

Attendance Policy

Key document details

Author:	AWO	Approver:	ET
Owner:	SRAT	Version no.:	1
Last review:	March 22	Next review:	Sept 23
Ratified:			

STEEL RIVER

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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 school 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 whole-school 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 won't 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 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. Parents must call school on each day of absence. The school's telephone number is available off the school's website.
- 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 telephone them 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 are advised to carry out a lateral flow test on their child if they develop COVID symptoms. If the test is positive, parents are advised to keep their child isolated for 5 days
 - School will mark all COVID related absences as an X

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, 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 Headteacher in conjunction with the Trust's Attendance Welfare Officer.

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 parent's support and co-operation to tackle this.
- 5.2** The school, 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. The child's attendance will be closely monitored by school until attendance improves to above 95%. School's will use their discretion and knowledge of families during the first half term of each academic year when deciding whether a letter 1 is necessary as a single bout of illness can significantly reduce attendance figures during this short period
- 5.4** If a child's attendance falls below 92% in an academic year, parents will receive Letter 2 from the Headteacher and will be invited to a meeting with a representative from the school. During the meeting, attendance over the next six weeks will be agreed and a document specifying the target attendance of 95% for the next six weeks will be signed by both the school and the parents. School will then monitor the child's attendance on a biweekly basis.
- 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 the Parental Support worker, 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 Education 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.

7.2 If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

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. Late arriving pupils may disrupt 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 30 minutes, they will be marked in the register as late. If a child arrives at school after the first 30 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**. 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 and/or children were not expected to attend until September 2020 then the previous 12 months attendance will be extended to an 18 month period to take into account the 6 months when the school was not open.
For any child, whose attendance was below 95% within the previous 39 academic weeks, measured from the date before the first day of the leave of absence (including authorised and unauthorised absence).
- 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.

Due to the pandemic, no fines will be issued for holidays taken for the academic year 2021/22 as long as they don't exceed a maximum of 10 school days and are not taken during statutory assessment periods.

From September 2022, all schools will revert back to full implementation of the Trust policy. From this date, fines will be issued in accordance with the number of day's holiday taken in a 12 month period as opposed to the number of occasions. For example, some families may take one or two days holiday and then a week later in the year while others take 2x fortnightly which may equate to a significant difference in the time a child is taken out of school. Therefore, parents will not be issued with a fixed penalty notice unless; they take holidays in September, during formal assessment periods or if they take more than 10 days holiday in a 12 month period.

Any exceptional circumstances such as: Parents with allocated leave (with evidence), graduations, Religious events, family weddings/funerals, significant/terminal illnesses or family circumstances will be considered at school level and decisions made at the discretion of the Headteacher.

The school will request that the Local Authority raises a penalty notice if unauthorised absence is taken at the following critical times:

- During September
- During testing periods (e.g. the Year 1 Phonics Screening Test or Year 6 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 average – 96% – 95%
- Cause for concern – 94.9% - 90%
- Persistent absence – 89.9% - 85%
- Serious concern – Below 85%

14. Rewarding Good Attendance

14.1 Each school within Steel River Academy Trust reward children for 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, biannually 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.

16 Coronavirus (Covid 10)

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Date Policy Reviewed: March 2022

Date of Next Review: September 2023