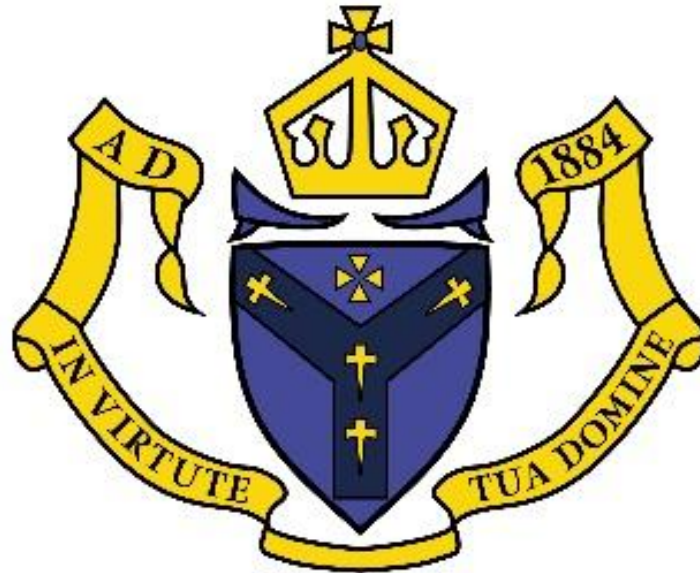




Sissinghurst VA Church of England Primary School

Enjoy, Achieve and Celebrate Together in Faith



The Governors and Staff of Sissinghurst (VA) Church of England Primary School believe the policies and procedures we write help us to continuously improve the school and develop our pupils to become life-long learners and valuable citizens of the future. We are dedicated to providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice.

Our Christian values of:

Endurance · Koinonia · Friendship · Wisdom

underpin all our policies. We actively reject any form of discrimination.

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Policy Title: | Attendance Policy |
| Date: | September 2020 |
| Review Date: | September 2022 |
| Reviewed By: | Policy Committee |
| Approved By: | Policy Committee |

Statement of Intent

Sissinghurst School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Sissinghurst School.

This Policy includes the following sections:

1. Legal responsibilities and School procedures
2. Lateness and Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness
3. Absence and Penalty Notice Proceedings for Absence
4. Local Authority Action

Appendix 1 Request for Leave of Absence in Term Time

Appendix 2 School Based Intervention Flow Chart

1. Legal Responsibilities and School Procedures

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk, encouraging anti-social behavior.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.40am. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

The Role of the School Staff

At Sissinghurst VA CE Primary School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for attendance.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies Miss Harrison (**the Attendance Officer**) of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence with a seven day reply deadline before the absence is treated as unauthorised.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed termly and at times of concern of their child's attendance figure

If a new pupil has a history of poor attendance at their previous school, there will be a pre-start attendance meeting held.

Timeline of School Action for Poor Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance – class teacher/Attendance Officer to investigate and notify Headteacher of concerns
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents.
- Below 90% - Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the Kent County Council (KCC) Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- Penalty Notice referral will be made where the absences have not been authorised and referral criteria are met.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance 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 but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

2. Lateness and Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Lateness

At Sissinghurst School the register is taken at 8.55am and 1.00pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.30am and 1.30pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents. **It can provide grounds for prosecution or Penalty Notice.** (See part 4 of this Policy for information about the powers of the Local Authority to impose Penalty Notices.)

3. Absence and Penalty Notice Proceedings for Absence

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty of an offence** of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- due to religious observance
- due to failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

Authorising Absence

Please refer to Appendix 1 for a Request for Leave of Absence in Term Time. Copies of this form are available from the school office. **All requests must be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the requested date.**

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, agreement to each request for leave of absence is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once a decision not to authorise the leave is taken, it cannot be appealed or authorised retrospectively.

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. Family holidays, for whatever reason, cannot be approved, even if the parent is unable to take time off work at any other time. Requests for holidays in term time will **not** therefore be authorised.

Absence (leave) during term time can only be approved in **"exceptional circumstances"**.

An "exceptional circumstance" would have to be defined as an unavoidable cause e.g., a one-off emergency situation which prevents the child from attending school. Other examples could be:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers **can** agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion

can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and a letter or telephone message from the parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Where there is doubt, the Headteacher, on behalf of the Governing Body, should take a consistent approach.

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

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised. If the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral to the Attendance Service is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings MUST be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

4. Local Authority Action

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Penalty Notices Proceedings for persistent lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.

- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

Local Authority Action may include: -

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.



Appendix 1

Application for Leave of Absence from School During Term Time

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence in term time unless there are “exceptional circumstances”. These require the absence to be due to an unavoidable cause e.g., a one-off emergency situation which prevents the child from attending school. Agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits.

If the absence is not authorised and the leave is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Attendance Service, who will issue a Penalty Notice for £120 to be paid within 28 days (or £60 if paid within 21 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Please note that since September 2013 family holidays cannot be authorised as absence by law. However, please also use this form to advise us of any leave of absence dates. The school website includes guidance about whether a Penalty Notice will apply.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Name of Child(ren) | |
| Date of Birth | |
| Class | |

| | |
|--|--|
| First Date of Absence | |
| Date of Return | |
| Number of Days Requested | |
| Reason for absence taken during term time | |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Parental Name | |
| Parental Signature | |
| Date | |

For School Office use only:

| | |
|---|--|
| Total sessions of pupil absence this year | |
| Of which were unauthorised | |
| Conflict with statutory assessments/ tests | |

Appendix 2

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

