CLAYGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Approved by the governing body	October 2026
Next Review Date	October 2027

Attendance Policy

Rationale

Claygate Primary School (CPS), together with Ember Learning Trust (ELT) and Surrey County Council, believes that regular school attendance is essential to pupils' educational achievement, wellbeing and future life opportunities. Good attendance establishes positive learning habits, supports academic progress and enables children to participate fully in school life.

CPS expects all pupils to attend school every day unless an absence has been authorised by the Headteacher, or a member of staff acting on their behalf. We work closely with parents/carers to promote excellent attendance, identify barriers at an early stage and provide appropriate support where needed.

We believe that children learn best when they feel happy, safe and supported, and we strive to make school a positive and engaging experience for all pupils.

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. Failure to do so may constitute an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could result in prosecution or the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

Registers

CPS is open for 380 sessions (190 school days) each academic year.

Under the provisions of the Education Act 1996 and the relevant Pupil Registration Regulations, schools are required to maintain an attendance register for every session.

Any child who is absent from school during the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as:

- Authorised;
- Unauthorised; or
- Approved educational activity.

Only the Headteacher, or a member of staff acting on their behalf, may authorise an absence.

Where no reason for absence is known at the time of registration, the absence will initially be recorded as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received.

Registration and Lateness

It is expected that all pupils arrive at school on time.

The school day begins at **8:45am**, when attendance registers are taken.

Pupils arriving after the register has been taken will receive a late mark. The register closes at **9:00am**. Pupils arriving after **9:15am**, without a valid reason, will be recorded as **'Late After Register Closes'**, which is recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session.

All late arrivals must be signed into school via the online sign-in system, and the time of arrival will be recorded.

In cases of persistent lateness, the school will:

- Work with families to identify barriers and determine how the Attendance Leads can provide support;
- Notify parents/carers in writing when concerns have been identified and improvement is required;
- Seek advice and support from the Attendance Advice Officer where appropriate.

Responding to Non-Attendance

Initial Actions

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school by **8:30am** if their child will be absent for any reason.

When a pupil does not attend school, CPS will respond in the following way:

- If no message or notification is received by **10:00am**, the school will endeavour to contact parents/carers by telephone, email or text message;
- If no response is received, the school will continue attempts to make contact on subsequent days of absence;
- Attendance Leads may undertake a home visit where there is no response and safeguarding concerns exist;
- In accordance with statutory requirements, prolonged unexplained absences may be reported to the Local Authority (LA).

Frequent Absence

Whilst occasional absence due to illness is unavoidable, patterns of absence can have a significant impact on a child's education.

Where a pupil develops a pattern of absence, the school will work proactively with parents/carers to identify and address any barriers to attendance. Support may include:

- A telephone call from the Attendance Lead;
- A letter outlining attendance concerns and available support;
- Meetings with parents/carers;
- Involvement from the Attendance Advice Officer, where appropriate.

Where parents/carers fail to engage with support offered by the school, a **Notice to Improve** may be issued. This provides a final opportunity to engage with support and improve attendance before a Fixed Penalty Notice is considered.

The Attendance Advice Officer meets regularly with school staff to discuss attendance concerns. Where the school is unable to resolve attendance issues through its own interventions, a referral may be made for additional support.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil is classified as persistently absent when they miss **10% or more of available sessions** during the academic year.

Any absence can affect educational achievement, wellbeing and social development; therefore, the school relies on the full support and cooperation of parents/carers to address attendance concerns.

Attendance is monitored carefully alongside academic progress, as there is a strong link between attendance and attainment.

Attendance information is shared with parents/carers termly as part of the school's reporting processes.

Requests for Leave of Absence

Leave of absence during term time will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Applications must:

- Be submitted in advance by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides; and

- Demonstrate exceptional circumstances that warrant the request.

Valid reasons for authorised absence may include:

- Attendance at a funeral of a close family member;
- Religious observance, where the day is exclusively set apart by the religious body to which the family belongs;
- Attendance at approved educational visits or activities;
- Attendance at secondary school entrance assessments or similar educational assessments;
- Participation in a performance for which a local authority licence has been granted;
- Traveller families travelling for occupational purposes, where agreed with the school;
- Other exceptional circumstances as determined by the Headteacher.

All requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Headteacher will determine whether leave should be authorised and, if so, the number of days approved.

Leave of absence for family holidays during term time will not normally be authorised.

Requests should be submitted using the **Application for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances Form**, wherever possible at least two weeks before the proposed absence.

The form is available from the school office or electronically via Google Forms.

If leave is granted but a child fails to return to school at the end of the approved period, and the school and Local Authority are unable to establish the child's whereabouts following reasonable enquiries, the pupil's name may be removed from the admissions register in accordance with statutory guidance.

Unauthorised leave of absence may result in legal action, including the issuing of Penalty Notices.

Dental and Medical Appointments

Parents/carers are encouraged to arrange dental and medical appointments outside the school day wherever possible.

Where appointments during school hours are unavoidable, parents/carers should notify the school office in advance, providing details of:

- The appointment date and time;
- Collection arrangements;
- The anticipated return time to school.

Evidence of the appointment may be requested.

What Happens if My Child Misses School Without a Good Reason?

Where a child is absent without authorisation, the school and Local Authority may take action.

Before any enforcement measures are taken, CPS and Surrey County Council will seek to work in partnership with families, offering support to improve attendance and address any barriers.

These measures may include:

- Issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN);
- Seeking an Education Supervision Order through the Family Court;
- Prosecuting parents under relevant education legislation.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are fines issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution for certain school attendance offences.

They may be issued where a parent fails to ensure that a child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school at which they are registered.

In Surrey, Penalty Notices relating to attendance are issued by Surrey County Council on behalf of schools, in accordance with the national framework introduced on **19 August 2024**.

First Penalty Notice

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for a child:

- £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days;
- £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days.

Second Penalty Notice Within Three Years

If a second Penalty Notice is issued within three years:

- £160 per parent, per child, payable within 28 days.

There is no reduced payment rate.

Third Offence Within Three Years

Where a parent has already received two Penalty Notices for the same child within a three-year period, a third Penalty Notice will not be issued.

Instead, Surrey County Council may consider prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Upon conviction, the Magistrates' Court may impose a fine of up to £2,500 per parent, per child, alongside other legal measures available to the court.

National Threshold

A Penalty Notice must be considered where a pupil accumulates **10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks**.

Ten sessions are generally equivalent to five school days.

Reaching the threshold does not automatically result in a Penalty Notice. Each case will be considered individually, taking account of the circumstances and whether further support is appropriate.

Changing School

If parents/carers decide to transfer their child to another school, they should inform the School Office as soon as possible.

A pupil will be removed from the school admission register when the relevant statutory requirements for deletion have been met. Where a pupil is transferring to another school, the school will seek confirmation of the pupil's new school and their start date, where appropriate.

Following confirmation of the pupil's leaving date and in accordance with statutory requirements, the pupil's Common Transfer File (CTF) and educational records will be transferred securely to the new school. Where applicable, this will be completed within 15 school days of the pupil ceasing to be registered at the school.

The Local Authority will be notified when pupils join or leave the school, where required by statutory regulations.

Elective Home Education

Upon receipt of written notification that parents wish to educate their child at home, CPS will inform the Local Authority and remove the pupil from the admissions register where appropriate.

The school will not encourage Elective Home Education as an alternative to exclusion or because of poor attendance.

CPS recognises the right of parents to educate their children at home. Parents are not required to obtain the school's permission before making this decision. However, parents remain responsible for ensuring that their child receives a suitable full-time education.

Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff Will:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality;
- Accurately record attendance and absence;
- Raise attendance concerns with the DSL and Attendance Leads;
- Support pupils in developing positive attendance habits.

Governing Body and Headteacher Will:

- Promote a culture of excellent attendance throughout the school;
- Ensure this policy is implemented effectively;
- Monitor attendance patterns and trends;
- Ensure appropriate support and intervention is provided where concerns arise;
- Communicate attendance expectations regularly with parents/carers, including through newsletters;
- Work in partnership with families and external agencies to improve attendance outcomes.