

St Ann's Heath Junior School

Attendance Policy

The school is committed to safeguarding, child protection and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all members of the school and its community to demonstrably share this commitment. We aim to foster good relations between all members of the school community ensuring they are treated equally and without prejudice.

Introduction

St Ann's Heath Junior School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

The school aims to provide a safe, caring, well-ordered environment, which allows the best possible teaching and learning to take place.

The school is committed to giving the highest priority to attendance and punctuality as well as meeting its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Regular attendance is considered to be attending school on each day the school is open for students unless there is an authorised reason to be absent.

Parental responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that the child is safe and their whereabouts known. Parents should update the school each day their child is absent and inform the school when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.50am. All pupils who arrive late must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness will be recorded.

Encouraging attendance

St Ann's Heath School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- by providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- by marking registers accurately and punctually at morning and afternoon registration
- by communicating with parents quickly when attendance could become an issue

- by publishing and displaying attendance statistics (e.g. class attendance figures displayed in the school newsletter)
- by celebrating good and improved attendance and punctuality (e.g. awarding certificates)
- by responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- by referring to school's pastoral support when necessary

The role of school staff

At St. Ann's Heath Junior School, there is a whole school approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Co-Head Teachers have overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers complete registers at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present or absent. The class teacher will notify the school office or Co-Head Teachers of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the school's attendance officer, to ensure:

- attendance and lateness records are up to date
- if no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence
- where there has been no communication, follow up calls are made requesting reasons for absence
- the appropriate attendance code is entered in the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- parents are informed regularly of their child's attendance figures

School procedures

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. The attendance registers will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and again at the start of the first session of the afternoon.

Registers for the first session open at 8.40 and will be kept open until 9.20. Registers for the afternoon session will be taken at 13.20 and will be kept open until 13.30.

When a pupil does not attend school and parents fail to notify the school by 9.20am, we will respond in the following manner:

- the school will endeavour to contact the parents/ carers
- if there is no response, the school will continue to try to make contact, utilising all contact numbers we hold, via phone, text or email

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is authorised or not and record the absence with the correct attendance codes.

Lateness

At St Ann's Heath Junior School, the school gates open at 8.30am with children going into class at 8.40am when registers are open. The school day starts at 8.50am and gates to the playground will be

closed at this time. If pupils arrive after this time, they must enter school by the main entrance and report to the school office. They will be recorded as late before registers have closed (L).

The morning register remains open until 9.20. Children arriving after this time will be recorded as 'late after close of register' which counts as unauthorised absence (U) for that session.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Medical/Dental appointments during term time

We encourage parents to make medical or dental appointments out of school time where possible. Where an appointment during school time is unavoidable, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The school will grant requests for absence for dental and medical treatments during school time when these are unavoidable. The school should be notified in advance of the date and time of the appointment including when the child will be collected and returned to the school office via the Studybugs app. Evidence of the appointment (screenshot of appointment or copy of appointment letter) should be emailed to the school at admin@stannsheatheath.org.

Unplanned absence

Parents must notify school on the first day of an unplanned absence, for example if their child is unable to attend due to ill health, by 9.20 or as soon as practically possible. This can either be by using the Studybugs app or by phoning the school office.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

Timeline for managing poor attendance

95% - 100% attendance – under review through regular attendance monitoring

90 – 95% attendance – school intervention letters/ meetings with parents

Where the level of absence does not improve, the school will make a referral to Surrey Inclusion Service. For cases that require intensive family support or Early Help, the school may make a request for support via Surrey C-SPA.

Persistent Absenteeism

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) if their attendance falls below 90% at any point across the school year. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and parents' fullest support and co-operation is needed to tackle this.

All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the 'Persistent Absence' mark or is at risk of moving towards the mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately. The school may also refer to their Inclusion Officer.

Requests for leave of absence during term time

Only the Co-Head Teachers can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Co-Head Teachers are not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself, authorise an absence.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Co-Head Teacher's discretion.

If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example, leave for holidays) during term time, can only be approved in 'exceptional circumstances'. The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/ unwell
- absence of siblings if one child is ill
- oversleeping
- inadequate clothing/ uniform
- confusion over school dates
- medical/ dental appointments of more than half a day, without very good reason
- child's / family birthday
- shopping trips
- family holidays (with some rare exceptions)

The school holiday dates are published well in advance and are available from the school office and on the school website. There are 190 school days each year and 175 days of holidays/weekends, therefore all family holidays need to be booked within the school holiday dates. Family holidays are not deemed exceptional circumstances. In line with the Government's amendments to the 2006 regulations, holidays during term time will NOT be authorised. Please note that any absences for illness that runs before or after school holidays or any holiday absence will not be authorised without medical evidence. Unauthorised absence of 5 days or more, may result in a penalty notice.

Changing Schools

It is important that if a parent/ carer decides to send their child to a different school, they must inform St Ann's Heath Junior School in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next
- the name and address of the new school
- the new home address, if known

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Co-Head Teachers and the Inclusion Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority Guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:

- if the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/ her.
- the family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (CTF - pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Penalty Notices

The Inclusion 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, which will require 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 consider a prosecution for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued

- Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions (5 days) or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the Co-Head Teachers, **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 made aware 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 a pupil has incurred 7 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school of Inclusion Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrivals after the close of registration without good reason.
- Pupils identified by Police and Surrey Inclusion Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences could be issued with a penalty notice.

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.

Monitoring and Reviewing

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Co-Head Teachers and Governors through the Learning Committee to evaluate its implementation and effectiveness. This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if the need arises. This policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

Policy Status	
Agreed by Governors	March 2023
Next Review Date	July 2025