Trinity Oaks CofE Primary School

Attendance Policy

Person responsible:	Mrs Elizabeth Woods
Committee responsible:	Children and Learning
Status:	Recommended
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Vision: Where acorns flourish into mighty oaks. (Isaiah 61:3 – They will be oaks of righteousness)

Mission: Rooted in God's love and Christian values, we are a school who treasure each individual, enabling them to flourish and achieve.

Values Statement: *We are **thankful** for the uniqueness of everyone in our community, created in God's image, fostering relationships with integrity rooted in God's love. We value and **respect** all people in our community. Our pupils, staff and families work together with **kindness** and **compassion.** to support each other. We are **resilient** learners who recognise that perseverance and risk-taking is the key to our **aspirational** goals and successes.*

Values:

Rooted in love, we are……

Respectful – interactions with others (Matthew 7:12)

Kind and **Compassionate** – displaying integrity towards others (Galatians 5:22-23) / interactions with the world around us and the community in which we live (Ephesians 4:32)

Thankful – being grateful for what we have the privileges that we are afforded (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Resilient – risk takers, perseverance (Philippians 4:13)

Aspirational – aiming high, being the best we can be (Ecclesiastes 10:7)

The Diocese of Southwark

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

> Promoting good attendance

> Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence

> Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled

> Acting early to address patterns of absence

> Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

> Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

> Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

> Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

> The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

> The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

> Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

> Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties

> Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

> Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school

> Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

> Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

> Implementation of this policy at the school

> Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

> Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

> Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

> Request the Issuing of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

> Leading attendance across the school

> Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement

> Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

> Having an oversight of data analysis

> Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

> Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

> Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mrs Katy Whitford and can be contacted via k.whitford@trinityoaks.surrey.sch.uk

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

> Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

> Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

> Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher

> Working with Inclusion officers to tackle persistent absence

> Referring Leave of absence request to the Headteacher to consider fixed-penalty notices

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using Studybugs. All registers are to be done by 9.00 – moving to 8.50am from January 2023.

3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

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> Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on Studybugs if parents have not reported absence using this platform.

> Follow up on absence that has not been notified.

> Request medical evidence if required by HSLW.

> Contact parents if absence cannot be explained.

> Report absence to HSLW if parents cannot be contacted.

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

> Make sure their child attends school every day on time – the gates open at 8.40am and are closed by 8.50pm

> Report child's absence on Studybugs by 8.40am.

> Call the school to report their child's absence if they are unable to do so via Studybugs with reasons for absence and expected return date to school.

> Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

> Ensure that appointments for their child are made outside of the school day wherever possible

> Provide medical evidence of appointments during the school day.

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

> Attend school every day on time.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon. It will mark whether every pupil is:

> Present

> Attending an approved off-site educational activity

> Absent

> Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will also record:

> Whether the absence is authorised or not

> The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

> The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The register will be taken at 8.50am and for the afternoon will be taken at 1.00pm(years 1-6) and at 12.30pm in Reception.

Acorns Nursery

We follow the same procedures outlined above in the Acorns Nursery. In the morning Acorns children are welcome in school from 8.30am, registers are taken at 8.45 and close at 9.30 am. In the afternoon children arrive from 12pm, registers are taken at 12.30 pm and close at 1pm.

Although pupils in the Acorns Nursery are not of statutory school age, we still encourage parents to develop good habits regarding attendance and punctuality in readiness for school.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by as soon as practically possible, by messaging on Studybugs or by calling the school office.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Medical evidence will be requested if continued absence is a cause for concern – the HSLW will communicate this with parents directly.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and evidence is provided.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

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Notification of medical and dental appointments can be made using Studybugs as a general message to be sent in advance. The 'report an absence' feature is for unplanned absence on the same day.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Section 5 details which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

> If children are late, they should report to the school office with a reason for the late arrival. This will be marked on the register as late (L).

> Registers close at 9.30am. If the pupil has not arrived and we have not heard from parents before this time attendance is recorded as Unauthorised (U). If a child is persistently late then parents' co-operation will be sought to improve lateness, firstly by the HSLW, and then by the Headteacher.

> External gates are locked soon after 9.00 am when parents of younger pupils have left. This is to secure the school site. From January 2023 external gates will be locked at 8.50am.

> If children arrive after the gates have been locked parents should bring children to the main entrance.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

> Send a Studybugs message as a reminder to report absence.

> Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact other contact numbers on record.

> When there is a safeguarding concern, the school will call the Police to conduct a welfare check.

> Identify whether the absence is approved or not

> If parents are contacted - Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

> Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an inclusion officer.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via Studybugs alerts. Where the concerns continue the HSLW will call for a conversation or write to parent outlining concerns and next steps.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as:

Examples of authorised absence

- Genuine Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Hospital/dental/doctors/optician appointment for the pupil
- Visits to prospective schools
- External exams or assessments

Examples of unauthorised absence

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

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

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Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or by contacting the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The Education Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue parents a Penalty Notice (fine) for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. This is a Penalty Notice and is issued 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 £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. This rises to £120 per parent, per child, if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

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.

Penalty notices can be issued by the local authority.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

There are very clear rules governing the authorisation of absences, and in line with Surrey County Council's recommendations and guidance, we have started to fine parents who take their children out of school for unauthorised reasons.

You may be fined if your child has:

¨ 5 or more unauthorised days off (which do not have to be consecutive) in a six-week period

¨ 7 unauthorised absences in a period of 6 weeks

¨ if your child gets stopped on a Truancy Patrol Stop.

6. Attendance monitoring

6.1 Monitoring attendance

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The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

6.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to the school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

6.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every year by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

8. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

> Child protection and safeguarding policy

> Behaviour policy

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Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario

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Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
Code	Definition	Scenario

Code	Definition	Scenario
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2

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Section 5.2 Legal sanctions provides details regarding Penalty Notices.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued

Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 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 5 days 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.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where attendance has fallen below 85% and there are no less than 10 unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Education Welfare 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.

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