 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 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 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 90% 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 and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Above all, missing school seriously affects 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.

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