



# Attendance Policy 2025-2026

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## **Attendance Policy**

### **Rationale:**

Claygate Primary School, along with the Ember Learning Trust (ELT) and Surrey County Council, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life.

Claygate Primary School expects children to attend school every day, unless the absence is authorised by the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

We believe that happy children wish to come to school and do all that we can to make the school day a positive experience.

### **Parental responsibility and the law**

Parents/carers, whose children are of compulsory school age and are registered at a school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or to be served with a penalty notice.

### **Registers**

Claygate Primary School is open for 380 sessions (190 days) during a school year. Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 (s434) and the Student Registration Regulations 1995 the school must keep an attendance register for every session. Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. 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.

### **Registration and Lateness**

It is expected that children will arrive at school on time. The school day begins at 8.45 am when the attendance register will be taken. If pupils arrive at school after the register has been taken, a late mark will be recorded. The register will close at 9.00 am, and if a child arrives after 9.15 am without a valid explanation it will be recorded as 'late after close of register' and counted as an unauthorised absence for that session. The pupil's name, and the time of arrival will be recorded on our online sign in system.

In cases of persistent late arrival to school, the school will:

- consult with families to identify how the attendance leads at Claygate Primary School can support them
- notify the parents by letter of the contact made with the Attendance Advice Officer (formerly Inclusion Officer) and the need to improve attendance/punctuality rates.

## **Responding To Non-Attendance**

### **Initial actions**

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school by 8.30am if a child will be absent for any reason. When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following way:

- If no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 10.00 am, the school will endeavour to contact them that day by phone, email or text;
- If there is no response the school will try to contact the parent/carer on every subsequent day of absence. Note the attendance leads may seek to carry out a home visit if there has been no response to contact from school and where there are safeguarding concerns;
- In line with the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, all unexplained absences of 10 days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority (LA).

### **Frequent absence**

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school without good reason. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/carer by:

- Phone call by the Attendance Lead;
- Letter from Attendance Lead sent to parents stating concerns.

Should a parent/carer fail to engage with staff, 'A Notice to Improve letter' may be issued. This is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued (see page 5-6). The Attendance Advice Officer meets with school staff on a regular basis to discuss attendance concerns. If the school are unsuccessful in resolving the issues itself it will refer to The Attendance Advice Officer.

## **Persistent Absence (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% (38 or more sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Any absence has an impact on a child's educational achievement and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. The Department for Education (DfE) and the Local Authority monitor the levels of PA children and levels of absence in all schools.

Attendance of all pupils is tracked and monitored carefully and we also combine this with academic monitoring because absence affects attainment. We share attendance with parents termly as part of our reporting processes.

## **Request for leave of absence**

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless:

- an application has been made in advance to the Headteacher by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides and the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the 'exceptional circumstances' relating to that application.

Valid reasons for authorised absence may include:

- if a performance licence is granted by the local authority.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Travellers – when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

All requests for leave will be considered on a case by case basis by the Headteacher who has delegated responsibility from the Governing Body to make fair and appropriate decisions.

The Head teacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday as a norm. The decision of the Governing Body will be final. If a family needs to request absence in term-time then an Application for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances Form must, wherever possible, be completed prior to the leave date and preferably at least 2 weeks before. A paper copy of this form can be obtained from the office or as a Google Form via email.

If a child is granted leave of absence but:

- fails to return to school immediately following the expiry of the period of leave granted
- the Headteacher does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend by reason of sickness or unavoidable causes
- that both the school and Local Authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is, the school will be able to delete a child's name from the Admissions register.

Unauthorised leave of absence may result in legal action being taken against each parent - see Penalty Notices.

### **Dental and medical treatments**

Whilst the school will grant requests for absence for dental and medical treatments, parents/carers are encouraged, whenever possible, to book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the school office should be notified in advance in writing, of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected and/or returned to school. Evidence of the appointment may be requested.

### **What happens if my child misses school without a good reason?**

If your child is absent and you haven't received advance permission from the Headteacher to take your child out of school, the school and local council may take action. Before that, Claygate Primary School and your local council are expected to support you to improve the child's attendance before any measures are put in place.

#### ***These measures can include:***

Issue a fixed penalty notice, otherwise known as a 'fine' – Surrey LA can give each parent a fine. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.

Seek an Education Supervision Order from the family court – if the council thinks you need support getting your child to go to school but you're not co-operating, they can apply to a court for an Education Supervision Order. A supervisor will be appointed to help you get your child into education. The local council can do this instead of, or as well as, prosecuting you.

Prosecute you – this means you have to go to court. You could get a fine, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court could also give you a Parenting Order.

## **Penalty Notices from August 2024**

Penalty notices are fines imposed on parents. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. A new national framework was introduced on 19th August 2024 which will mean that all councils have the same rules in place for when they need to consider a fine. Further information can be found on the link below:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/08/19/fines-for-parents-for-taking-children-out-of-school-what-you-need-to-know/>

### **First offence**

The first time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave: £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. The fines are per parent, per child. For example, 3 siblings absent during term time would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

### **Second offence (within 3 years)**

The second time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave: £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

### **Third and subsequent offences (within 3 years)**

The third time an offence is committed for term time leave, a penalty notice will not be issued and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Fines can be up to £2,500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

### **10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period**

Under the new guidance, schools must consider penalty notice fines when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period. One school day = 2 sessions. Claygate Primary School will seek to offer support parents where attendance is a concern. This may be through regular meetings with the attendance lead, with external support agencies involved where appropriate.

### **How can you be sure parent fines are fair?**

Fines are a last resort, and parents will be offered support to help improve their child's attendance first. The vast majority of fines for unauthorised absence (89%) are issued for term time holidays.

If your child is facing barriers to school attendance due to special education needs or disabilities (SEND), Claygate Primary School, the local authority and wider services will work together to provide the right support in the first place.

## **Changing School:**

It is important that if families decide to send the child in their care to a different school that they inform School Office staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received,

- the dates the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next
- the address of the new school
- the new home address, if it is known

School staff will then confirm with the parents the leaving date for their child. Following this date the pupil's school records will be sent to the new school as soon as possible and within ten days of the child leaving.

The Local Authority will also be sent appropriate information within ten days of anyone leaving or joining the school. If no notification is received from a new school then the child's name will not be removed from the school roll until after an investigation by Inclusion.

- record details of consultation, liaison and monitoring with the attached Inclusion Officer, analysis of registers etc.
- follow up any unexplained non-attendance or lateness with the Head Teacher
- record all reasons for absences and lateness in the register\*

## **Elective Home Education**

On receipt of written notification to home educate, Claygate Primary School will inform the local authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. The school will not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding excluding the pupil or because the pupil has a poor attendance record.

Claygate Primary School will not seek to prevent parents from educating their children outside the school system. There is no requirement for parents to obtain the school or local authority's agreement to educate their child at home. Parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full time education but this does not have to be at a school.

## **EBSNA (Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance)**

The school recognises that some pupils may experience Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), where difficulties in attending school are linked to emotional or mental health needs. We are committed to identifying early signs of EBSNA and working proactively with pupils, families and relevant professionals to put supportive strategies in place. These may include individual support plans, reasonable adjustments, pastoral support and a graduated approach to reintegration, with the aim of promoting wellbeing, reducing anxiety and supporting regular school attendance.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **All staff to:**

- Encourage good attendance and punctuality;
- Record attendance/absence in registers accurately;
- Notify the DSL & Attendance Lead of any patterns/concerns raised by a pupil's non-attendance or punctuality

### **Governing body and Headteacher to:**

- Promote the attendance policy and ensure that it is implemented effectively.
- The Headteacher will include regular items on attendance in the school newsletter;
- Ensure this policy is adhered to;
- Ensure action will be taken to identify poor attendance and offer support where necessary.