



EWELL GROVE PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

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Ewell

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POLICY STATEMENT

ATTENDANCE POLICY

APPENDIX 1 – ATTENDANCE CODES

Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school:

Kate Keane (Headteacher), Anne Gardiner (Deputy Headteacher) & Paula Rising, (Assistant Headteacher)

Parents should make contact with the School Office Staff (phone or email), on a day-to-day basis, with regard to anything to do with their child's attendance:

Tel: 020 8393 4393 Email: info@ewell-grove.surrey.sch.uk

REVIEW DATE:

ANNUALLY

PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNING BOARD

AUTUMN 2023

This policy for Ewell Grove Primary and Nursery School has been developed within line with the DfE guidance [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance), as well as guidance from Surrey County Council on [What will happen if my child does not attend school including the use of Penalty Notices in cases of Non-Attendance at School](#).

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The expectation of Ewell Grove therefore is that all pupils attend 100% unless there is a genuine reason for the absence approved by the Headteacher. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. Therefore, improving attendance is everyone's business and to this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure their children achieve maximum possible attendance.

The barriers to accessing education can be wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. In addition, any problems that prevent full attendance must be identified and acted on promptly. When absence is unavoidable, parents/carers are expected to inform the school at the earliest opportunity and maintain regular contact throughout the duration of the absence.

Schools are required to report all absence figures to the Local Authority, DfE and must ensure they are recorded on a child's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by OfSTED as part of a school's inspection.

COMMITMENT TO ATTENDANCE

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, and at Ewell Grove, it is an expectation that we will have a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

ENCOURAGING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

The majority of children attend Ewell Grove regularly and punctually, the benefits of this can be seen in their academic progress and healthy relationships they enjoy with their peers and staff. With this in mind, the school is proactive in encouraging good attendance using the following strategies:

- by providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- by responding promptly to a child or parents/carers concerns about the school or other pupils

- by accurate and punctual completion of registers during morning and afternoon registration
- by providing parents with termly attendance data for their child and an annual summary with their annual report
- ensuring all staff take a proactive approach to promoting good attendance and apply this policy consistently and equitably

Ewell Grove believes that the best strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence is to make our school environment a place that our children are keen to be in and supports them in being ready to learn. Therefore, we do not have a 'one system fits all' approach to incentivising good attendance. However, we do fully recognise the need to build strong relationships with families so that we can listen to and understand their barriers to attendance: in order to provide appropriate support to remove them. Therefore, when the data demonstrates a need to target attendance improvement, we work with the child and their family to agree support using a bespoke range of strategies and incentives to ensure unnecessary absence or lateness are overcome.

THE LAW ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND RIGHT TO A FULL-TIME EDUCATION

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

ACCURATE COMPLETION OF ADMISSION AND ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

The law requires all schools to have an admission register and an attendance register. All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on the admission register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register. The proprietor of a school who fails to comply with these regulations is guilty of an offence and can be fined.

ADMISSIONS REGISTER ('the school roll')

The admission register must contain specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended.

A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, applies.

ATTENDANCE REGISTER

Schools must also take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion, they must record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

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.

CATEGORISATION OF ABSENCE

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Family holidays/days out/events during term time
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence
- Any absence which has not been explained by the parent by **8:30 am**

2. Authorised Absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

REGISTRATION & LATENESS

School/Registration Times

- Morning registration takes place from 8:45 am (or 8:30 am or 12:30 pm in the case of Nursery).
- Afternoon registration takes place when the children return to class after their lunch break; times vary for year groups.
- School finishes at 3:15 pm (or 11:30 am, 2:30 pm or 3:30 pm for nursery children depending on 15hrs or 30hrs placements).

Classroom staff are responsible for keeping an accurate register of attendance at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon session. At the close of morning and afternoon registration, our electronic registers are saved so that the children's attendance can be examined by the School Office; with necessary action taken in relation to any unexplained absence.

Registers for both sessions remain open, as legally required, for thirty minutes. Any child, who arrives at school within thirty minutes of the register being completed and saved for the School Office, will be marked late "L". Pupils arriving after the thirty minutes will be marked as "U", which statistically counts as an unauthorised absence. Their parent using the book held in the School Office must sign in all children arriving late at school.

If a reason is given for the late arrival, for example, attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered (**See Appendix 1**). For an authorised code to be used in this context, prior notice must have been received by the school. Any circumstances where prior notice has not been received by the school will automatically be treated as unauthorised.

In cases of persistent late arrival to school, parents could be spoken to by the class teacher, written to, reminded of the schools' attendance policy or ultimately be invited to a meeting with a member of SLT.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD WILL NOT BE ATTENDING SCHOOL?

If your child is absent for any reason, it is the responsibility of the Parent/Carers to notify the School via phone or email by **8:30 am** and confirm the reason for their absence. If you are able to state how long your child will be absent for, there is no need to contact the School on a daily basis. However, in situations where the length of absence is unclear, we would ask that you contact the School daily. If the absence is carried over from one week to the beginning of the next, we would ask that you contact us again on the Monday morning and provide us with an update.

If a child is not reported as absent by 8:30 am then the school will try to make contact as soon as possible, once the registers have been taken, with the Parent/Carer to ascertain the reason; in this case the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

If your child has any specific or on-going medical issues which could cause absence, we would ask Parents/Carers to contact the School without hesitation in order that we can work together in the best interest of your child.

ESCALATION PROCESS

If a child is absent for any reason, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school via phone or email by 8:30 am.

Where we have been unable to make contact the school will use all of the 'Emergency Contacts' that parents provide on their child's Admissions Form in an endeavour to ascertain confirmation that a) the child is safe and b) the reason for absence. Wherever possible office staff will leave messages asking the parent/contact to communicate with the school as a matter of urgency.

If a child is absent and no reason has been provided the following procedure will apply:

1. First Day Absence

The school will telephone the parent as soon as possible once the registers have been taken to request a reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence but will categorise it as unauthorised. The school reserves the right to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances; the decision to use "exceptional circumstances" will rest solely with the Headteacher. If the school is unable to make contact then, wherever possible, a message will be left. The school will also contact all of the 'Emergency Contacts' that the parents provided on their child's admission form.

For any children whose family are known, by the school, to be currently working in partnership with Children's Services additional effort will be made to locate the child. As illustration, this could include strategies such as email/texts to child's contacts and phone call to the named Social Worker/Family Support Worker. Equally for any children where the school has significant concerns, that are not currently working in partnership with Children's Services, an additional phone call into 'C-SPA' (Children's Single point of Access) is likely to be made. The school may also seek further advice from the Surrey Inclusion Service team and/or any other professional service they feel is appropriate.

2. Second Day Absence

If the school has been unable to make contact with parents on day one, once again, they will try all means to communicate with the child's emergency contacts to ascertain a reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence but will categorise it as unauthorised. The school reserves the right to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances; the decision to use "exceptional circumstances" will rest solely with the Headteacher. If the school is unable to make contact then wherever possible a message will be left.

Where we have been unable to make contact with Parents and/or Emergency Contacts the school, in addition to the above, may also visit the child's home. Where no contact is made we will also hand deliver a letter to the address that we have registered on the admissions form to; a) request parents make contact with the school as a matter of urgency and b) ascertain a reason for absence.

If a phone call to C-SPA was not made on day one, the school will review if this is now necessary and action as required.

3. Third and subsequent days

The school will continue to repeat some or all of the actions outlined above, whilst also ensuring other services such as Police and Children's Services are taking our concerns for seriously; using escalation if necessary.

4. Ten Days Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will automatically be notified to the Local Authority (if this has not already happened), by submitting a referral to Surrey Inclusion Service; this is a legal requirement. As part of this referral the school will include details of the action that they have taken.

For any children whose family are known, by the school, to be currently working in partnership with Children's Services a repeat phone call to the named Social Worker/Family Support Worker will be made. Equally, for any children where the school has significant concerns that are not currently working in partnership with Children's Services an additional phone call into C-SPA will be made. The school may also seek further advice from the Surrey Inclusion Service team and/or any other professional service they feel is appropriate.

5. Frequent Absence

The school understands that at some point most children will be off school due to illness. However, we also use attendance data to ascertain if absenteeism is disguising other difficulties including a reluctance to attend school. It is in the best interest for the child, for home and school to work in partnership, in order to quickly and effectively resolve any issues or barriers leading to non-attendance. If a child is reluctant to attend school, it is unhelpful for families to cover up their absence or give into pressure to excuse them from attending; this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes returning to school more difficult.

The Inclusion Officer meets with school staff on a regular basis to discuss attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of non-attendance, parents could be spoken to by the class teacher, written to, reminded of the school's attendance policy or ultimately be invited to a meeting with a member of SLT and/or the Inclusion Officer.

PERSISTENT ABSENCE (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and the school requires parents' full support and co-operation in addressing this.

The school monitors attendance data thoroughly and any case that is seen to have reached the Persistent Absence mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority. The Inclusion Officer supports this process through planned half-termly visits to that include register checks. Following these visits parents are notified by letter if;

- The child's attendance pattern is irregular and/or concerning
- If the child's attendance percentage is falling, near to or exceeding 10% and/or persistent lateness
- If a child's attendance pattern demonstrates prolonged and/or significant number of absences through repeating illness.

If any of the above are identified the school will communicate the concern to the parents and offer support to address the concerns. This can include offering to write a letter to a GP demonstrating a child's low attendance in order to secure further assistance from health professionals.

The school also sends letters in cases where a family has received communication in the past and progress is evident, at the next Inclusion visit, to acknowledge and encourage continued improvement.

EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Governors of Ewell Grove have decided that family holidays will always be unauthorised. This policy states that no authorisation will be given for any family holidays taken during term time, for any year groups. Authorisation will only be given, other than illness and hospital appointments, in exceptional circumstances; for example compassionate reasons.

All requests for absence must be submitted using the Ewell Grove 'Leave of Absence Form' (available from the school website or from the School Office).

Any request will only be considered where;

- A Leave of Absence form is submitted to the Headteacher in advance of any bookings/travel arrangements being made or committed to (this includes where somebody other than the parents makes this even as a surprise)
- All adults with parental responsibility are aware of the request being submitted
- Exceptional circumstances can be supported by evidence e.g. letter from employer, details of family emergency

Family holidays including those booked by other relatives, 'once in a lifetime' opportunities and where a significant price saving can be made will not be considered under Exceptional Circumstances.

The Headteacher will consider the application on behalf of the Governors. As part of the consideration the Headteacher will decide if the "exceptional circumstances" provided can be applied. Even in cases where "exceptional circumstances" do apply, authorisation will be considered within the context of the child's previous attendance and that the request does not exceed 10 school days in any one academic year. Exceptional Circumstances will not be applied where the absence would result in the

child's missing 10% or more schooling across the year; as this would classify them as a Persistent Absentee. "Exceptional Circumstances" alone do not guarantee authorisation.

All absences, including holidays, taken without prior authorisation by the school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, Inclusion Service will be notified and in some circumstances, parent/s may be liable to a Penalty Notice.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off school, during term, to attend a family holiday. The Department for Education states:

- *Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.*
- *If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.*
- *As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.*

You can be fined for taking your child on holiday during term time without the school's permission. Any savings that you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. Research relating to this demonstrates:

The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN A PENALTY NOTICE MAY BE ISSUED

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice instead of prosecuting parents/carers for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered. Ewell Grove's policy includes the use of penalty notices. Use of Penalty Notices will be restricted to three per pupil per academic year.

A penalty notice can be used as an alternative to prosecution of a parent/carer in cases where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school (unauthorised leave of absence). The issuing of a penalty notice for unauthorised leave of absence may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

1. Unauthorised leave of absence in term time (5 days/10 sessions or more within a three month period – this need not be consecutive). **Each parent** could be liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child**. *In the case of separated parents, the penalty notice will be sent to the parent requesting leave of absence and/or taking the pupil out of school.* No written warning will be given where it can be shown that the parent/carer had previously been warned of their liability to receive a Penalty Notice.
2. Unauthorised absences or late arrival after the close of registration, on 7 occasions in any six week period (not including school closures). The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning from the Inclusion Service of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a maximum of 15 school days to effect an improvement. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further unauthorised absence. Where a formal warning letter has been issued to parents, the Local Authority will monitor the attendance for a maximum of 15 school days

and issue a Penalty Notice by first class post if the Local Authority determine that an acceptable level of attendance has not been achieved.

3. Pupils identified by police and Inclusion Officer engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences
4. Penalty Notices may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a fixed term or permanent exclusion.

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/carers for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice.

With the exception of unauthorised holidays taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive a notice before it is issued.

If two penalty notices have been issued and paid in relation to a particular child (or there has been previous prosecutions) and poor attendance is still an on-going problem, except in Exceptional Circumstances, information will then be gathered to support a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 rather than a further Penalty Notice being issued.

TRUANCY PATROL

When a family comes to the notice of a Truancy Patrol, the child's pattern of school attendance is investigated. If there are unauthorised absences in the preceding 4 months, a warning letter may be sent to the parent/carers. If there are further unauthorised absences during the subsequent 15 school days, a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent/carers.

The Penalty Notice fines are as follows:

- £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 is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

THE INCLUSION OFFICER

The Inclusion Service monitors the attendance of all children on a regular basis. They will work with school and parents to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence.

If attendance problems cannot be resolved by school then the school will make a referral to Inclusion Service Team. The Inclusion Officer will try to resolve the situation but if attempts to improve attendance have failed and unauthorised absence persists, the Inclusion Officer can use sanctions such as Parenting Order, Education Supervision Order, School Attendance Order, Penalty Notice and Prosecution.

Legislation is put in place for parents to ensure all children attend school regularly. Failure to comply with this could ultimately result in prosecution. Parents could receive a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court also gives you a Parenting Order.

ATTENDANCE CODES

All students must be given a registration mark each day. There are two sessions that require a registration mark.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances