

Attendance Policy

Introduction

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, regular school attendance is essential. We will consistently work with parents and pupils to achieve our expectation of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving the goals set. This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

School Procedures

Any child who is absent from school at morning or afternoon registration must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Head Teacher or another person 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.

Responsibilities of school staff:

- ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities
- liaise with the attendance lead/HT on matters of attendance and punctuality
- communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence via CPOMS
- support pupils who have been absent to engage with their learning once they are back in school
- inform parents of the attendance of their children
- work alongside the school's assigned Education Welfare Officer to monitor and review pupil attendance and meet the school's attendance targets

Responsibilities of pupils:

- attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence such as being required to isolate due to having tested positive for Covid-19
- arrive in school on time

Responsibilities of parents/carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- encourage regular school attendance by supporting the values of good attendance at home and to be aware of their legal responsibilities
- inform the school by telephone on the first day of their child's absence by 9.30am and on any subsequent days
- alert the school office of any planned absences/medical procedures well in advance
- support the school with their child in achieving 100% attendance each year
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request a leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually and that they are prepared for the school day (including extra-curricular activities)
- escort their child to the school office and ensure they are registered if they arrive late
- if requested, provide medical evidence as proof of illness
- if requested, attend meetings regarding absence and lateness with school staff
- if requested, attend meetings regarding attendance with the assigned Education Welfare Officer

Education Welfare Officer – EWO

To help make sure that every child goes to school regularly and gets an appropriate education, each school has an education welfare officer who can act on enquiries from schools, other organisations, parents and members of the public. Where a child's absence from school gives cause for concern, the education welfare officer works with everyone involved to create an action plan supporting full-time attendance and will stay involved until this is achieved. Legal action may be taken to ensure your child attends school.

Lateness

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of registration will be treated, for statistical purposes, as present but will be coded as late before registers close (L). Arrival after registers close will be marked as unauthorised absence (U). At Burhill the registers are taken at 8:55am close at 9.25am.

First Day Absence

Parents are expected to contact the school by 9:30am via studybugs or if this is not possible, via telephone leaving an appropriate message or in an email to office@burhill.surrey.sch.uk. This information will be collated and the registers adjusted to reflect the information. If no call is received, a phone call home will be made, usually by 10:30am.

Subsequent Days Absence

You do not need to contact the school every day if you have already told us that your child will be away for a specified number of days. If however, you have not informed us already, please follow the same process of notification as for the first day of absence.

Covid-19

If your child has symptoms of Covid-19, you must notify the school and they must stay at home. The symptoms include a high temperature (37.8C), a new continuous cough (this means coughing a lot, for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24hours) and a loss or change to sense of smell and taste. Parents must arrange for a PCR test to be taken and the results of the test must be shared with school in a timely manner by emailing office@burhill.surrey.sch.uk. If the test result comes back negative, your child can return to school if they are feeling well enough. If a child develops symptoms throughout the course of the school day, they will be taken to an isolation bay and the parents will be required to collect their child immediately.

Frequent and Continuing Absence

A courtesy phone call will be made if your child continues to be absent if you have not notified us further. In cases where a student begins to develop a pattern of lateness or absence, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/s. The school will seek advice from their linked Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Persistent Absence

If your child's attendance falls below 90% across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child's attendance level is falling towards 90% after the first half term and is not as a result of isolating due to Covid-19, we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, may ask for medical evidence or suggest a meeting with the head teacher or relevant staff member. Should attendance continue to be below the expected level, a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Officer.

Absence notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence will be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the student that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

Promoting attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education. The school will be particularly sensitive to the need to support families where attendance issues are related to a pupil's special needs.

Request for absence in term time

Request for absence during term time are actively discouraged. Parents will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a student's potential achievement. The head teacher will not authorise term time absences, except in very exceptional circumstances. If the absence is unavoidable and exceptional a decision as to whether to authorise the absence will be made with regard to the following:

- the child's record of attendance;
- the length of the absence requested
- the circumstances surrounding the request for absence
- the timing of the absence and ensuring that it would not prevent the child from missing any important examinations/assessments.

PLEASE NOTE: holidays are not deemed exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised.

Parents wishing to make a leave request should complete a Leave Request Form, available in the parents' document library on the school website. Completed forms should be emailed to office@burhill.surrey.sch.uk.

Understanding types of absence

Students are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

1. **Authorised absence** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory. Absences for the following reasons are more likely to be authorised:

- Illness, medical or dental treatment
- Family bereavement

- Religious observance
- Requirement to isolate whilst awaiting the results of a PCR test following showing symptoms of COVID-19 or testing positive on a LFD test
- Requirement to isolate due to a confirmed case of COVID-19

(see Appendix 1 for further examples).

2. **Unauthorised absence** is when the school has not received a valid reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school following a parent's request. This includes parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings or absences which have not been explained. If you do not request and/or receive permission to take your child out of school and do so regardless, your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school we suspect that they have been on holiday. The school reserves the right to ask for medical evidence of an illness as stated by the parent/carers.

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 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 Head teachers 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 head teacher, **each parent** could potentially 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 (e.g. through a newsletter) that such absences would not be authorised and that they might incur a Penalty Notice if the leave of

absence is taken. A link to the full attendance policy will be circulated to all parents in September 2021 and a reminder will be circulated to parents via the Burhill Newsletter on a termly basis.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where there are unauthorised absences or late arrival after the close of registration, on 7 occasions in any six week period (not including school closures). 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.

Penalty Notice 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 can render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103.

Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Appendix 1

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

The legislation requires that all children, from babies until they cease to be of compulsory school age, be licensed by the local authority in which they live, when they take part in a performance on stage or in a broadcast. A child remains subject to these regulations until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they turn 16. The academic year runs from 1 September – 31 August inclusive.

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Head Teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Head Teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sports players can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Head of School's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Head Teacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Appendix 2

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better 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 may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher or the Home School Link Worker immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons: difficulties with school work; friendship problems; family difficulties. It is important that the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school is identified early and the school and parents work together to tackle the problem. For some children the extra support of familiar staff may be called upon. In addition, it may also be helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. Let them know that there is support in school, either from their class teacher or other trusted adults.

Encourage them to seek out a member of staff who they feel comfortable with to talk through any worries or concerns that they have which is preventing them from coming to school or as a parent/carer, contact the school and request this on your child's behalf. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learned, the friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!