

Tillingbourne Junior School
Attendance policy for pupils

Adopted September 2024

Review: 3 yearly

VISION:	VALUES:	RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS (RRS)	BEHAVIOUR
<p>At Tillingbourne we want children to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Love Learning 2. Find their strengths and talents 3. Achieve more than they thought possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspirational • Responsible • Resilient • Curious • Confident • Caring 	<p>FOCUS RIGHTS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The right to learn 2. The right to be heard 3. The right to be me 	<p>All children must be:</p> <p>Ready</p> <p>Respectful</p> <p>Safe</p>

Review Date: September 2027

INTRODUCTION

The staff of Tillingbourne School are committed, in partnership with parents/guardians/carers, pupils, governors, trustees and the Local Authority, to building a school which serves the community and of which the community is proud. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence – ***to achieve more than they thought possible.***

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and all pupils should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS SO IMPORTANT

All pupils are expected to attend 100% of the time unless their absence is authorised by the Head teacher. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and condoning absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility parents/guardians/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily
- Monitor every pupil's attendance;
- Contact parents/guardians/carers as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend, where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes authorising the absence;

- Inform you regularly about:
 - o how your daughter/son is performing in school
 - o what their attendance and punctuality rates are and
 - o how these relate to their attainments
- Invite you to discuss persistent absence with the appropriate person – Attendance Officer /Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/ Surrey’s Inclusion Officer if absence reaches 95% or 20 missed sessions (10 days) over the year.
- Produce individualised support plans to promote better school attendance
- Make referrals to surrey County councils inclusion officers

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/guardians/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and which the Headteacher has not authorised. Pupils with unauthorised absences may be referred to The School Inclusion Officer and this may lead to legal proceedings being taken by the Local Authority, if attendance does not then improve. Examples of absence which will not be authorised include:

- parents/guardians/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after close of registration
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

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/guardians/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better 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.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason; this equates to 19 days over the year. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents/guardians/carers’ fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school before 8.50am to report a child’s sickness, on each and every day they are absent.
- Contact the school promptly whenever a problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;

- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to Surrey's Inclusion Officer if, despite the school's efforts to work with parents/carers, the pupil attendance remains a concern.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

There are many occasions when we may need to contact parents/guardians/carers about many things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your daughter/son by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed.

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY INCLUSION OFFICER

Parents/guardians/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Inclusion Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents/guardians/carers or children may wish to contact the Inclusion Officer themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

The local authority Inclusion Officer meets regularly with the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher.

LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their Class Teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8:45am** and we expect pupils to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by **8:50am** and pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9:30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a pupil arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but late after close of registration and this will be classified as an unauthorised absence unless reasons for absence are provided by the parent and school accept them as reasonable. If the absence is unauthorised this may result in a referral to the local authority Inclusion Officer and legal sanctions if the problem persists.

If a pupil has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 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.

School will only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

Children should not be taken out of school during term time. The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and parents/guardians/carers are expected to book their family holidays during the school holidays.

On occasions, where it is felt to be impossible to avoid the need for absence during the school term, parents must request leave of absence from the Headteacher by completing a 'Request for Absence from School in Exceptional Circumstances' form.

If pupils are taken out of school without the Headteacher's authorisation the absence will be marked as unauthorised and s/he may request that the Local Authority issue a penalty notice – please see details regarding when and to whom penalty notices may be issued below – Appendix C.

ABSENCE DUE TO ILLNESS / APPOINTMENTS

Pupils may have dental or medical appointments in school time. However, parents/guardians/carers should try to make routine appointments during the school holidays or after school hours. If a pupil needs to leave the premises during school time they must bring a note from home. They must be signed out at Reception before leaving and be signed in on their return. These are important procedures in helping to ensure the safety and welfare of all our pupils. Where there is an excessive amount of absence due to sickness the school may request that medical evidence be provided and, if this is not provided, such absence will not be authorised and the school is likely to refer the matter to the local authority Inclusion Officer to investigate further.

THOSE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR ATTENDANCE MATTERS IN THIS SCHOOL ARE:

Headteacher/attendance officer – Mr Ben Stevenson

Deputy Headteacher – Mrs Emma Lines

ELSA – Mrs Sandra Haynes

HSLW – Mrs Chris Albrecht

SUMMARY

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/guardians/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/guardians/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents/guardians/carers and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

APPENDIX A

School Organisation

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/guardians/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:

Governors to:

- adopt the whole policy;

Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher to:

- ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that resources are provided;
- ensure that the Attendance Officer has time-tabled periods for liaison and follow-up work with the local authority Inclusion Officer and appropriate access to attendance data;
- oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually;
- provide regular attendance data to all relevant parties.

Attendance Officer to:

- consult and liaise closely with the local authority Inclusion Officer on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay;
- work in close collaboration with the local authority Inclusion Officer during their half termly register analysis;
- monitor and evaluate attendance with the local authority Inclusion Officer.
- identify pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern;
- Put in place and monitor attendance interventions for individuals whose attendance or punctuality is a concern

Class Teachers to:

- complete registers accurately and punctually twice daily;
- follow up any unexplained non-attendance;
- record all reasons for absences in the register;
- inform the attendance officer of concerns about attendance or lateness;
- be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to the Attendance officer/Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher.
- Inform the office staff immediately when a child who has an attendance concern is not at school
- Speak to parents/carers about school absence in the first instance of concern about falling attendance.

Office Staff to:

- administer attendance daily;
- check pupil lateness;
- inform the attendance officer of attendance patterns;
- support teachers in ensuring absence is authorized;
- carry out procedures for contacting parents on the first day of absence;

APPENDIX B

Attendance Panels:

The attendance officer will meet half termly with the Deputy Headteacher/Head teacher with the objective of targeting low level attendance concerns and implementing attendance interventions. Actions to improve attendance for the following will be decided upon;

- those with attendance of below 95%
- those who have had three broken weeks of attendance within a half-term
- those who have more than 3 late marks within a half term

It is hoped that the result of holding these panels can address and raise whole school attendance, and raise the profile of attendance generally without the need to involve the inclusion officer immediately. The aim of the panels is for the school to address those concerns with parents/guardians/carers and pupils early on.

Once a child has been identified, the following steps may be taken;

- A meeting between the child and the class teacher to address reasons for low attendance
- A call to parents/carers to address reasons for low attendance and offer support to improve attendance
- A letter written to parents/carers to outline the importance of good attendance and identify the next steps if attendance does not improve
- A meeting with parents to discuss how attendance can be improved including writing an attendance improvement plan
- Referral to the local authority Inclusion Officer

APPENDIX C

Penalty Notices

The Education Welfare, 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 requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £160 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

If a parent/carer has incurred a penalty notice relating to the same child/children during a rolling 3 year period, activated from the date of the first penalty notice, 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 within 28 days will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

If 2 penalty notices relating to the same child/children have been incurred in the rolling 3 year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then the parent/carer will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will consider prosecution.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued

- A Penalty Notice may be issued to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are failing to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or the local authority Inclusion Officer.

- Where a child is taken out of school during term time for 10 sessions (5 days) within a rolling 10-week period without the authority of the Headteacher. **Each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child**. 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 they persist in taking their child out of school for unauthorised leave.
- Pupils identified by police and the local authority Inclusion Officer engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where attendance has fallen below 90% and supportive measures have not led to improvements. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

APPENDIX D

Absence Trigger Points

The following steps will be taken if a pupil's attendance begins to decline:

1. **After 12 sessions (6 days) – 97% attendance**
A letter will be sent home outlining the importance of regular attendance and reporting the current attendance level. Support will be offered to improve attendance if needed. At this point, the class teacher will also reach out to discuss any barriers to attendance and explore ways to help.
2. **After 20 sessions (10 days) – 95% attendance**
A phone call will be made by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, or Inclusion Lead to discuss the school's concerns and explore potential solutions to improve attendance.
3. **After 38 sessions (19 days) – 90% attendance**
A formal meeting will be arranged with the Headteacher and Inclusion Lead to develop a support plan. This stage may include involvement from the Home School Link Worker (HSLW), Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA), and the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCo) for a comprehensive approach to supporting attendance.

If the above steps do not lead to an improvement in attendance, a referral will be made to the Inclusion Officer, and potential sanctions may be imposed by the Inclusion Service.

In addition, if a pupil has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 week period, the school may issue a penalty notice, in line with the Department for Education's 2024 statutory guidance on improving school attendance. Please refer to Appendix C for more details on this process.