

What is a Fixed Penalty Notice?

It is a fine charged for unauthorised absence from School. The Fixed Penalty Scheme operates in Surrey when poor attendance becomes an issue.

Who issues them?

The Local Authority issues the written notices through the Education Welfare Services (EWS).

What is the fine?

£60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of Notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court for the offence for which the Notice was originally issued.

Who will receive the fine?

Each parent is liable to receive a Fixed Penalty Notice for each child who incurs unauthorised absences.

Unauthorised Absence Explained

It is important to realise that **only** the School can authorise any absence, **not** the parent/carer. When a pattern of absence begins to cause concern, you will be contacted by a member of the attendance or pastoral team who will seek to work with you to resolve poor attendance. This will include considering the possibility that further absences may be deemed unauthorised. In any 10 week period, 10 sessions of unauthorised absence could trigger a Fixed penalty Notice. Each day counts as two sessions (morning and afternoon registration).

Important aspects of attendance which are looked upon as unauthorised absence:-

- Holidays taken in term time.
- If no contact is made or explanation is provided to School for the absence.
- When a student persistently arrives late to School after the register has closed.
- When a student is found in a public place during an exclusion from School.

Please remember that unauthorised holiday of 5 days or more taken during term time will result in a Surrey County Council Fixed Penalty Notice.

Can I get help if my child is not attending School regularly?

Yes, we have a dedicated Pastoral and Attendance Team who can offer support and advice to help secure improvement in your child's attendance. It is important to seek help at the earliest opportunity. So, if you are worried about your child not attending school, or if you think your child is unhappy, please contact either your child's Head of Year or the School's Attendance Officer.

Advice and support is also available from your local Education Welfare Service:

**South West Education Welfare Service
Surrey County Council
Quadrant Court
35 Guildford Road
Woking
GU22 7QQ
Telephone: 01482 517179**

Here at George Abbot we take school attendance very seriously and are committed to attempting to engage every child with the school environment and education. We consider ourselves a very supportive school, and will try and make considerations for students who need extra support. We are, however, bound by law to ensure that each student attends school. We will consider further actions should a student with low attendance continue to be absent from school.

Attendance Matters



School Attendance: Information and Advice for Parents

To report an absence:

Telephone:
Years 7-11 : 01483 888000 – opt#1
Sixth Form: 01483 888155

Email:
absence@georgeabbot.surrey.sch.uk

Why attend School every day?

Good attendance at school is vital for students to achieve their full educational potential. Education is the most important gift we can give our children and a day lost is one day too many. Being at school is a very important part of any young person's life. It enables them to learn to make friends and to gain important qualifications and to develop a variety of skills which will prepare them for adult life. School and parents/carers are partners in making this a success.

As parents/carers it is **your** responsibility to make sure that your child makes the most of this opportunity by attending regularly.

What constitutes good attendance?

Attendance percentages are not like examination results. An attendance percentage needs to be in the high nineties before it can be considered good. Consider the following examples:

- An attendance record of 90% might seem good, but it is equal to one day missed per fortnight! If this continues from Year 7 to Year 11 a total of six months' education will be lost.
- An attendance record of 80% might seem acceptable but it is equal to one day missed per week!! If this continues from Year 7 to Year 11 a total of one year's education will be lost.

Reporting an absence from School

By law, schools must record absences and the reason for the absence.

You are therefore required to contact the school before 9:00am on every day of absence. This can be done either by telephone or email.

Failure to do this will result in a text/email message sent by our automated system which alerts parents that they have not communicated their child's absence to the school. Parents are then required to respond to these messages providing a reason for the absence. Unexplained absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

Please complete an Application for Leave of Absence Form for **all** absences known in advance where your child will miss some or all of a school day. Copies are available from the school offices or can be downloaded from the school's website.

Holidays in Term Time

School holiday dates are published well in advance and parents are expected to plan and take family holidays at this time so as not to disrupt their children's education. In exceptional circumstances the Head Teacher has the discretion to authorise leave in term time but parents should be aware that this is not a legal entitlement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1 September 2013, states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

With only 190 statutory school days in the year, this means there are 175 days (weekends and School holidays) left for shopping, birthday treats, non-urgent medical/dental appointments, holidays etc.

Taking your child out of school without authorisation from the Head Teacher will result in absence being shown as unauthorised and may result in a referral to The Educational Welfare Service and legal action being taken against you.

It is very important to remember that holidays taken in term time are deemed unauthorised.

Your role as a Parent/Carer?

You play a **very** important role in ensuring the good attendance records of their children. All parents/carers want the best for their children and a good education helps to ensure that children have the best start in life. School equips them for succeeding both academically and socially so that they can achieve in their exams and learn how to make and manage relationships.

As a parent/carers it is **your legal responsibility** to ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually.

Children who miss school are more likely to become victims or perpetrators of crime. The more school children miss the harder it is to catch up. Statistics show that 90% of persistent absentees (those with attendance below 85%) fail to achieve 5 or more good GCSE grades, or equivalent.

What can I do?

- Always encourage full attendance.
- Stress the importance of full attendance to your child.
- Do not allow your child to have time off for minor complaints or illness: if they are well enough to be up and about, they are generally well enough to attend school.
- Try to book any medical/dental appointments out of school hours or make them at the very beginning or end of the day.
- Ensure your child is punctual to school.
- Inform the school promptly of any absence.
- **DO NOT** book holidays in term time – this is not an entitlement and may be detrimental to your child's education.
- If your child seems unwilling to attend school, contact their Head of Year as soon as possible: do not let your child stay at home as this could set a precedent for the future

Punctuality – Arriving at School on time

The first lesson of the day starts at 8:30am. All students are expected to arrive at school by 8:25am so they are ready to start the lesson promptly at 8:30am. The Law states that the school has to take a register of all students first thing in the morning. Government advice states that schools can keep the register open for up to 30 minutes. If a student arrives late to school but whilst the register is still open, they are marked as late. If the student arrives at school after the register is closed, without a satisfactory reason, this will be classed as an unauthorised absence and may lead to prosecution for not ensuring your child has regular/punctual school attendance.

Being frequently late for school adds up to lost learning:
5 minutes late every day = 3 days lost per year
15 minutes late every day = 10 days lost per year
17 missed schooldays per year = one full GCSE grade drop

Late arrival is monitored closely and any student who repeatedly arrives late to school will, initially, be given a 30 minute lunchtime detention. If they persist in being late this detention time will increase and ultimately parents may be invited in for a meeting to discuss our concerns about your child.