



THE HERMITAGE SCHOOLS

Attendance Policy

Senior Attendance Champion (SAC):	The Executive Headteacher
Date Adopted:	October 2007
Date of last review:	Spring Term 2026
Date of next review:	Spring Term 2028

This policy came into effect on August 19th 2024

This policy should be read in conjunction with Surrey County Council school attendance and absence information and advice:

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/at-school/attendance-and-absence>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At The Hermitage Schools, we are committed, in partnership with the parents, children, governors, and the Local Authority (LA), to building schools which serve the community commendably, and of which the community is proud.
- 1.2 The Hermitage Schools staff, alongside the LA, firmly believes that regular school attendance is key to achieving the five outcomes of Every Child Matters (staying healthy, enjoying and achieving, keeping safe, contributing to the community, and social and economic well-being). Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. To this end we will do all we 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.

2.0 EXPECTATIONS

- 2.1 We expect that all children will:
 - attend school 100% of the time (unless the absence is authorised by the Executive Headteacher);
 - attend school punctually;
 - attend school appropriately prepared for the day.

- 2.2 We expect that all parents/carers/persons who have day-to-day responsibility for the children and young people will:
- encourage regular attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
 - ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, fully prepared for the day;
 - ensure that they contact the school, on the first day of absence, whenever the child/children is/are unable to attend; with a reason for their absence.
 - The schools office can be emailed on schooloffice@hermitage.surrey.sch.uk or telephone the office on 01483 474981 or 01483 472047
 - notify the school immediately of any changes to contact details;
 - notify the school promptly of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
 - If a parent wishes to discuss their child's attendance in more detail they should contact the SAC via the school office.
- 2.3 We expect that school staff will:
- provide a welcoming, calm, orderly and supportive atmosphere for children, provide a safe learning environment and provide a sympathetic response to any child's concerns;
 - encourage good attendance and punctuality;
 - keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all children, at registration;
 - monitor every child's attendance and punctuality;
 - contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a child fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence;
 - make initial enquiries of parents/carers of children who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the School's and the Local Authority's expectations with regard to regular attendance;
 - follow up all unexplained absences to obtain reasons for the absence. Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verification from the family doctor or other relevant body may be requested;
 - refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Surrey Attendance Service. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by the Surrey Attendance Service may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order;
 - meet the requirements of the UN Convention - The Rights of the Child, by ensuring that, where possible, children are consulted on all decisions that relate to them.
- 2.4 Children leaving during the school day:
- 2.4.1 Children are not permitted to leave the premises without prior permission from the school;
- 2.4.2 Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time;
- 2.4.3 Parents/carers are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected time of return. Children must be collected by parents/carers;
- 2.4.4 Parents/carers must sign out their child/children on leaving the school and sign them back in upon their return.

3.0 REGISTRATION AND PUNCTUALITY

- 3.1.1 Punctuality to school is crucial and registration at the beginning of the day with the class teacher is one of the most important periods in the day. Lateness to school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other children in the class. It is paramount therefore that all children arrive at school on time.

The Hermitage Infant School

- The Hermitage Infant School gates opens at 8.30am and close at 8:45am
- Classroom doors open at 8:40 and Registration takes place at 8:45am; students who arrive after 8:45am will be recorded as late marked with an L code (late as the register has closed).
- Morning registration will close at 9.00am. If a child arrives after this time, the lateness will be recorded as a U code (an unauthorised absence) and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority.
- The Hermitage Infant School day ends at 3:10pm.

The Hermitage Junior School

- The Hermitage Junior School opens at 8.30am and registration takes place at 8:40am; students who arrive after 8:40am will be recorded as late to school.
- If a child arrives at The Hermitage Junior School after 8.40am the parent/carers must sign in the late book to ensure their child's presence on site is noted, particularly in case of a fire drill.
- Morning registration will close at 8:55am. If a student arrives at The Hermitage Junior School after this time, the lateness will be recorded as a U code (an unauthorised absence) and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority.
- Afternoon registration is taken at 1.00pm at The Hermitage Junior School.
- Lateness by a student will be dealt with through the school behavioural system and may be referred to the Surrey Attendance Service.
- The Hermitage Junior School day ends at 3:20pm.

4.0 ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE

- 4.1 Regular attendance is encouraged in the following ways:

- by providing a caring, calm, orderly, supportive and welcoming learning environment
- by responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other children;
- by providing regular attendance statistics;
- by monitoring children, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Surrey Attendance Service if the irregular attendance continues.

5.0 RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE / MANAGING ATTENDANCE

- 5.1 When a child does not attend The Hermitage Schools and a reason has not been previously provided, steps will be taken to ascertain why the child is absent.
- 5.1.1 Parents/carers are requested to contact school by 9.30 a.m. at the latest on each day of absence (or to provide a letter or phone call for longer planned absences or those due to longer term illness). If the school does not hear from parents/carers on each day of the absence, then they will endeavour to contact them after 10.30am on each day of the absence to ensure that the child is safe and being cared for (this is especially important for children who may walk to school on their own after a period of absence).
- 5.1.2 On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 10:30am the school will endeavour to contact them that day by automated text, or personal telephone or email messages.
- 5.1.3 If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer throughout the day. Followed by a second or third contact on the list where there has been no response.
- 5.1.4 If contact cannot be made, the Executive Headteacher must be made aware and then subsequent action, which may involve seeking advice from other professionals, will be decided upon. This is to ensure the safety and welfare of our families.
- 5.1.5 **Persistent 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. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.
- 5.1.6 When school attendance falls below 90% the school will review reasons and work with the family to bring about improvement. This may be in the form of an initial phone call, a meeting with the SAC, a stage 1 or 2 letter. If no improvement is seen then a referral to Surrey Attendance Service acting on behalf of Surrey County Council (SCC) may be made and a fine may be issued.
- 5.1.7 **Severe absence.** Particular focus will be given by all staff to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners.
- 5.1.8 The school will monitor and target these children and work with these families. The school may also look at the needs of the children for example if they have an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.

6.0 UNAUTHORISED LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- 6.1 The schools term dates are published a year in advance to ensure children do not miss out on their education and we strongly advise parents/carers to book any leave of absence during the school holidays. If a family leave of absence in term time is unavoidable, parents/carers should apply to the school using the 'Application for Leave of Absence' application form; however, it is no longer policy to authorise any absences due to a leave of absence being taken during term time. Some exceptional circumstances may be considered when appropriate.
- 6.2 We expect that pupils attend 100% of the time as per Surrey County Council's guidelines, unless the absence is authorised by the Executive Headteacher.

- 6.3 If a leave of absence is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- 6.4 No parents/carers can demand leave of absence for their child/children as a right.
- 6.5 Where a child is taken out of The Hermitage Schools for a leave of absence during term time without the authority of the Executive Headteacher, each parent/carer may be liable to receive a penalty notice for each child.

7.0 PENALTY NOTICES

- 7.1 The Surrey Attendance Service, 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 The Hermitage Schools and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount. For a Summary of National Changes to penalty notices coming into effect on August 19th 2024 see Appendix 3.
- 7.2 The payment must be made directly to the local authority.
- 7.3 Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:
- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks – one morning is one session. One afternoon is another session – one day is two sessions);
 - Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil;
 - Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution;
 - Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

7.4 Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued

- 7.4.1** For pupils identified by police and Surrey Attendance Advice Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- 7.4.2** Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the Executive headteacher, 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.
- 7.4.3** The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 10 school weeks (which may span different terms or school years). The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice.
- 7.4.4** Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

- 7.4.5 Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.
- 7.4.6 If an absence exceeds 20 days, and still no contact from home, your child's name will be removed from the school roll and you will have to reapply for a place upon your return.

7.5 Amount Payable Under a Penalty Notice: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

- 7.5.1 If a parent/carers has not incurred a penalty notice relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, per parent/carers per child, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against the parent/carers in the Magistrates Court.
- 7.5.2 If a parent/carers has incurred a penalty notice relating to the same child/children since 19 August 2024, a rolling 3-year period will be activated from the date of the first penalty notice and the second penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, per parent/carers per child, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against the parent/carers in the Magistrates Court.
- 7.5.3 If two 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/carers will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, per parent/carers per child, in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.

7.6 Notice To Improve

- 7.6.1 With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time parents will be sent a 'Notice to Improve' their child's attendance, warning them of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.
- 7.6.2 The Notice will include:
- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences;
 - The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996;
 - Details of the support provided so far;
 - Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with;
 - A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis;
 - A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period;
 - The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

In the case of unauthorised leave of absence during term time, a specific Penalty Notice warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents/carers have previously been warned through school newsletters; parent mail; or booklets, policies etc. available on the

school website, that such absences would not be authorised, and that they would be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if they persisted with any such unauthorised leave of absence.

8.0. SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL ATTENDANCE ADVICE OFFICER

- 8.1 The Surrey Attendance Service monitors the attendance of all children on a regular basis. The Surrey County Council Attendance Advice Officer will work with school staff and parents/carers to promote good attendance.
- 8.2 The Surrey County Council Attendance Advice Officer may contact parents if children are consistently late or there are concerns about attendance.
- 8.3 Failure to ensure regular school attendance, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could, following prosecution, result in a community order, a fine not exceeding £2500 per parent/carer and/or imprisonment for up to three months.

9.0 THE SENIOR ATTENDANCE CHAMPION

9.1 The Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school;
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance;
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes;
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis;
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance;
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff;
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed;
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues;
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families;
- Work with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers;
- Communicate with the local authority when a pupil with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs;
- Communicate the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels.

9.2 Office Staff/Attendance Officer will:

- oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually;
- record all reasons for absences in the register;
- liaise with the Surrey Attendance Service as required to reinforce good practice;
- share the class teacher's concerns regarding the early identification of disaffection with the Senior Attendance Champion;
- take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system and check for absences;
- transfer calls from parents to the Executive Headteacher or DSL in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance;
- monitor and analyse attendance data;
- provide regular attendance reports to school staff.

9.3 The attendance officer can be contacted via the school office.

9.4 We expect that school staff will:

- complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily;
- monitor every pupil's attendance;
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Surrey County Council Attendance Advice Officer;
- be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to the Surrey County Council Attendance Advice Officer
- encourage good attendance;
- provide a caring and welcoming atmosphere for children, provide a safe learning environment, provide a sympathetic response to any pupil concerns;
- make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school and LA expectations with regard to regular school attendance.

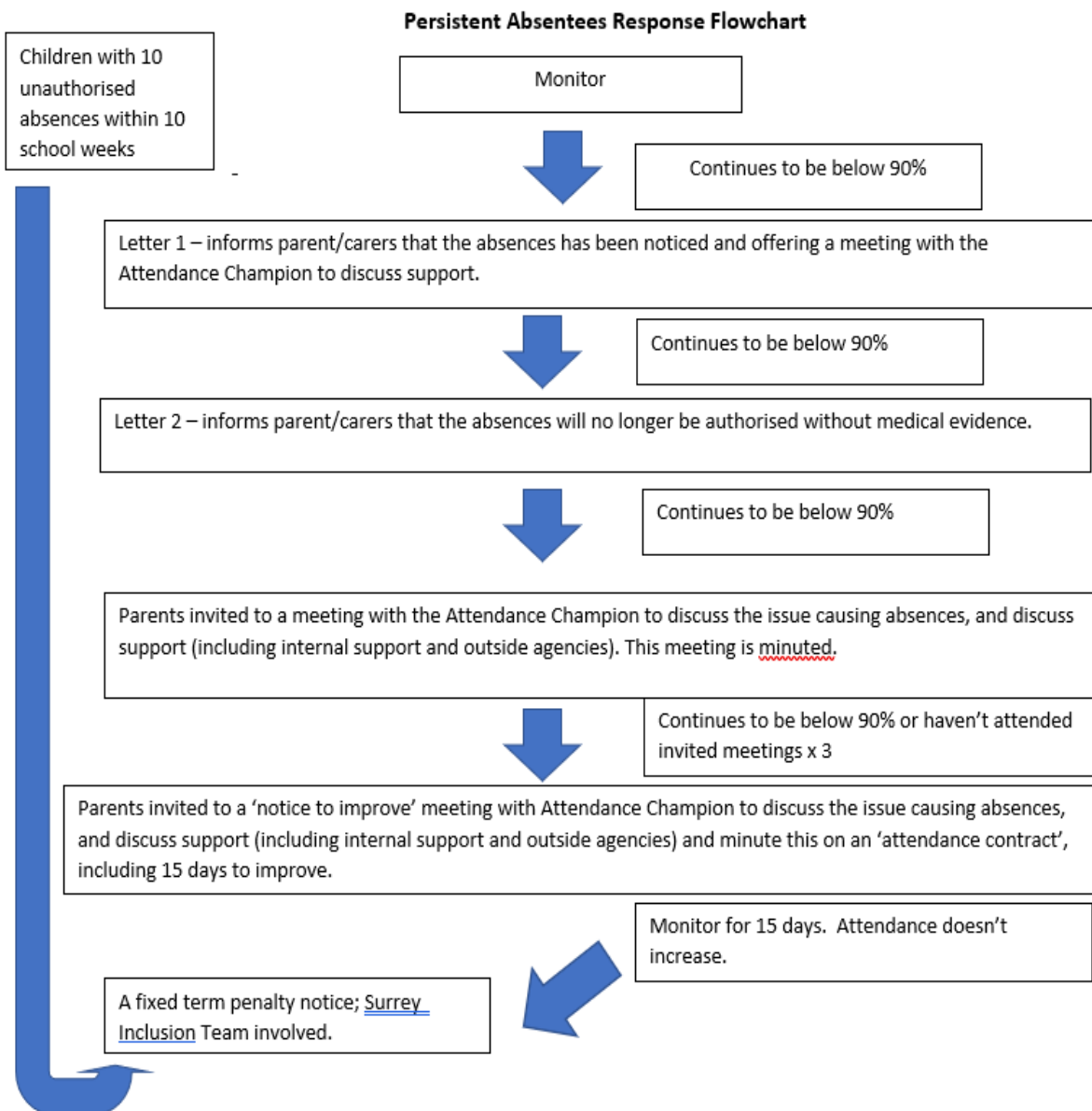
10.0 CHANGING SCHOOLS

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

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

10.2 The child's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible.

APPENDIX 1. Persistent Absentees Response Flowchart



Appendix 2. – Attendance Codes

All pupils must be given a registration mark each day. There are two sessions that require a registration mark. Registration will be taken by class teachers during am registration and pm registration.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

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
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend

C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school

N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

If you would like an application for leave of absence, please contact the office or download the form from the website.

Penalty Notice Fines for School Attendance are Changing!

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes came into effect for Penalty Notice Fines issued after **19th August 2024**.

Per Parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice Fines will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.
Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

5 consecutive days of term time leave

Penalty Notice Fines will be issued for Term Time Leave of 5 or more consecutive days. Inset training days are school days and can be included in the 5 or more consecutive days where there was intent to be absent for term time leave.

10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period.

Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court.

Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate, due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.