



# Attendance Policy

This policy is written with regard to DfE document 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022' and advice from Suffolk County Council's Education Welfare Service.

### **1. Aim**

The aim of this policy is to encourage students to attend school every day (190 days per year) and to be able to take full advantage of the opportunities available. Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and it is also essential in order for students to maximise their chances of success. There is clear evidence showing strong links between excellent GCSE results and excellent school attendance.

### **2. Purpose**

The Education Act 1996 requires parents ('parents' refers to parents and carers) to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education. Parents are responsible for their child's school attendance and punctuality. Schools are responsible for recording student attendance twice each day: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all students of compulsory school age who are on the school's roll. In addition, lesson registers are completed each lesson.

#### The School Day

- The school day for students begins at 8.15am — by this time all students should be on the school's premises and at 8.15am to students enter the building to assemble outside form rooms.
- The first session begins at 8.20am when students are registered by their form tutor.
- Students entering the school building after 8.20am are late for school and are coded L in the register.
- Students entering the school building after 8.30am are late after the register has closed. This is coded as U and is an unauthorised absence.
- Afternoon registration takes place at 1.40pm.
- The school day ends at 3.00pm.

### **3. Attendance Procedures**

- Parents and carers should use the dedicated Absence Line (01787 326941) or email student absence@stourvalley.org to notify school before 9.00am on each day of absence.
- Authorised absence, eg. illness or medical appointments, must be supported by an email, letter or telephone call from parents explaining the reason for the absence.
- Parents who wish to collect their child from the premises during the school day will be expected to email the school in advance or bring a letter explaining the reason for absence.
- Students arriving at school after 8.20am should sign in at Reception. Students should sign out if leaving the premises before the end of the school day.
- Where parents fail to make contact providing a reason for absence, the School Attendance Officer will endeavour to contact them.

### **4. Responsibilities (In line with the Home-School Agreement)**

The school will ensure that:

- Students are registered accurately and efficiently;
- Attendance targets are set for individual students and year groups;
- Attendance and punctuality data is regularly reviewed.

Students are expected to:

- Attend school regularly and be registered punctually;
- Inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to absence;

Parents or Carers will:

- Ensure good attendance (97% and above);
- Inform the school on each day of absence and give a specific reason for the absence;
- Discuss any planned absences with the school in advance and seek the appropriate leave of absence in good time, being aware that this will only be coded as an authorised absence in exceptional circumstances.

## **5. Monitoring Attendance**

### Form Tutors

- Form Tutors have the responsibility of registering students' attendance at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions;
- Form Tutors will ensure that the registers are completed in accordance with the appropriate regulations.

### Attendance Team

The Attendance Team comprises the Attendance Officer and the Assistant Headteacher who will;

- liaise closely with Form Tutors in checking that registers are completed accurately;
- work closely with Year Leaders to identify at an early stage those students in need of interventions;
- ensure that the registers are available for scrutiny and for emergencies e.g. fire drills;
- ensure that all absences are recorded accurately and in accordance with regulations;
- reward students and tutor groups for excellent attendance via the school's rewards system and at end of term events;
- notifying parents on the day when a child is absent from school and where no reason has been received from the parents, in line with Safeguarding procedures;
- meet regularly to review the attendance of students and issue relevant letters to parents;
- meet with the Education Welfare Officer to monitor attendance and discuss individual concerns;
- provide the Governing Body with regular attendance updates;
- update the Headteacher to ensure Governors are informed of the school's response to its attendance target at the Full Governing Body meeting.

### Notification to Parents

The category of Persistent Absentee is applicable to any student whose attendance, for whatever reason, falls below 90%. When this happens the school is legally obliged to discuss the case with the Education Welfare Officer to agree a plan of action.

- The attendance team will meet regularly to monitor attendance and parents will receive notification by email (or letter if they are not online) when attendance drops below 93% without a valid health reason.
- If a student's attendance falls below 90%, and to try and avoid the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer, parents will be invited to discuss ways to improve attendance at school. At their discretion the attendance officer, with the agreement of the Year Leader, may choose to invite parents in prior to falling as low as 90% as a further preventative measure.
- Should the student's attendance then drop below 85% the Education Welfare Officer will insist that we request medical evidence\* to support all future absences relating to illness. Failure to provide documentation will result in an unauthorised absence mark being recorded.
- A referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer for either a Prevention meeting or a Fast Track Referral if attendance does not improve. In this case, parents will be invited to a meeting by letter.

*\*An example of medical evidence could be an appointment card, copy of a prescription, a hospital discharge letter or a stamped surgery compliment slip (a doctors' letter is not required).*

## **6. Punctuality**

- All students are expected to be punctual for the start of school, at 8.20am, and to lessons.
- Students arriving after registration at 8.20am will be marked as late using an L code.
- Students arriving after registers close at 8.30am will be marked as an unauthorised absence. This will be coded as a U.

## **7. Unauthorised Absence**

An absence will be recorded as unauthorised if:

- School has not given approval in advance for a student to be absent;
- School does not accept a given explanation as satisfactory justification for absence;
- Medical evidence requested by the School is not forthcoming;
- No explanation of absence is received within two weeks.

### Unauthorised Absence Procedures

- If a student of compulsory school age is absent, the register must show whether that absence is authorised or unauthorised. Parents may not authorise any absence as only the Headteacher has the authority to do this. In cases where parents seem to condone unauthorised absence, school may involve the Education Welfare Officer;
- The Governing Body have agreed to adopt the Government initiative of imposing Penalty Notices in cases of persistent unauthorised absence and persistent lateness to registration;
- Parents will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued once there have been 6 sessions (am or pm) of unauthorised absence;
- Once a child has 8 sessions (am or pm) of unauthorised absence a Penalty Notice will be issued;
- In accordance with Suffolk County Council's Fixed Penalty Notice Protocol, we will only issue one penalty notice per parent per child in an academic year. However, any further unauthorised leave of absence taken during term time will be referred to the Local Authority for legal action;
- Penalty Notices are issued, on behalf of the School by Suffolk County Council, to the family home. The fine for unauthorised absence currently stands at £60 per parent, per child. Non-payment of the Penalty within the 28 day time limit will result in an increased fine of £120 per parent, per child. Non-payment of the increased fine will trigger the prosecution process under the Provisions of Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act.
- In circumstances where a Penalty Notice has been served with no impact or attendance patterns show exceptionally poor attendance the school may request a prosecution through Section 444 (1) of the 1996 Education Act. This will result in prosecution through the courts if there is no improvement in attendance.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence is shown on reports and ultimately school references.

### Leave of Absence

As of September 2013 the Headteacher can no longer legally authorise any holiday during term time. Leave in term time will not be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional. "Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm." (DfE 'School Attendance 2020').

For extended periods of absence due to medical procedures a copy of the appointment letter should be provided.

**8. Monitoring and review**

The Governing Body will be responsible for reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of this policy annually. Any changes will be made in line with legislation.

Ratified by Governing Body	SVCS LGB
Date	28 November 2023