

Attendance Policy



Approved by: Governing Body

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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child (of compulsory school age) receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education elsewhere.

For pupils registered at the school, this means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. We will support parents to perform this legal duty, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

We are committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils and recognise this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. We recognise the foundation of securing good attendance is that our school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. We are also committed to promoting race, disability and gender equality within all practices and procedures related to attendance and punctuality. The school will employ a wide range of strategies to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as a priority.

Regular school attendance is an important part of giving pupils the best possible start in life, and is also the single most important determinant of a child's likely success at school. Pupils who frequently miss school can fall behind with their work and do less well in exams. Consequently attendance, absence, and medical care are considered of the utmost importance at the school. We aspire to achieve 100% attendance for all pupils. A child who has an attendance record of 90% misses more than three weeks during a school year. That equates to nearly half a school year by the time they reach the end of year 11. Good attendance also shows potential employers that a young person is reliable.

We recognise those pupils not attending school are our most at risk pupils in terms of safeguarding and failing to make progress. We will proactively seek to reduce episodes of non-attendance.

The need to work in partnership with parents and carers is essential, in order to identify, investigate and communicate concerns as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times. Parents and carers have a vital role, as well as a legal responsibility, to ensure good attendance. We will prioritise developing effective links and conveying the importance of regular and punctual attendance to parents, carers, and pupils.

We will promote the vital role that full attendance and punctuality have in achieving the best possible educational outcomes. Through consultation days and reporting systems, we will ensure that parents, carers, and pupils are made aware of the attendance pattern and provide an opportunity to discuss how it may affect learning and offer supportive strategies to improve attendance.

Parents/carers who are concerned about their child's attendance should contact the progress and engagement guides at the school who will be able to offer guidance and support. In addition, the school will be proactive in addressing attendance, for example by conducting announced and unannounced home visits.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The register is taken twice per school day. Pupils will ordinarily arrive in school by 9.10am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 9.30am and will be kept open until 9.45am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.15pm and will be kept open until 12.45pm. In response to making reasonable adjustments for some pupils, slight variations of entry or exit times may be made.

Using the DfE stipulated attendance codes (see appendix 1) the register will record whether each pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for three years after the date on which the entry was made.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents/carers must notify the school by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible on the first day of an unplanned absence, for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health.

3.3 Illness related absence

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied in relation to the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this decision.

When a pupil is sick whilst at school, they are to report to the administration office or other authorised staff who will contact parents/carers to confirm that the student may leave the academy site. Prior to leaving the academy site, all students must report to reception and be officially signed out.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions being removed from most settings, the school recognises the importance of limiting the spread of communicable illnesses, particularly with regards to those students who have additional medical considerations. Where a student is exhibiting signs of such an illness (e.g. vomiting and diarrhoea) parents/carers will be advised to either keep their child at home until the likelihood of spreading to others on site has reduced. A list of notable common illnesses and times to be kept out of school can be found on the government website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infectious-diseases-schools-and-other-childcare-settings/how-long-should-you-keep-your-child-off-school-checklist-poster-text-version>

3.4 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advanced notice is required for authorising these absences. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents/carers must notify the school in advance of a medical or dental appointment.

3.5 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

3.6 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

We act proactively to incidents of unauthorised absence including holding parent/carer meetings on the school premises or at home addresses. We conduct home visits to support parents/carers to ensure pupils are in school and we will pursue court action to address unauthorised absences when necessary.

3.7 Reporting to parents

We report each pupil's attendance to parents/carers via school reports and/or parent/carer progress days.

3.8 Information sharing, Tracking and monitoring

Pupil attendance data may be shared with Parents/Carers, Local Authority, Early Help, School Liaison Officer/Attendance Service, Children's Social Services, Police, relevant LEA's, Ofsted and the DfE.

A student is deemed to be a Persistent Absentee (PA) if their attendance falls below 90%. The school will consider students below 95% at risk. Pupils who fall into either of these categories, will be monitored by the members of the Tasking and Coordination group (T&CG).

Analysis of trends and attendance by micro-population should identify strengths and areas for intervention to further improve attendance. The school formally reviews attendance weekly at the T&CG and a full report is produced termly.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The Head Teacher may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' based on the case presented to the Head Teacher determining that the absence supports the mental, emotional, or physical wellbeing of the pupil. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head Teacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.3 and 3.4.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
- Study leave – study leave is not granted by default and is only granted to pupils in year 11. Provision will still be made available for pupils who wish to revise in school.
- Flexi-schooling provision – in circumstances where this is deemed appropriate by the Head Teacher, a pupil may be placed on a part time timetable. This would be in exceptional circumstances and would be documented in detail and reviewed at least every six weeks.

4.2 Legal sanctions

Currently local authorities have different penalty notice codes. This is likely to be streamlined nationally in the near future. Our schools are under the auspices of Kent County Council (KCC) and Medway Council.

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

In line with KCC Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct and Medway Council Code of Practice we follow set procedures for issuing penalty notices.

Local authority Attendance Services take responsibility for issuing Penalty notices and taking other legal actions following referral by the school.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Head Teacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may consider:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

A penalty notice can would only be issued as a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that its use will secure improvement. It will only be issued following the school having taken steps to resolve attendance concerns/warned the parent/carer of a possible Penalty Notice referral.

5. Remote education

If a pupil is not attending school because their attendance would or have a medical reason that precludes physically attending school, we offer access to remote education where pupils are well enough to access this. We keep a record of and monitor incidences of remote education and the engagement of pupils who are offered remote learning.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We communicate early about issues acknowledging positive improvements by phone calls home and updates in contact books.

We seek to develop a curriculum and environment where pupils want to attend school.

7. Attendance monitoring

The Office Administrator and Office Manager monitor pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be unexpectedly absent (see section 3.2).

We will contact the parents on each day of absence.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors.

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 The Governing Body

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

8.2 The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Head Teacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

It is only the Head Teacher who can authorise a request for absence.

8.3 Office Manager/Office Administrator/School Manager

This team will:

- Monitor attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Report concerns about attendance to the Head Teacher
- Work with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advise the Head Teacher when to issue fixed penalty notices

Office staff are expected to take calls from and make calls to parents/carers about absence and record it on the school system. They will arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.

8.4 Progress and Engagement Guides

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis and submitting this information to the school office.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing Body.

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection, safeguarding and equality policies.

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorized absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organized, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day