



**EWELL GROVE PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL**

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Ewell

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# **POLICY STATEMENT**

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school acting as the Senior Attendance Champions:**

Paula Rising (Headteacher), Anne Gardiner (Deputy 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](mailto:info@ewell-grove.surrey.sch.uk)

**REVIEW DATE:**

**ANNUALLY**

**PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNING BOARD**

**30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The expectation of Ewell Grove 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. Good attendance is a learned behaviour. 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. Positive relationships with parents and pupils will be the foundation for supporting good attendance. Ewell Grove will treat all pupils and parents with dignity and staff should model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school.

"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."

Working together to improve school attendance. DfE 2024

## **LEGISLATION, STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS AND STATUTORY GUIDANCE**

This policy is based on legislation and advice from the Department for Education (DfE) and other related documents;

[Education Act 1996](#)

[Equality Act 2010; advice for schools DfE Feb 2013](#)

[Statutory Guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions. DfE December 2015](#)

[Working together to improve school attendance. DfE August 2024](#)

[Keeping children safe in education \(KCSIE\) 2024. DfE September 2024](#)

[Children missing education. DfE August 2024](#)

[Providing remote education: guidance for schools. DfE August 2024](#)

[Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance. DfE August 2024](#)

(This policy applies to children of compulsory school age and those of non-compulsory school age i.e. any child registered to attend Ewell Grove).

Children are expected to attend each day that the school is open – term dates are published on the school website.

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. 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.

Ewell Grove will follow the DfE guidance for attendance and will aim to remove barriers to attendance by working collaboratively with families and local support partners, all partners should work together to:

**Expect** - Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

**Monitor** - Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

**Listen and understand** - When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents, to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

**Facilitate support** - Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

**Formalise support** - Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

**Enforce** - Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **REGISTRATION & LATENESS**

### *School/Registration Times*

- Morning registration takes place from 8:45am (or 8:30am /12:30pm in the case of Nursery).
- Registers close at 9:15am (or 9:00am / 1:00pm in the case of Nursery).
- Children are marked as late if they arrive between the time the register has been taken and the time the register has closed. This will be no more than 30 minutes after the start time for registration.
- Afternoon registration takes place when the children return to class after their lunch break; times vary for year groups.
- School finishes at 3:15pm (or 11:30am, 2:30pm or 3:30pm 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 for up to thirty minutes. Any child, who arrives at school within thirty minutes of the register being completed and saved on the school system, will be marked late "L". Pupils arriving after the thirty minutes will be marked as "U", which statistically counts as an unauthorised absence. Parents/carers must sign in all children arriving late at school using the book held in the School Office.

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. 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/ Senior Attendance Champion..

## **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/Carer to notify the School via phone or email by **8:30am** 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 8:30am 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; if it is not possible to record a reason for absence then 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 8:30am.

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:

#### **First Day Absence**

The school will telephone the parent/carer 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.

## **Second Day Absence**

If the school has been unable to contact 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 contact 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 contact 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.

## **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 seriously; using escalation if necessary.

## **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 Attendance 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.

## **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 Attendance Advice 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 Attendance Advice Officer.

## **SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH HEALTH NEEDS AND SEND**

Ewell Grove has the same ambition for all children to have full attendance at school, including those with SEND or health conditions. The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and we will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult. An individual Healthcare Plan may be required to support the child's attendance and this will be written in conjunction with parents/carers and advice sought from relevant healthcare professionals. If a referral is needed from another service then this will be made as quickly as possible.

We understand that mental health can affect attendance and we will endeavour to work closely with families to remove anxieties around school attendance, whilst also recognising in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue, as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

## **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.

### **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 physically present in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes.

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.

## DEFINED TERMS

**Absence** – arriving at school after the register has closed or not attending school for any reason.

**Authorised absence** – having time out of school for a particular reason. An explanation from parents/carers is required if the absence is to be authorised. For illness absence parents are required to call the school office and leave a message confirming the name of their child and an explanation of the type of illness. (In the case of sickness and diarrhoea children will be expected to remain at home for 48 hours from the end of the most recent bout of sickness or diarrhoea.) If there are doubts about the explanation or there is no explanation offered then the absence will be treated as unauthorised. Routine dental and medical appointments are expected to be made outside of school hours and you may be required to provide evidence of appointments, e.g. letter, email or text.

**Leave of absence** – Parents or carers who wish to take their children out of school for any other reason for an exceptional circumstance.

**Unauthorised absence** – having time out of school without explanation, or where the reason for absence is one that the school can not authorise, for example; shopping trips, birthday celebrations, tiredness, not realising the term had started, because other family members are ill, travelling abroad to look after a family member. This is not an exhaustive list but an indicative one.

**Persistent absence** - when attendance drops to 90% or below for any reason whether the absences are authorised or not.

**Severely absent** – when attendance falls below 50%.

**Missing education** – when a child is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education in a setting other than a school.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE PROCESS

The Governors of Ewell Grove do not authorise family holidays. 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.

All absences, including holidays, taken without prior authorisation by the school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, Surrey Attendance Service will be notified and, in some circumstances, parent/s may be liable to a Penalty Notice. Information regarding penalty notices and the range of applicable fines is included on the Leave of Absence form.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off school, during term, to attend 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:

## **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, governing board, the local authority, and other local partners.

## **MONITORING AND ANALYSING DATA TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE**

Parents will be kept informed about their child's attendance and absence levels, this will be part of the parent meeting discussions (Autumn/Spring term) and end of year report. Ewell Grove will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs. The Senior Absence Champions will work closely with the Local Authority (Schools

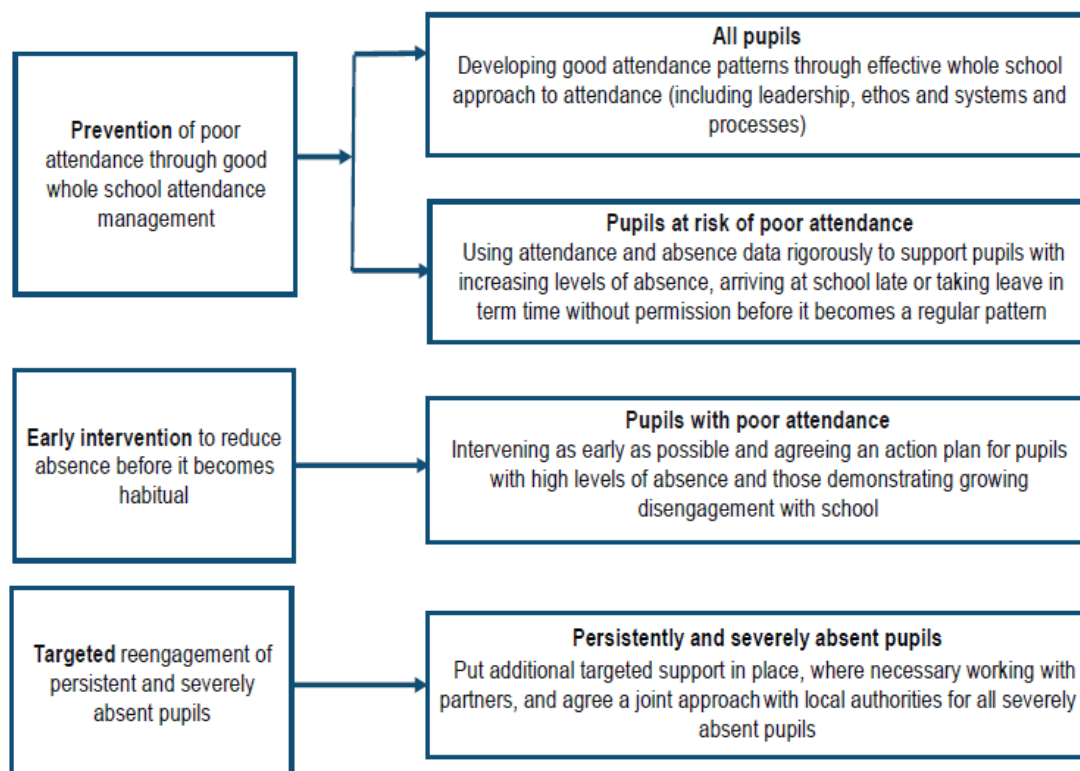
Attendance Service and the associated Attendance Advice Officer for the school) to proactively manage and improve attendance across the school. There will be regular Targeting Support Meetings with the Attendance Advice Officer. The school will also make written referrals to the Attendance Advice Officer where there are considerable concerns about attendance or punctuality of a particular child and the support from the school has not had the desired impact or there is unwillingness from the responsible parent/carer to engage with the school to rectify the situation.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, authorised and unauthorised absence in order to identify trends and patterns for:

- The school cohort as a whole.
- Individual year groups.
- Individual pupils.
- Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds.
- Other groups of pupils, e.g. pupils with SEND, LAC and pupils eligible for FSM.
- Pupils at risk of Persistent Absence.

Regular reports will be provided to school stakeholders (e.g. Governing Board, Surrey Attendance Service) to enable them to track the attendance of pupils, implement attendance procedures and monitor how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future. The school will also benchmark its attendance data against local, regional and national level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement.

Ewell Grove will follow the processes for prevention, early intervention and targeted support in accordance with [DFE statutory guidance](#). These are outlined below:



## **NOTICE TO IMPROVE**

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (e.g. because the parent/carer has already received one for a similar offence).

The Notice to Improve is expected to include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences.
- The benefits of regular attendance and parents' duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- Details of the support provided so far.
- Opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with.
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period.
- A clear timeframe for the improvement period of between 3 to 6 weeks.
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like.
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to issue a penalty notice before the improvement period has ended.

## **NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PENALTY NOTICES**

The Surrey Attendance Service, acting on behalf of the Local Authority 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.

We will consider each case individually when deciding to issue a penalty notice. The school will not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency. Where the threshold has been met the school will consider whether a penalty notice or other alternative support will be best placed to improve attendance for the child in question.

The threshold for a Penalty notice is:

10 sessions (for full time schooling each day consists of 2 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks).

These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).

The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued:

- Pupils identified by police and Surrey Attendance Advice Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 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 10 sessions 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 a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 10 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school 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.
- 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. 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.

**With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time (Paragraph 2 above) parents will be sent a 'Notice To Improve' their child's attendance, warning them of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.**

### **Amount Payable Under a Penalty Notice: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024**

1. If a parent/carer has not incurred a penalty notice relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, the rolling 3 year period will be activated from the date of the first penalty notice and the second penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
3. If you have incurred 2 penalty notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, **per parent/carer per child**, in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.