



## **Attendance Policy 2023 - 2024**

**Policy Originator:** Headteacher

**Status:** Non-Statutory

**Review Period:** Annually

**Date:** October 2023

**Next review date:** October 2024

The governing body of Shalford Infant School has chosen to adopt the following Surrey County Council policy.

The Local Authority firmly believes that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. We know that every day lost to education can have a serious impact on children's attainment and overall progress in school. As a school we do all we can to encourage parents and carers to ensure that the children in our care 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.

### **Key Objectives**

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school regularly;
- attend school punctually;
- attend school appropriately prepared for the school day

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- ensure that their child attends school and is aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that the child in their care arrives at school punctually, prepared for the school day;
- contact the school on the first day of the child's absence and send a note on their return to school confirming the reason for absence;
- discuss promptly with their child's class teacher or head teacher, any problems that deter their child from attending school;
- not take holidays in term time.

We expect that the school staff will:

- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily;
- monitor every child's attendance;

- contact parents as soon as possible when unexplained and/or prolonged absence occurs and obtain notes authorising the absence.
- encourage good attendance and punctuality;
- provide a welcoming and safe learning environment for children;
- meet with the school's Inclusion Officer regularly to discuss any new concerns and report on the progress of existing cases;
- meet with the parents of children whose attendance causes concern;
- refer children whose attendance is an on-going concern, despite their best efforts to resolve the situation, to the Inclusion Officer for additional ongoing support and guidance
- work with the Inclusion Officer and follow his/her advice once cases are referred to ensure that the legal process to address attendance concerns can be implemented if necessary

## **Legislation & Guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## **School Procedures**

### **Attendance Register**

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 register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

## Responding to Non-Attendance

- When a pupil does not attend school, the parent/carer must notify Shalford on the first day of an unplanned absence. For example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health. If no note, email or telephone call is received on the first day of absence from the parent/carer, the school will endeavour to contact them that day via a telephone call.
- If there is no response to this call, the school will continue to try and contact the parent/carer and other emergency contacts if they are not answering their phone. If after 2 days the school have not spoken to a parent/carer or emergency contact to explain the absence, the office will inform the Head Teacher and further investigation and action will be made accordingly;
- Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily and will always be discussed with the Inclusion Officer before being requested. 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 in advance.
- 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 the school day. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the school office should be notified in advance in writing. Evidence of the appointment may be requested. Parents are asked to remove the child only for the duration of the appointment.
- The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.
- If there is persistent non-attendance, the school will keep records of the contact with home during the period of absence and this will be discussed with the Inclusion Officer when a formal referral may be made. If a child's attendance is below 85% with 7 unauthorised sessions in a 6-week period, the school are able to make a referral to the local Inclusion Team. The school will discuss any attendance concerns with the Inclusion Officer even where this threshold hasn't been met.

## Child Missing in Education (CME)

Children Missing Education (CME) refer to all children who are of compulsory school age and are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision).

In Surrey, a school refers a pupil to the Local Authority for further investigation if s/he has been continually absent for more than 10 school days without permission and the school has carried out reasonable checks and failed to establish the child's whereabouts and the reason for absence.

If a child continues to be missing from school for 20 days and the school and LA have exhausted enquires and has been unable to locate the pupil and his/her family, under the regulations, it is permissible for the child's name to be removed from the school roll and details of the child to be uploaded to the DFE Lost Pupil Database. Shalford Infant & Nursery School would only remove a child from roll in this way if confirmed by the LA.

## **Responding to Lateness**

- When a pupil is late for school they should enter the building via the front office so that they can be recorded as being present.
- Registers open at 8.40am. Children will be recorded as being late if they arrive after 8:55am but before 9.30am when the registers close.
- Any child arriving after close of register time (9.30am) will be recorded as late after close of register (U coded) and this denotes an unauthorised absence.
- A monthly late report is compiled by the office staff and given to the Head to analyse.
- Persistent lateness will be monitored and letters sent to parents to inform them of learning time lost. If lateness remains a problem and this lateness is after close of register a referral may be made to the Inclusion Team.

## **Request for Leave of Absence**

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance by Learning Partners Academy Trust and parents/carers are expected to book their family holidays during those times. Leave of absence will not be granted for holidays to be taken in term time.

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. In exceptional circumstance, when leave in term times is unavoidable, a leave of absence request form must be completed as soon as possible once the dates of the proposed period of absence are known. The leave of Absence Request Form can be obtained from the school office.

No parent/carers can demand leave of absence for their child as a right. If leave is taken, without prior authorisation, the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the school register. The Headteacher will decide whether or not to authorise the absence having decided whether or not the circumstances are exceptional. Should absence be taken without the Headteacher's authorisation the case may be referred to the Local Authority and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1<sup>st</sup> 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. The Head Teacher will decide whether or not to authorise the absence having decided whether or not the circumstances are exceptional.

Should absence be taken without the Head Teacher's authorisation, parents may be issued with a penalty notice as a result (see Penalty Notice below).

In the event of a pupil having unauthorised leave of absence for a period in excess of 20 days parents should be aware that there is a risk that the child might be taken off roll.

## **Changing School**

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform school staff 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 address of the new school;
- the new home address (if appropriate and known).

The pupils' school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Inclusion Team.

## **Legal Sanction**

The Inclusion Team, 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.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. 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 Penalty Notices may be issued**

- 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. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:
- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as multiple holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- 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. 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 may be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.
- 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.**

## **Penalty Notices relating to Exclusions**

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. The amount payable is stated above.

## **Attendance Monitoring**

At Shalford we regularly discuss the attendance of pupils falling below 95%. We look at each child's individual attendance reports to ascertain the nature of the absence. In particular, the team monitor the persistent absence list. The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. Once the nature of absences has been ascertained, the team will decide as how to

support the child in attending school regularly (action taken is made on a case by case basis.) This could include: a meeting with a parent/carer, a warning letter regarding or referral to the local Inclusion Team.

Parents will be informed on a regular basis of their child's attendance when it is a cause for concern.

We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors annually.

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered.
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer / educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit / trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>Authorised Absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/Dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school.

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised Abs	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exception circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local / national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admissions register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term / bank holiday / INSET day



## APPENDIX 2

### ***Letter sent to parents to inform them of their child's attendance when >95%***

Dear Parents,

Attached to this letter is a print out of your child's current registration certificate. We hope that this information helps you feel more informed about your child's attendance and absence.

If you would like to discuss the contents of this letter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Dutton  
Headteacher

## APPENDIX 3

### ***Letter sent to parents to inform them of their child's attendance when <95%***

Dear XXXXXXXX

The Surrey Inclusion Officer visited the school recently to carry out a review of pupil absence for the year so far.

We need your help, please. {Pupil Name} has been absent for {#} days of school, which is equal to {#} lessons missed so far this school year.

We know that sometimes our pupils cannot come to school because they are really unwell - and that's the right thing to do for them and other students. Medical advice is clear however that children with mild illness will often be well enough to attend - for example if they have a cough, or cold, without a temperature. The NHS guidance [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/when-to-call-the-doctor/) is designed to support parents in their decision making about mild illness.

We also know that pupils fall behind their friends and classmates when they miss school. At Shalford Infant & Nursery School we want the amount of missed education to be reduced as much as possible. We believe that our community is stronger together, with all of our pupils in school, on time, every day. We are building life skills, life-long friendships and preparing your child for future success.

We also know that you can have a significant effect on {Pupil Name} absences this academic year and we would really appreciate your help and support ensuring that {Pupil Name} comes to school every day so that they can get the best possible outcomes. We want to work with you to achieve this – please call or come in and meet {Pupil Name}'s class teacher if there is anything we can do to support you or your child. We appreciate that every family's situation is unique.

We will be in touch again to request a meeting with you if we have ongoing concerns about your child's absence.

Kind regards,



Michelle Dutton  
Headteacher

#### **APPENDIX 4**

##### ***Letter sent to parents to inform them of their child's attendance when <90% (VERSION 1)***

Dear XXXXXXXX

Child: XXXXXXXX

The Surrey Inclusion Officer visited the school recently to carry out a review of pupil absence for the year so far.

Please find attached a record of your child's absence. Please be aware that your child's absence has increased to **XX.XX%** which is a cause for concern.

Children with an absence rate of 10% or above are classed as 'persistent absentees' by the Department for Education. For some parents, 10% may seem like an acceptable level of absence, but the reality is that 10% absence means that your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that's nearly 4 school weeks.

Please avoid taking your child out of school or keeping **him/her** at home unless he or she is really poorly. We know that sometimes our pupils cannot come to school because they are really unwell - and that's the right thing to do for them and other students. Medical advice is clear however that children with mild illness will often be well enough to attend - for example if they have a cough, or cold, without a temperature. The NHS guidance [is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/when-to-call-the-doctor/) is designed to support parents in their decision making about mild illness.

Should there be any issues of which the school is not aware or should you require assistance in improving your child's attendance please contact me to discuss.

Kind regards,



Michelle Dutton  
Headteacher

## APPENDIX 5

### ***Letter sent to parents to inform them of their child's attendance when <90% (VERSION 2)***

Dear XXXXXXXX

Child: XXXXXXXX

The Surrey Inclusion Officer visited the school recently to carry out a review of pupil attendance for the year so far.

Please find attached a record of your child's absence. Please be aware that your child's absence has increased to **XX.XX%** which is a cause for concern.

Children with an absence rate of 10% or above are classed as 'persistent absentees' by the Department for Education. For some parents, 10% may seem like an acceptable level of absence, but the reality is that 10% absence means that your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that's nearly 4 school weeks.

I would like to notify you that we will be unable to authorise any further absence due to sickness unless accompanied by evidence such as an appointment from the doctors.

I will be monitoring XXXXXXXX's absence and hope to see an improvement. If an improvement does not occur then the school will need to consult with the Surrey Inclusion Officer as to the appropriate next steps.

Should there be any issues of which the school is not aware or should you require assistance in improving your child's absence please contact me to discuss.

Kind regards,



Michelle Dutton  
Headteacher