

# Attendance Policy

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# **Steel River Academy Trust**

## **Attendance Policy**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1** Steel River Academy Trust's expectation is that all children on roll attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate, consistent procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our schools a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good and we will also make the best provision possible for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school. We take a trust wide approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents or carers, pupils and all members of staff that children are attending school as often as they should be.
- 1.2** Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the Local Governing Committee is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

### **2 Definitions**

#### **2.1 Authorised Absence**

- Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered as justification for absence. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent contacts the school on the first day to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents or carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents or carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent or carer takes a child out of school to go on holiday during school hours, or there is doubt about an illness, the absence would not be authorised.

#### **2.2 Unauthorised Absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent or carer. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent or carer.
- If a child is more than 40 minutes late after registration closes, with no good reason, this is classified as an unauthorised absence.

### **2.3 Medical or Dental Appointments**

- Parents/Carers should make every effort to ensure appointments are made outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, children should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
- If registration is missed due to a medical or dental appointment, the absence will be authorised.

## **3 Absence Procedures for Parents**

- 3.1** If a child is going to be absent from school, the child's parent or carer must contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence. The parent or carer can either leave a message detailing the name, year group and reason for absence or report this information to a member of staff in the school's office. The school's telephone number is: 01642 454339
- 3.2** Notification may be given to school prior to the day of absence if, for example, a child has a medical appointment.
- 3.3** If a parent or carer does not call the school to report an absence, the school will make contact to determine their child's whereabouts in compliance with the school's safeguarding procedures.
- 3.4** Regular absence due to illness may require parents to provide the school with medical evidence such as an appointment card or a prescription note. If these items are not presented, it may result in the absence being classified as unauthorised.
- 3.5 COVID related absences**
- Parents/carers must inform school if their child display signs and symptoms of COVID.
  - Parents should arrange for their child to have a COVID PCR test.
  - Parent must provide evidence of their test results.
  - Children no longer need to self-isolate where a family member has had a positive result or has COVID symptoms, unless the child displays symptoms themselves.
  - School will mark all COVID related absences as an X unless they have a positive result and it will be marked as I.

## **4 Absence Procedures for School Staff**

- 4.1** When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register to inform the school office staff, who will endeavour to contact a parent or carer on the first day of absence by 9:30am.
- 4.2** If the school is unable to contact the parent or carer, they will use the other contacts that are recorded on SIMS. If the school is still unable to make contact within 42 hours, the Trust's Attendance and Welfare Officer or a member of school staff will make a home visit to ascertain the safety of the child in compliance with the school's safeguarding procedures.
- 4.3** Attendance is monitored half-termly by the Safeguarding Lead in conjunction with the Trust's Attendance Welfare Officer.

**4.4** When a child is absent due to COVID school staff will ring on the first day to check on their health and will call if they do not return after their isolation period.

## **5. Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

**5.1** A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will damage the child's education and the school needs parental support and co-operation to tackle this.

**5.2** The schools, alongside the Trust's Attendance and Welfare Officer, thoroughly monitors all absence and the reasons given on a half-termly basis. When pupils who are persistently absent or in danger of being persistently absent are identified, the school takes action as detailed below.

**5.3** If a child's attendance falls below 96% in an academic year, parents will receive Letter 1 from the Headteacher or delegated person. However, during the first half term of each academic year, attendance figures can fall below the 96% mark with a single days absence. Therefore, during Autumn 1, the Safeguarding lead will monitor the reasons for absence and will only send the letter 1 if there are historical/ongoing concerns with absence. The child's attendance will be closely monitored by school until attendance improves to above 95%.

**5.4** If a child's attendance falls below 92% in an academic year, parents will receive Letter 2 from the Headteacher.

**5.5** If the child's attendance does not improve or stays the same, an immediate referral will be made to the Trust's Attendance and Welfare Officer. The AWO will contact the parents or carers of the child to discuss the issue and to offer any support needed. All our persistent absentee pupils and their parents will have a personalised action plan created by the school which may include allocation of additional support through School staff, School Nurse or Attendance and Welfare Officer. This is also combined with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

**5.6** If the child's attendance does not improve or continues to stay the same, a formal Attendance Case Conference meeting will be arranged by the Attendance and Welfare Officer with parents or carers.

**5.7** The Attendance and Welfare Officer 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 Trust's Attendance and Welfare Officer.

**5.8** The school, supported by the Local Authority, reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

## **6. Repeated Unauthorised Absences**

**6.1** The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers to discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school may then refer to the

Trust's Attendance and Welfare Officer, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

## **7. Long-term Absence**

**7.1** When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for several days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work, if parents and carers feel that this is appropriate.

## **8. Lateness**

**8.1** Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss learning and vital information for the day ahead. Pupils arriving late disrupts lessons which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

**8.2** If a child arrives later than the start of the school day but within the first 40 minutes, they will be marked in the register as late. If a child arrives at school after the first 40 minutes of the school day, they will be marked as 'U' in the register (an unauthorised absence) and a reason for their lateness will be recorded by office staff. Regular lateness may result in a referral to the Attendance and Welfare Officer.

## **9. Children Leaving School during the School Day**

**9.1** Children are not allowed to leave the school premises without prior permission. Children must be signed out on leaving school. If a child leaves school without permission, their parents will be contacted and then the police to report the child as missing.

## **10 Requests for Leave of Absence**

**10.1** Since September 2013, Headteachers have been unable to grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

**10.2** Requests should be made **at least four weeks before the intended absence where possible**. Parents and carers should not risk making any arrangements before a school decision is made on their leave of absence request application.

**10.3** The exceptional circumstances of the request must be given in writing on the correct form issued by the school office and consideration will be given to the individual circumstances and the time of school year, as well as the child's attendance, progress, behaviour and wellbeing.

**10.4** When deciding on the issue of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised Leave of Absence we have previously applied 12 months school attendance prior to the Leave of Absence as a criteria.

To take account of the Covid-19 pandemic for any school which was closed we will calculate 39 academic weeks.

**10.5** Where leave of absence is taken without authorisation, a referral will be made to the Attendance and Welfare Officer. If a child's attendance is 95% or above we will now take into account the new Local Authority directive (10.4 above) and a warning letter will be issued. If a child's attendance is below 95% taking into account (10.4 above), a penalty notice is likely to be issued to each parent or carer. Two warning letters will not be issued using the new Local Authority directive as the second leave of absence request would result in a penalty notice.

The school will request that the Local Authority raises a penalty notice if unauthorised absence is taken at the following critical times. Under normal circumstances, a fixed penalty notice would have been issued for any Leave of Absence taken in September 2021, under the current circumstances, penalties will not be issued. However, this will apply again from September 2022.

- During September
- During testing periods (e.g. the Year 1 Phonics Screening Test, Year 4 multiplication checker, End of Key Stage 1 (Y2) SATs and End of Key Stage 2 (Y6) SATs)

## **11 Pupils with Medical Conditions**

**11.1** This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's policy on 'Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions' which sets out how the school will provide support.

**11.2** The school is committed to ensuring, upon notification of a medical condition that arrangements are in place to support pupils so that they have full access to education. With this in mind, Headteachers have discretion in applying this policy where children have medical conditions which have been notified to us.

## **12 Attendance Targets**

**12.1** The school sets internal attendance targets each year, which are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved nationally, including groups, such as disadvantaged children and persistent absentees.

## **13 General Reporting to Parents**

**13.1** All parents will receive information regarding their child's attendance on their annual report using the following statements:

- Good or better – Above 96%
- Below national expectation – 96% – 95%
- Cause for concern – 94.9% - 90%
- Persistent absence – 89.9% - 85%
- Serious concern – Below 85%

#### **14. Rewarding Good Attendance**

**14.1** All schools have a range of rewards and incentives for good attendance throughout the year which vary from school to school. However, they all recognise, celebrate reward and raise the profile of good attendance.

#### **15. Monitoring and Review**

**15.1** It is the responsibility of the school's Local Governing Committee to monitor overall attendance and thus they receive a termly update in the Headteacher's Report. The school governors examine closely the information provided to ensure that the school's attendance figures are as high as they can be and that this attendance policy is being adhered to by the school.

**15.2** The school's office staff will be responsible for monitoring attendance daily throughout the school, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence on a particular day by any member of staff, the member of staff should contact the school office immediately and they will take the appropriate action. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher.

**15.3** This policy will be reviewed by the Local Governing Committee, in consultation with the Trust's Attendance and Welfare Officer, yearly or earlier if considered necessary.

**15.4** The Trust will follow guidance and support from the Department for Education & Public Health England in respect to Coronavirus (Covid 19). Head Teachers will decide if an absence is unauthorised on an individual basis and will refer if necessary to the Trust's Attendance and Welfare Officer for further action.

**Date Policy Written:** September 2020

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