

# Esher Church School



## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

September 2021

School Development Area Leader : Ben Foley                      Signed :

Link Governor :    Ben Holmes                      Signed :

Status / Review Cycle :                                      Statutory / Bi-annual

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## **School Vision**

To be a safe, happy, loving community where excellent teaching inspires children to learn and explore, care for each other and believe that they can make a difference.

### **1. Introduction**

Esher Church School is committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, students, governors and the Local Authority, to building a school which serves the community and of which the community are proud. The school is committed to ensuring that all children attend school, believing that attendance is closely linked to achievement and that regular attendance and punctuality is an important life skill.

Regular attendance is key to staying healthy, enjoying and achieving, keeping safe, contributing to the community, social and economic well-being and the school aims. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. As a school, we will encourage and support parents to ensure that their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

In order for this Attendance and Punctuality Policy to be effective it is imperative that children, parents, all staff and governors are equally committed to its success. At Esher Church School, we believe that whole school and individual good attendance and punctuality needs to be maintained at 96% and above. All pupils are expected to attend 100% of the time unless the absence is authorised by the Headteacher.

### **2. Aims and objectives**

To promote a high level of attendance and punctuality in all our pupils and thus ensure that each benefits fully from the education the school provides.

#### **2.1 To achieve this we will:**

1. Ensure an attendance administrator is in post to manage attendance in the school.
2. induct staff and parents on attendance procedures and keep regular and accurate records of morning and afternoon attendance and punctuality.
3. allocate a senior member of staff [Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher] and a member of the school administration team to oversee attendance and punctuality and to promote its importance across the school community.
4. monitor individual children's attendance and punctuality.
5. produce and provide attendance figures reports for parents and governors as required.
6. liaise with the Surrey County Council (SCC) Inclusion Service to discuss attendance issues.
7. provide a welcoming atmosphere and safe learning environment.

### **3. Responsibilities of key staff**

#### **3.1 Responsibilities of the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher**

1. Be responsible for monitoring and reviewing attendance across the whole school.
2. To compile attendance data reports for the Headteacher, governors and parents as required.
3. Attend meetings with parents of children whose attendance falls below the expected level.
4. Attend fortnightly meetings with the Attendance administrator to monitor attendance and punctuality trends.
5. To organise and analyse at least ½ termly punctuality watch

### **3.2 Responsibilities of Attendance Administrator**

1. To ensure that every parent whose child is not in school is contacted by phone between 9am and 9.30am on each day of absence, unless the reason for absence is already known
2. To ensure that parents of children with Child Protection or Child in Need Plans, attendance targets otherwise deemed to be vulnerable due to family circumstances will be contacted first and spoken to directly
3. To ensure that every parent who arrives late is reminded that punctuality is important and that their late arrival has been logged
4. To ensure that parents are asked (verbally, via phone or by letter) for a reason for every absence from school
5. To inform Children's Social Care if a focus child is absent (on each day of the absence) and to liaise with LAC re: any LAC who is absent from school
6. To inform the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher of any concerns about attendance or punctuality prior to the fortnightly meetings, as appropriate
7. To follow up actions from meetings: set and monitor targets, write to parents etc.
8. To pass on information received from parents to class teachers.
9. To liaise with the SCC Inclusion Officer
10. To send letters to parents regarding absence when an acceptable reason has not been received.
11. In collaboration with the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher, be responsible for deciding whether an absence should be authorised.
12. To manually adjust class registers as necessary.
13. To send letters if attendance falls below 90% or continued lateness.

### **3.3 Responsibilities of the class teachers**

1. To mark the registers for each session within 5 minutes of the session starting.
2. To ensure that any child who arrives late, after 5 minutes from the start of the morning or afternoon session, is marked in late in the register
3. Alert the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/Attendance Administrator to any patterns of absence or lateness.
4. Liaise with the school administrative team
5. Monitor and encourage good attendance and punctuality.
6. Speak to a child's parents regarding any poor attendance and punctuality.

### **3.4 Responsibilities of all staff**

1. Actively promote and support good attendance and punctuality.
2. Discuss a child's attendance and punctuality with parents/carers.
3. Support school events which promote good attendance and punctuality.
4. To take part in the punctuality watches as required
5. To promote Breakfast Club and morning sports clubs as a way of encouraging good attendance and punctuality

### **3.5 Responsibilities of parents and carers**

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

'The parents of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable

- a) to his age, ability and aptitude and
- b) to any special needs he may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

For educational purposes the term 'parents' is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this act. Part 6 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

**Parents/carers will ensure children receive an effective education by:**

1. Keeping their child/ren's attendance at school at 96% or above.
2. Ensuring children arrive at school punctually and prepared for the school day, arriving at least by 8.45am and are collected at the end of the day punctually.
3. Informing the school of the reason for absence in advance of or on the first day of absence.
4. Ensuring that when children arrive at school late, they are signed into the late book / sign in computer screen at the office and that if they need to collect children before the end of the day they sign them out on the relevant school register in the office.
5. Make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours as much as possible.
6. Providing proof of medical appointments, prescriptions etc. whenever their child is absent due to ill health.
7. Advising the class teacher (or contacting the school office if plans change during the day) who will be collecting their child if they are unable to.
8. Notify the school immediately of any changes to parent / carer contact details.
9. Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child.

**3.6 Responsibilities of the Inclusion Service**

1. Maintaining regular contact with the school.
2. Once a child has been referred, liaising between home and school on matters relating to attendance,
3. Following up referrals from school.
4. Conduct attendance reviews with Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and Attendance Administrator

**3.7 Responsibilities of the Governors**

1. Registers are properly kept.
2. Reports on Attendance data is regularly received and reviewed at the Governing Board committee meetings.
3. Legal requirements to publish data are met.
4. The school is supported in developing strategies for improving attendance.

**4 Registers**

Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 and The Student registration Regulations 1995 the school must keep an attendance register.

**5 Categorisation of absence**

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

- 1) **Unauthorised absence** – this is for 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
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence
- Term time holidays

- 2) **Authorised absence** – this is for 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 e.g. educational visits, sporting activities, dual registration, Secondary School visit or exam

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.

## 6 Registration and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial and registration at the beginning of the day with the class teacher is important. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other children in the class. It is paramount therefore that all children arrive at school on time, by 8.45am.

The school day begins between 8:30am and 8:45am, with morning registration taken by 8.50am. Any pupil arriving after 8:45am should sign in at the office and pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late (L). The school should be notified of any medical appointments in advance via this [webform](#).

## 7 Procedures

If a pupil has not turned up for school and no communication from the parent/carer has been received, the school will contact parents to request a reason for absence. A message will be left where no contact can be made. If there continues to be no response, a Senior Leadership Team member from the school or the Inclusion Officer may visit the child's home to ensure there are no safeguarding concerns.

The school will follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.

## 8 Frequent Absence

If a child's attendance becomes a concern, a letter will be sent to parents to highlight the importance of the child's attendance at school. If there is no improvement, a second letter will be sent which requests evidence of illness e.g. GP appointment card, chemist receipt etc and parents will be asked to come in and meet with a member of Senior Leadership Team.

Any pupil who is absent for 10 consecutive days without an acceptable explanation will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to Inclusion Service. This is a legal requirement.

On their return to school, pupils will be welcomed back and supported as much as possible to catch up on missed work. For longer term absences a more formal reintegration will take place.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful of parents 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 usually makes things worse.

## **9 Persistent Absence**

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling at any point across the school year, for whatever reason. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. The school regularly monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards this mark is given priority and parents will be contacted by a member of the Senior Leadership Team to invite them to a meeting to address the issues identified.

## **10 Leave of Absence**

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance.

Where a family leave of absence in term time is unavoidable, a Leave of Absence application form must be completed from the school website and submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, ideally no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date. If the Headteacher has not authorised absence and you take term time leave, you may be liable to a penalty notice.

The Education (Pupil Registration- England- Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013, state that Headteachers 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. (The amendment has not defined 'exceptional circumstances' and therefore the Headteacher/Governing Body will be responsible for deciding what they consider to be 'exceptional circumstances').

## **11 Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence**

The Headteacher may now request that the Local Authority consider issuing a Penalty Notice to parents, when students are taken out of school for 5 or more day's leave of absence in a school year without school authorisation.

## **12 Penalty Notices**

In addition to Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised holidays, Penalty Notices may also be issued when a child is stopped by Truancy Patrol or at the discretion of the Inclusion Officer if a parent/carer fails to ensure regular school attendance.

The Penalty Notice fines are as follows:

- **£60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 per parent per child 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.

### **13 Inclusion Service**

The SCC Inclusion Service monitors the attendance of all children on a regular basis. The Local Authority Inclusion Service will work with school staff and parents/carers 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 the Inclusion Service. SCC Inclusion Service will try to resolve the situation but if attempts to improve attendance have failed, but unauthorised absence persists, the Inclusion Service may use sanctions such as parenting contracts, penalty notices and prosecution.

The Inclusion Service may issue a Penalty Notice to parent/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school and the Inclusion Service. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents/carers will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

Failure to ensure regular attendance, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, to a fine or a term of imprisonment.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where attendance has fallen below 90% and there are no less than 7 authorised sessions during the preceding 6 weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or the Inclusion Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration.

### **14 Inclusion Service / Truancy Patrol**

When a child 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 / carer. If there is no significant improvement in attendance in the 3 subsequent weeks, a Penalty Notice may be issued.

### **15 Education Supervision Order**

When it is clear that a parent is fully cooperating with the school and Inclusion Service in trying to ensure their child's regular school attendance and it is the child who is resisting these attempts, the Local Authority may apply to the Family Law Court for an Education Supervision Order in respect of the child under Section 36 Children Act 1989.

An Education Supervision Order is a court order that formalises the plan drawn up by the Inclusion Service in partnership with the child, parents and school as well as other agencies if appropriate, to bring about a return to regular school attendance.

## **16 Children leaving during the school day**

- Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Whenever possible, parents/carers should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time.
- Where a student is being collected from the school, parents/carers must report to the school office to sign their child out in the relevant register
- If a child leaves the school site without permission their parents and the police will be contacted to register the child as a missing person.

## **17 Changing schools**

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform Esher Church School 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 the school and the start date at the new school
- The address of the new school or details of the Elected Home Educated
- A new home address if appropriate

The child's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the local authority Inclusion Service.

## **18 Linked Policies**

Safeguarding Policy

## **19 Monitoring and review**

**19.1** When monitoring this policy, through its committee work, the Governing Board will:

- seek the views of parents, to be sure that they agree with the policy, and support it;
- consider with the Headteacher any requests from parents for individual children to have special dispensations;
- require the Headteacher to report to the Governors on the way the policy is being implemented.

**19.2** This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Board every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.



## Appendix 1

### Dealing with unacceptable attendance and punctuality

The school has expectations of good attendance and punctuality which are communicated to pupils and parents clearly and regularly. However, it is important to have strategies for when things do not go well. Agreed strategies are outlined in the grid below:

Stage	Attendance / Punctuality	Action Taken
Needs Improvement	Below 90% / 4 lates per half term	1) Stage 1 letter sent home. 2) Class teacher speaks to parents
Of <b>Serious</b> Concern	Where no improvement or deterioration in attendance or punctuality	1) Stage 2 letter sent home. 2) Parents required to attend a meeting with Attendance Administrator & Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher where a Home School Agreement is issued. 3) Where no improvement is made, parents called to an attendance panel.
<b>Extreme Welfare Concern</b>	Continued persistent absence / lateness	1) Referred to the SCC Inclusion Service 2) Parents expected to attend a panel meeting at the Civic Centre 3) Parents can be taken to court and fined.

- Attendance and punctuality issues are ultimately dealt with by the Deputy Headteacher and/or the Headteacher. The above grid is used as a guideline to attendance and punctuality procedures and the professional judgements of the Senior Leadership Team will be used at all times.
- Punctuality Watches are used to support families who are late. It is an opportunity to inform parents/carers of the impact that children's lateness can have on their education.
- At any point in the school year, despite the fact that parents have informed the school of a child's absence or poor punctuality, parents may be called by the Attendance Officer in order to explain the reasons for their child's poor attendance and/or punctuality.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Attendance and Punctuality Procedures**

#### **Registration:**

Marking of registers:

- Each class will be registered at the start of morning and afternoon sessions. Each child will be marked present or absent.
- Registers must be marked on the School's Management Information System (SIMs) and submitted to the school office within 5 minutes of the start of each session.
- If the office has been informed of a reason for absence the allocated code is visible for teachers to see on the school system.
- All absence notes are ultimately passed on to the Attendance Administrative team member.
- Registers close 30 minutes after the start of the session. If a child arrives after this time they will be marked 'late after register closed' which has an impact on attendance.

#### **Absence:**

- Parents/carers are expected to phone or email the school before 9am on the first day of their child's absence
- If the child continues to be absent, the parent/carer is expected to communicate this absence each day.
- If parents/carers have not already informed the school office, the Attendance Administrative team member ensures that contact is made with every parent on the first day of his or her child's absence by 9.30am .
- The Attendance Administrative team member makes contact with the family of any 'at risk' children or informs the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher of the necessity to do this and all children in Year 5 or 6 who to come to school on their own.

#### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence:**

- Absences remain unauthorised unless a satisfactory reason has been obtained.
- A child should only be off school sick if they are significantly unwell, such as being physically sick or diarrhoea, with an extremely high temperature or a pharmacist or doctor has given medical advice (evidence of this may be requested)
- The Attendance Administrative team member (in liaison with the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher) makes the decision whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

#### **An absence is regarded as authorised when it is one of the following reasons:**

- Sickness – medical proof is requested if available (for children with attendance below 90% medical proof is required i.e. certificate, appointment card, medicine label etc.)
- Religious reason, if agreed by the Headteacher. Religious days are limited to 2 days in any academic year.

#### **Leave of absence may be granted by the Headteacher for:**

- Death of a family member.
- Dental or medical appointments in extreme circumstances, where appointments cannot be made outside of the school day.
- Attendance at an off-site or educational establishment.
- Taking part in a performance licensed by Surrey County Council. These will be limited to 15 days across an academic year.

## **Monitoring Attendance**

We monitor attendance through:

- 1) Computerised records
- 2) Provision of information for: governors, staff, parents, pupils, Inclusion Officer
- 3) Identifying developing patterns of irregular attendance and lateness.

- Attendance figures are returned as part of the school census.
- Parents and carers whose child/ren's attendance is unsatisfactory will be written to or called in to discuss the issue and/or have an attendance referral form completed and sent to the Inclusion Officer to investigate.
- Under the Anti-social Behaviour Act (2004) Local Authorities were given the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices where parents/carers are considered capable but unwilling to ensure their child/ren attends school regularly. Surrey County Council and the school would preferably work with parents to improve their children's attendance at school rather than take legal action, however over time it has become evident that this power should now be used.
- Fixed Penalty Notices warning letters and Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued for irregular attendance at school to parents/carers for failing in their duty to ensure their child/ren attends school regularly and punctually.
- In addition, should parents/carers choose to take their child/ren out of school for unauthorised Term Time Leave they may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice Warning Letter and should they choose to take further unauthorised term time leave, they may be issued with a fine by Surrey County Council.
- Following Surrey County Council's admissions procedures any child who has 20 days unauthorised absence will be taken off the school role and referred to the Children Missing Education department at the County Council. This includes children who do not return after a school holiday. Parents are then required to reapply for a school place at Esher Church School.

## **Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception children)**

- It is very important that clear routines for good attendance and punctuality are established as soon as a child arrives at Esher Church School. Parents/carers have accepted a place at Esher Church School and are therefore signing up to agree that they will support the school in at least 96% attendance and punctuality for their child.
- If a child is not of statutory school age (i.e. the term after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday) Esher Church School reserves the right to withdraw their place from school should term time leave be taken – this will take effect from the first day of unauthorised term time leave. If this happens, the parent/carer will need to contact Admissions for a school place and Esher Church School will notify the Inclusion Service of these actions.