



Sandfield Primary School
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Headteacher Mrs Kate Collins

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4th October 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

Over the summer, The Department for Education released new guidance regarding Penalty Notices for unauthorised leaves of absence. This guidance became statutory from 19th August 2024.

As schools are now required to follow this statutory guidance, I wanted to remind all families of the processes and procedures that all schools are required to implement going forward.

At Sandfield we work hard to create an environment where all children feel that they belong and want to come to school. Whilst we understand that there may be days when children are too unwell to come to school or exceptional circumstances occur, we really value your support in making sure that your child is in school and on time every day.

Below outlines the actions that you need to take to support your child's attendance and what actions we will take when any child is absent from school:

What parents/ carers must do:

- Send a Studybugs message before 09.15am each day of your child's absence.
- Tell the school in advance, of any medical appointments and send in the corresponding appointment via parents@sandfield.surrey.sch.uk.
- If you are not sure whether your child is well enough to attend school, please consider sending them in as they often perk up on arrival. Our staff team will monitor children carefully throughout the day and, under your instruction, can give basic medication (calpol, antihistamine etc.) if we have received written instructions from you to do this.
- Wherever possible medical appointments should be made after school or in the school holidays, and pupils should either come to school before or after their appointment, if this is possible.
- Have a backup plan if your normal transport methods are not viable, or if you are unwell yourself. Consider calling on a family member, neighbour or friend to help you out.
- If you and your child are experiencing difficulties with school attendance, then talk to us as a first step so we can help.

What we will do:

- Check your child's attendance every day.
- If we do not hear from you by 09.30am regarding your child's absence and we are unable to contact you via telephone, we will call the next contact on our list to make sure that you and your child are safe.
- Send you termly information on your child's attendance.

Everyone is welcome, everyone belongs and everyone is important

- Phone home to discuss your child's attendance with you.
- Write to you if we need to share concerns or celebrate improvements with your child's attendance.
- Implement any strategies that we (family & school) feel would help you or your child.
- Invite you into school for attendance meetings if we are concerned.
- If we cannot establish a reason for absence, then we may make a welfare home visit or refer to external agencies for further support.

From this academic year, a Penalty Notice may be issued as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and will be used by Surrey County Council in the following circumstances:

1. Pupils identified by police and Attendance Advice Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
2. Leave of absence in term time (5 days or 10 sessions or more)
 - This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks).
 - Please be aware that The Education Regulations 2013 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
 - The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.
3. The issuing of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where it is judged that a parent is failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance. This will be considered when a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions in the previous 10 school weeks, which may include a pupil arriving late after close of registration.

Amount Payable for a Penalty Notice and Consequences for Repeat Unauthorised Absences

1. If you have not incurred a Penalty Notice relating to your child/children in a rolling 3 year period since 19th August 2024, then the Penalty Notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, per parent/carer 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 you in the Magistrates Court.
2. If you have incurred a Penalty Notice relating to this child/children since 19th August 2024, the 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/carer 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 you in the Magistrates Court.
3. If you have incurred 2 Penalty Notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first Penalty Notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third Penalty Notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, per parent/carer per child, in the Magistrates Court under Section 444 Education Act 1996

If you believe at any stage that your child's absence from school may leave you liable to receive a Penalty Notice, it is extremely important that you act without delay to secure their regular attendance.

We want to work together with families to ensure that your child/ren reach their full potential, by attending school daily and being on time. Please contact us with any questions or if you require further support to achieve an improvement in your child's attendance. Our attendance policy and process can be found on the school website.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Kate Collins and Lucy Lidstrom'.

Kate Collins and Lucy Lidstrom
Headteacher and Home School Link Worker