

Stepgates Community School



Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

At Stepgates Community School everyone has the opportunity to learn and grow together, as independent, enthusiastic and confident learners in an inclusive, creative, safe, healthy environment.

This policy is based on our Mission Statement and Aims for our school.

Introduction

Stepgates Community School, along with other local schools and Surrey County Council, firmly believe that all children benefit from regular school attendance. School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. To this end the school will do all it 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.

Parents/carers and the school staff should work in partnership in making education a success and in ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. As parents, it is their responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school and return home safely.

Aims

Our attendance policy aims to:

- support children and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- enable all children to have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- enable children to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure school attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets.

Relationship to other documents and policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents and policies:

- Equalities Policy
- Children with Medical Needs Policy
- Inclusion Policy

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 daily. 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.

Being at school

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents/carers and the school staff should work in partnership in making education a success and in ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. As parents, it is their responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school and return home safely.

Expectations

At Stepgates we expect that all pupils will:

- attend school daily;
- attend school punctually;
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day;
- discuss promptly with their class teacher, any problems that deter them from attending school.

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

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that their child/children in their care arrive at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- ensure that they contact the school daily by 9am whenever the child/children is unable to attend school;
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school;
- notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child;
- notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.

We expect that school staff will:

- provide a welcoming atmosphere;
- provide a safe learning environment;
- provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's concerns;
- keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality.
- contact the parent/carer by phone or text message if no message is received by 9am to explain their child's absence.

- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested. Examples of:

Authorised absences:

- Genuine illness of the pupil;
- Hospital/dental/doctor's appointment for the child;
- Major religious observances;
- Visits to prospective new schools;
- External exams or educational assessments.

Unauthorised absences:

- Shopping /day trip/visit to a theme park;
- A birthday treat;
- Oversleeping due to a late night;
- Looking after other children/other family member;
- Appointments for other family members.

- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition.
- Regularly inform parents of the % attendance of all pupils.
- Make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly.
- Meet regularly with the Inclusion Officer (IO) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Inclusion Service. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Inclusion Service may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order.
- Will notify the Local education Authority (LA) after 15 days sickness.
- Will notify IO after 10 days unexplained absence.

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. School doors are open from 8.40am until 8.50am.

- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.
- Registration takes place at 8.45am and pupils who arrive after this will be recorded as late to school.
- Registers close at 9.15am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority.
- Afternoon registration is taken at 1.15pm.
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will be dealt with through the Home-School Link Worker and may be referred to Inclusion Service.
- Children's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

Encouraging Attendance

Stepgates Community School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- by providing a caring and welcoming learning environment;
- by responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils;
- by marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration. If children arrive at school after the close of the register without a written explanation, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the child's name recorded in the late book in case of a fire drill;
- by publishing and displaying attendance statistics;
- by requiring children to regularly record their own attendance and punctuality;
- by celebrating good and improved attendance;
- by monitoring children's attendance, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Inclusion Service if the irregular attendance continues.

Responding To Non-Attendance

When a child 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 10 a.m. the school will endeavour to contact them that day.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If by the end of the second day, there has still been no contact made with a parent/carer, the school will invite them into school to discuss their concerns as soon as contact is made. The school will tell parents/carers that if the absence persists that a referral will be made to the Inclusion Service. If the school has any safeguarding concern regarding the absence, a referral will be made to Surrey Children's Services.

Pupil Leaving During the School Day

During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the children are during the school day.

- Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents are requested to **confirm in writing**, by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time.
- Children must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return.

- Where a child is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the school office before the child is allowed to leave the site.
- All children leaving with permission will be given a written authorisation slip by the school in case of being stopped by Truancy Patrol.
- If a child leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted. *Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the child as a missing person.*

Frequent Absence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

In cases where a child begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/carer through discussions with the child and parent/carer. If school are unsuccessful in resolving the issues the school will refer to the Inclusion Officer, who meets with school staff on a regular basis.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% 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/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The Department for Education (DfE) and the Local Authority monitor levels of PA children and levels of absence in all schools.

Requests for leave of absence

The school holiday dates and end of Key Stage Assessment dates are published a year in advance and leave of absence will not be authorised during these assessment periods. INSET days are published as soon as the school have agreed these, but may be subject to change.

In line with the Government's amendments to the 2006 regulations (Appendix A), holidays during term time will NOT be authorised. The Headteacher and Governors have determined that:

- In exceptional circumstances permission may be granted for a maximum of five days of holiday providing a child has a good attendance record over the previous three terms.
- Where leave of absence in term time is due to exceptional circumstances, an application form (Appendix B) must be completed. This is available from the school office, school website or by writing to the Head teacher. It must be submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, no less than 2 weeks prior to the requested date. Consideration will then be given to the child's previous school attendance and that the time requested does not exceed five school days in any one academic year.

- If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and Inclusion Service will be notified.

In accordance with guidance from Surrey County Council, no holidays will be authorised at the beginning of the academic year, or during May due to end of year assessments. No parents/carers can demand leave of absence for their children as a right. Holidays taken without the permission of the Governing Body may result in a Penalty Notice being issued.

All requests for leave will be considered on a case by case basis by the Governing Body that may, at its discretion, delegate some decisions to the Head teacher. Any appeal will be heard by the Governing Body, whose decision will be final.

Penalty Notices

A Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority (SCC) as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

In line with the amendments made to The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 please note the following:

- The Headteacher can now request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents, when children are taken out of school for 5 or more days holiday or leave of absence without school authorisation;
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days;
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance;
- Penalty notices are issued to each parent, for each child

When a child comes to the notice of the Local Authority, the child's pattern of school attendance is investigated. If there are unauthorised absences in the preceding 4 months, a warning letter may be sent to the parents/carers. If there are further unauthorised absences during the subsequent 15 school days, a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent/carer.

If there is no significant improvement in attendance in the 3 subsequent weeks, a Penalty Notice will be issued. Again, the Penalty Notice fines are as follows:

£60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

Inclusion Service can also investigate legal proceeding against parents under section 444 Education Act 1996 or apply to family proceeding court for an ESO to secure regular attendance.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance

Stepgates Community School hold regular attendance panels in conjunction with the IO, and any parents whose children are identified as a cause for concern will be invited to attend. If there is no improvement in school attendance Stepgates Community School will refer to the

IO who work in partnership with the school and parents in support of children who are failing to attend school on a regular basis.

Inclusion Service may also issue a Penalty Notice to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Inclusion Officer. Before a Penalty notice is issued, parents/carers will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

Changing schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school that they inform our school staff as soon as possible. A child will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the date the child will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- the address of the new school;
- the new home address, if it is known.

The child's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Local Authority Tracking Officer and Inclusion Service.

School Organisation and Responsibilities

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the School has the following responsibilities:

Headteacher will:

- discuss any attendance/absence concerns with the child's parent/carer and offer support from the Home-School Link Worker where appropriate;
- consult and liaise closely with the Inclusion Service at least once a term, and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay;
- implement the attendance award scheme with assemblies, certificates and rewards on a monthly/termly basis;
- ensure that attendance percentages/graphs are displayed around the school;
- set annual whole school attendance targets with the Inclusion Service;
- provide a termly attendance report to governors.

Governing Body will:

- adopt the whole policy;
- approve annual whole school attendance targets;
- receive a termly report on attendance from the Headteacher;
- ensure that the appropriate resources to support good attendance are provided,

within budget constraints.

Welfare Assistant with responsibility for attendance will:

- have appropriate access to attendance data;
- initiate the procedure for contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence;
- keep a daily record of absences and the reasons for the absence;
- follow up any unexplained non-attendance;
- keep an on-going record of authorised absences for each child during the year;
- where appropriate, work in collaboration with the Inclusion Service to promote good attendance at school.

Designated member of the Admin staff will:

- oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually;
- liaise with the Inclusion Service regularly and share relevant information;
- share any concerns regarding the early identification of poor attendance or disaffection with the Headteacher and Inclusion Officer.

Class teachers will:

- complete registers accurately and punctually twice daily;
- record all known reasons for absences in the register;
- inform the designated person in charge of overall attendance/Headteacher of any concerns;
- be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to the Headteacher.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Children's attendance at Stepgates will be monitored in the following ways:

The Welfare Assistant will

- monitor the daily attendance of identified children's, contact parents/carers when necessary and make the class teacher and Headteacher aware of any issues affecting a child's attendance in school.

The Headteacher will:

- monitor individual, class and whole school attendance monthly;
- evaluate monthly and termly attendance and report to parents/carers via the school newsletters on whole school and class attendance;
- evaluate individual children's attendance termly and report to parents/carers on their child's school attendance termly;
- make attendance data available to the Local Authority as required for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

The Local Authority Inclusion Officer (IO) will:

- monitor the attendance of all children on a regular basis;
- review attendance data provided by the school, discuss any concerns with the Head teacher and follow up with parents/carers as appropriate.
- work with school staff and parents/carers to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence;
- try to resolve any attendance issues referred by the school, but if attempts to improve attendance have failed, but unauthorised absence persists, the IO can use sanctions such as parenting contracts, penalty notices and prosecution or consider an Education Supervision Order.

Governing Body will:

- monitor and evaluate termly and annual attendance through reports from the Headteacher.

Review: Spring 2024

Appendices:

Appendix A: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Appendix B: Application for Leave of Absence Form

APPENDIX A: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

Term-time holiday

The **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006** currently allow headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a **family holiday** during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Amendments have been made to the 2007 Regulations in the **Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents must pay £60 if they pay within 28 days; or £120 if they pay within 42 days.

Amendments to 2007 regulations reduced the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

Appendix B: Application for Leave of Absence Form**Stepgates Community School***Learning and Growing Together**Headteacher: Mrs Tara Ford***APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Child's name 1 _____ Class _____

Child's name 2 _____ Class _____

Date(s) of requested absence

From: Day (e.g. Monday) _____ Date (day, month, year) _____

To: Day (e.g. Monday) _____ Date (day, month, year) _____

Total number of days absent from school would be _____

Reason for Requested Absence: (Please provide full explanation of the 'exceptional circumstances' requiring absence during term time. If more space is required, please continue on reverse of the form)

Parent/Carer name _____

Parent/Carer signature _____

Date _____

Please note the following:

In line with our Attendance Policy, Government Regulations and Laws we do not authorise any absences for holiday purposes during term time unless in exceptional circumstances. Where a child is taken out of school during term time without the written authorisation and approval of the Headteacher, each parent/carers may be liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child. Further details regarding this can be found in our Attendance Policy on the school website: www.stepgatesschool.co.uk

For office use only: All Leave of Absence requests to be passed to the Headteacher for final decision.

Request denied _____ Request approved _____ Fine Yes / No

Headteacher's signature _____

A letter informing parents/carers of the outcome of the request will be sent home.

Comment(s) to be included in letter: