

	Reviewed	November 2024
	Next Review	September 2025

St Lawrence C of E (Aided) Junior School

Attendance (Pupils) Policy and Penalty Notices Information

This document is a statement of the philosophy and strategies for attendance at St Lawrence Junior School.

The staff of St Lawrence Junior School is committed, in partnership with the parents, pupils, governors and the LA, to building a school which serves the community, and of which the community is proud.

The school staff, alongside the Local Authority, firmly believes that all pupils benefit from 100% school attendance. To this end, we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance, and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school every day
- attend school punctually
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- discuss with their class teacher, Head of Year or Headteacher any problems preventing them from attending school.

We expect that all parents/carers and persons who have day to day responsibility for the children will:

- encourage 100% school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and have completed any homework they have been given
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.
- notify the school immediately of any change to contact details
- notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child.
- contact the school office every day a child is absent by 9.20am. The school office can also be emailed on reportanabsence@stlawrence-

junior.surrey.sch.uk. If you do email please include the child's name, the reason for absence and how long you expect the absence to last.

We expect that school staff will:

- provide a caring and welcoming learning environment
- provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns
- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, as required by current legislation
- monitor every pupil's attendance
- contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- refer irregular or broken patterns of attendance to the Head and School Business Manager who are responsible for monitoring attendance. They will liaise closely with the SLT, the Inclusion Officer and where appropriate the School's Home Link Worker.
- inform parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, including lateness
- ask the Home School Link worker to follow up concerns about attendance by contacting or visiting parents/carers at home

Categorisation of Absence

Any student who is on roll but not present in school must be recorded within one of these categories:

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for students where no reason has been provided or whose absence is deemed to be without a 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
- Holidays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

2. Authorised absence

This is for those students 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. This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits
 - Sporting activities
 - Link courses or approved education off site activities
- Most types of dual registration

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will **not** be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a the school inviting you to an attendance meeting and legal proceedings could be taken (see penalty notices).

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 at least two weeks prior to the leave date. This form can be found on the school website or obtained from the school office. The headteacher, who may consult with the Chair of Governors, will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence requested. Each request will be considered separately and a decision made based on the reasons for each request. In reaching a decision the following factors may be taken into account:

- the child's record of attendance for the current academic year is not below 100%
- that the Application for Leave of Absence does not exceed a maximum of ten school sessions in a ten week period (apart from in very exceptional circumstances in which case the request would be notified to the Governing Body for their consideration)
- the timing of the leave of absence, ensuring that it would not prevent the child from missing any assessments, examinations or school events

Please note:

- *any requests for children in Year 6 during the SAT's period will not be authorised*

Family holidays

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and are available from the school office and on the school's website. We expect that parents/carers will book

their family holidays within the school holiday dates. St Lawrence Junior School will not authorise holidays during term time.

Diarrhoea and Vomiting exclusion

Diarrhoea and/or vomiting commonly affects children and can be caused by a number of different germs, including viruses, parasites and bacteria. Infections can be easily spread from person to person (by unwashed hands), especially in children. In general, it is recommended that any child with diarrhoea and/or vomiting symptoms must stay away until they have been free of symptoms for 48 hours (the '48 hour rule') and feel well.

If your child is sick at school, we will ask you or your emergency contact to take your child home. They should not return for 48 hours to the school premises. We appreciate that this is inconvenient in many cases, but you will appreciate that we do this in all cases and it should reduce the risk of infection for all children and staff in school. As an example, if your child is sick at lunchtime on a Tuesday, they should not return to school until after lunch on Thursday, provided there have not been any further episodes of vomiting and/or diarrhoea.

Thank you for your understanding with this. Further guidance on infection control may be found on the [Public Health England website](#).

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 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, a form for this purpose can be collected from the school office. Evidence of the appointment may be requested.

Performances

Leave of absence in order for a child to act in a stage or film performance, or attend a modelling assignment or similar, is at the Headteacher's discretion. Three days per year will normally be permitted if the child's record of attendance is 100% to that point, and the timing of the leave does not prevent the child attending examinations or assessments.

Timeline for Managing Poor Attendance

- 90 - 100% attendance – If a class teacher is concerned about attendance, they will investigate and notify Head Teacher of concerns who will contact the parent if appropriate. Pupils will be discussed in the SLT attendance meeting which is held once each half term.
- 85 - 90% attendance - School intervention letters to be sent home.

- Below 85% - You will be invited to an attendance meeting to discuss your child's attendance. and legal proceedings could be taken (see penalty notices)..
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, legal proceedings could be taken (see penalty notices). Unauthorised absences are calculated across the school year and do not have to be consecutive days for a penalty notice to be issued.
- For the cases that require intensive family support or Early Help, the school may make a request for support via Surrey C-SPA.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below: -

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances: -

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area and remaining in the UK, but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Punctuality and Lateness

Please note that, if pupils arrive at school after 8.55am a late mark (Code 'L') will be recorded and if a child arrives after 9.20am it will be recorded 'as late after close of register' (Code 'U') and counted as an unauthorised absence for that session. Pupils arriving after these times must enter the school by the main entrance and report to the reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded via the sign in system.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Responding To Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- on the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by St Lawrence, the school will contact them that day by sending out an email and an SMS in the morning.
- if there is no response, the school will try to contact the parent/carer by phone the same day. If there is still no response, the DSL will be notified to make an informed decision of the next steps that should be taken.
- failure to comply with the attendance expectations may result in further action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

Changing Schools

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

- 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 on to the new school as soon as possible. The Pupil Tracking Office at County Hall 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 the school.

Penalty Notices

The Surrey Attendance Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and require the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

1. Pupils identified by police and Surrey Attendance Advice Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
2. 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.

3. 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.
4. 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.

Penalty Notice Fines for School Attendance are Changing!

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following Changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines Issued after 19th August 2024.

All the money from the Penalty Notices goes directly to Surrey County Council

Per parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice Fines will now be Issued to each parent, for each child That was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for Term time leave, would result in Each parent receiving 3 separate Fines.

5 days of Term Time leave

Penalty Notice Fines will be issued for Term Time Leave of 5 or more days. Inset training days are school days and can be included in the 5 or more days where there was intent to be absent for term time leave.

10 sessions of unauthorised Absence in a 10-week period

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is Issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will Be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child If paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance, the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance, a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court, Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 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

Appendix 2 (Late letter 1)

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forenames» has been arriving late at school. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forenames» was late (Code L):

«dates_of_lates_before»

Total lates before registration closed: «total_lates_before» half day sessions

At our school the register is taken at 8:55am and at 1:30pm.

A pupil's lateness will seriously disrupt their learning and potentially disrupt the learning of other children.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve punctuality. If we can help in any way please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 3 (Late letter 2)

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has arrived after the register has been closed. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code U):

«dates_of_lates_after»

Total lates before registration closed: «total_lates_after» half day sessions

At our school the register is taken at 8:55am and is closed at 9:20am for the morning session and taken again at 1:30pm and closed at 1:35pm for the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after the session has closed will be marked “U” which records the absence as unauthorised for that session.

Arriving after the register has closed is seriously disrupting your child’s learning and is impacting on their overall attendance.

Persistent late arrival may lead to further action such as the issuing of a penalty notice or prosecution.

If «forename» continues to arrive late after the register has closed we will contact you to arrange a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 4 (Absence letter 1)

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been absent from school. I attach for your information a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was absent.

A pupil's absence can seriously disrupt their learning, not only do they miss out on teaching while they are away but they are less prepared for the future lessons when they return.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve «forename»'s attendance. If we can help in any way please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 5 (Absence letter 2)

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

Despite previous warnings, I note with concern that your child's attendance at school has made no significant improvement. «forename»'s attendance at school is currently «percentage_attendance»% which means «he_she» has missed «total_authorised_absence» half day sessions for authorised absence and «total_unauthorised_absence» half day sessions for unauthorised absence. This will have an impact on your child's education which we cannot ignore.

As there has been no improvement in «forename»'s attendance. I must advise you that further absences from school as a result of illness may require medical evidence (e.g. copy of a prescription, Doctors/Dentist appointment card). If medical evidence is not provided when required, further absences will be marked as unauthorised.

I am now inviting you to attend a meeting to discuss this further. The time and date have been set for ?? at ?? It is important that you and «forename» attend this meeting for us to explore the issues around poor attendance. The meeting will be attended by:

??

If this appointment is inconvenient, I would be grateful if you could contact me so that an alternative time can be arranged.

If you do not attend this meeting and «forename»'s absence continues to deteriorate, further action may be taken such as the issuance of a Penalty Notice and possible prosecution.

Thank you for your co-operation

Yours sincerely

Headteacher