West Hill School
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22nd September 2026

Dear Parent/carer

Re: The Importance of Good Attendance at West Hill

As we begin another exciting academic year, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of regular school attendance. Attending school every day and arriving on time gives children the best possible opportunity to learn, make progress and benefit from all aspects of school life.

At West Hill, promoting good attendance remains one of our key priorities. We recognise the positive impact that consistent attendance has on educational outcomes, social development and emotional wellbeing, and we appreciate the support that families provide in helping their children attend school regularly.

We would also like to remind parents and carers that holidays and other absences during term time will not normally be authorised. We understand, however, that there may occasionally be exceptional circumstances which require consideration. If you believe your child's circumstances are exceptional, please complete a Request for Leave form, available here on the school website. Each request will be considered individually and in line with school, Trust, Local Authority and Government guidance.

Regular attendance is particularly important in a special school setting. West Hill placements are carefully allocated by the Local Authority and are supported through significant specialist resources. We therefore place great value on ensuring that pupils are able to access the provision available to them as consistently as possible.

We closely monitor attendance for all pupils and work proactively with families when concerns arise. We know that missing school can have a significant impact on a child's learning, progress and wider development. Where attendance falls to a level that causes concern, we will work alongside you and other agencies and professionals to ensure that appropriate support is available.

To help illustrate the impact that absence can have over time, we have included a table showing how attendance percentages translate into lost learning opportunities across the school year.

End of Year Attendance	No. of days absent from school	No. of school weeks absent
99.5%	1	-
99%	2	-
97.4%	5	1
95%	9	2
94%	11	2
92.4%	15	3
90%	20	4
85%	29	6 (half a term missed)
80%	38	8 (2 months missed)
75%	48	9
70%	57	11
65%	67	13

The Howard Partnership Trust, Registered Office: Lower Road, Effingham, Surrey KT24 5JR.
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We are committed to working in partnership with families and understand that there can sometimes be challenges which affect attendance. If there is anything preventing your child from attending school regularly, please contact your child's class teacher in the first instance so that we can discuss how best to support you.

Finally, we would like to remind families that if a child is absent from school for five days or more without prior notification or authorised leave (these days do not need to be consecutive), the Local Authority may consider further action. Details of the Local Authority's procedures are outlined below.

Penalty Notices to Address Poor Attendance at School

A Penalty Notice may be issued as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school (absence without the agreement of the school or not covered by a medical note) and will be used by Surrey County Council in the following circumstances :-

1. Pupils identified by police and Attendance Advice Officers (formerly Inclusion 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).

- Please be aware that The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- They may request that Surrey County Council issue Penalty Notices when the absence is not authorised.

Warnings will not be given where it can be shown that parents have been notified that such absences will not be authorised.

3. Finally, 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.

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.

If you have any questions or require further support to achieve an improvement in your child's attendance, please contact your child's school or the Attendance Advice Officer.

Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions

If a child is excluded from school, Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours. This duty applies to the *first five days of each exclusion.* Failure to do so will render the parent/carer liable to a Penalty Notice. (Alternative education provision will be made available from the sixth day of any exclusion.)

Amount Payable for a Penalty Notice and Consequences for repeat uauthorised absences

1. If you have not incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children in a rolling 3 year period since 19 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 19 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 s 444 Education Act 1996.

Surrey County Council is not responsible for authorising pupil absence and therefore cannot withdraw any Penalty Notice requests without the written permission of the Headteacher.

Advice and support is available from an Attendance Advice Officer by contacting Surrey Attendance Service as follows :-

North West - Tel: 01483 518130 South West - Tel: 01483 517874
North East - Tel: 01372 833588 South East - Tel: 01737 737777

Thank you for your continued support in helping us ensure every child benefits from the opportunities available at West Hill.

Many thanks

Lucie Scott
Vice Principal