

# ADUR LOCALITY SCHOOLS



October 2024

## ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Dear Parent/Carer,

School attendance is a high priority and new national expectations have been set out by the government. In the Adur locality, we have always worked closely together to ensure that our approaches are the same and that families are treated equally. For that reason, we are jointly sharing this update.

### Impact of Absence

Absence from school is often the greatest single cause of poor performance and achievement. Missing school leaves pupils vulnerable to falling behind, more likely to struggle sustaining friendships and much less likely to enjoy the school environment. The table below shows percentage absence in days, weeks and the impact if sustained over your child's school career:

Attendance during one school year	Equals days absent	Approximate weeks absent	School career absence (Yr1-Yr11)
95%	9 days	2 weeks	½ year
90%	19 days	4 weeks	1 year
85%	29 days	6 weeks	1 ½ years
80%	38 days	8 weeks	2 years
70%	57 days	12 weeks	3 years
60%	76 days	15 weeks	4 years
50%	95 days	19 weeks	5 years

A school day consists of two sessions – morning and afternoon. Absence for a day will be recorded as two missed sessions. If children miss ten school sessions (five days) within a ten-week period, action will be taken.

### Unauthorised Absence

Where absence can be avoided, it is recorded as **unauthorised**. The following are classified as unauthorised absence:

- Arriving after the closing of registration (i.e. if your child is late)
- Absence from school due to holiday (no holiday will be authorised)
- Absence that has never been properly explained by the parent or carer
- Absence that is unnecessary or without reason
- Absence to do something that could be done on a different day
- Absence for a day trip somewhere during term time
- Leaving school during the school day for no properly explained reason, or an unnecessary reason

### Government Updates

Key changes to be aware of:

- Schools will not be able to authorise absence for a holiday or any purpose of leisure and recreation

- Schools will not be able to take parents' employment circumstances or working patterns into account when considering absence requests
- Being late to school after the register has closed will count as an unauthorised absence and will count towards a potential fine
- Penalty Notice fines administered by West Sussex County Council for non-attendance will be up to £160 per pupil, per parent
- If a family is eligible for a fine for a third time within 3 years, then instead of a fine, parents will face a court prosecution
- As previously, fines are issued by West Sussex County Council in cases where children miss 10 school sessions (equal to 5 school days) over a 10-week period. In the case of weeks where the school is closed for an Inset Day, a fine may still be issued for missing the other 4 days in that week.

## Consequences

Possible costs and other consequences (FPN = Fixed Penalty Notice Fine):

- First referral: FPN £160 per parent, per child (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days)
- Second referral: FPN £160 per parent, per child (no reduction offer for early payment)
- Third referral: Matter presented to the Magistrates Court  
(a prosecution can result in the parent receiving a Criminal record and fines up to £2,500)
- Repeat offences of holidays in term time are likely to result in court action
- In addition, absences of 15 school days or more for the purposes of a holiday/travel abroad will be referred directly to the courts by Pupil Entitlement, rather than offering a FPN.

## Recording Absence

The statutory codes used for unauthorised absence are as follows:

- G Unauthorised holiday in term time
- U Arrival after the register has closed
- O Unauthorised absence
- N No reason yet offered for the absence

10 such codes in a 10-week period (or shorter) will lead to the school informing the West Sussex Pupil Entitlement department.

## Exceptional Circumstances

Headteachers will still be able to approve absence in **exceptional circumstances**. To be approved, absence should meet the 4 criteria of being rare, short, significant and unavoidable. For example, absence for a religious observance or a school transition visit would be approved, but attendance at a family birthday party or a family day trip would not meet the criteria.

Families who wish to request absence from school should follow individual school guidance on how to complete an absence request. Only the headteacher can approve an absence.

## Support with attendance

We recognise that there are other circumstances where attendance can be challenging, and schools will continue to work with families to provide support where that is needed. Please do always contact us in these cases, and we will be happy to help.

Yours sincerely,

Adur School Headteachers