



**Eastry Church of  
England Primary School,**  
*Learning and growing, side by side, in God's Love*

# Attendance policy

## March 2024

Policy lead	T Inglis & K-J Bowers
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## 1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

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

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 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:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [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. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 The governing board

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

### 3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### 3.3 The Family Liaison Officer

The Family Liaison Officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher

- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

### **3.4 Class Teachers**

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

### **3.5 School Office Staff**

School Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every 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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 10.00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.05pm and will be kept open until 1.30pm.

## **4.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.50am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7). This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that a child is safe. Parent/carers should notify the school on each subsequent day of an unplanned absence by 8.50am or as soon as practically possible. Parents/carers should inform on when their child is returning if appropriate.

We will mark absence due to illness as 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 the pupil's parent/carer 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 about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

## **4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and provides medical evidence.

However, we encourage parents/carers 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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as late after registration has closed, using the appropriate code

## **4.5 Following up absence**

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by contacting the parent/carer by telephone. Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

## 4.6 Reporting to parents

The school reports to parents on their child's attendance record annually in the written end-of-year report.

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent/carer or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- 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

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)

- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport.

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

**If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.**

## 5.2 Reducing persistent absence

The school’s procedures for targeting persistent absence:

- 95 – 100% attendance – the Family Liaison Officer will monitor school attendance termly
- 90 – 95% attendance – the Family Liaison Officer will investigate and notify the Headteacher of any concerns.
- Below 90% - school intervention letters/meeting with parents/carers.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorized absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

- Soft start (gates open 8:35-8:50)
- Teachers to welcome and greet the children on arrival
- Attendance celebrated in weekly assembly
- Certificates for classes who have 100% attendance for a week.
- Attendance shared with parents on reports
- Early morning club offered to children if they need a settled start to the day (pupil premium funding)

## **7. Attendance monitoring**

The school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2). If they do not contact the school will call the contacts listed to ascertain why the child is not in school.

If a pupil's absence is below 90%, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil and if appropriate invite them in to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, 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.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Our school collects and stores attendance data and is used for internal purposes such as:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or note there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as needing intervention and support.

## **Leave of Absence/Holiday**

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## **9. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy



## 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
L	Late (before registers close)	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Education off-site (not dual registration)	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Approved sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Other authorised circumstance	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made

<b>H</b>	Family holiday (agreed)	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Family Holiday (not agreed)	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason yet provided for absence	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)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Late (after registers close)	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	None-compulsory school age absence	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend

<b>Y</b>	Enforced closure	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>7</b>	Illness due to Covid-19	No longer in use
<b>8</b>	Self Isolating due to Covid-19	No longer in use
<b>9</b>	Shielding due to Covid-19	No longer in use

**Appendix 2 Late letter (Code L)**

**Appendix 3 Late letter (Code U)**

**Appendix 4 Absence Letter**

**Appendix 5 School Attendance Meeting Letter**

**Appendix 6 School Letter Warning re: Penalty Notice Referral**

**Appendix 7 Unauthorised absence confirmation of PN request**

**Appendix 8a Easry CEP School Response to Leave Request (Not Authorising)**

**Appendix 8b Response to Leave Request (Not Authorising)**

**Appendix 9 Leave of absence confirmation of PN request**

**Appendix 10 Response to Leave without Request**

**Appendix 11 Traveller Absence Letter**

**Appendix 12 Traveller Absence (CME)**

**Appendix 13 Kent School Referral Pathway**

## Appendix 2

Dear «Name»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «Name» has been arriving late at school. I attach for your information a summary of attendance indicating the days «Name» was late. (Code L)

At «Name» school the register is taken at «Time» am and at «Time» pm.

A pupil's lateness will seriously disrupt their learning and can be embarrassing for your child.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve punctuality. If we can help in any way, perhaps via our School Nurse or Family Liaison Officer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

## Appendix 3

Dear «Name»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «Name» has arrived after the register has been closed. I attach for your information a summary of attendance indicating the days «Name» was late. (Code U)

At «Name» school the register is taken at «Time» am and is closed at «Time» am for the morning session and taken again at «Time» pm and closed at «Time» pm for the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked 'U' which records the absence as unauthorised for that session.

Arriving after the register has closed is seriously disrupting your child's learning and is impacting on their overall attendance.

Persistent late arrival may lead to a referral for a Penalty Notice or a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for further action and possible prosecution.

If «Name» continues to arrive late after the register has closed we will contact you to arrange a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

## Appendix 4

Dear «Name»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «Name» has been absent from school. I attach for your information a summary of attendance indicating the days «Name» was absent.

A pupil's absence can seriously disrupt their learning, not only do they miss out on teaching while they are away but they are less prepared for future lessons when they return.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve «Name»'s attendance. If we can help in any way, perhaps via our School Nurse or Family Liaison Officer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 5

Dear «Name»

**Re: «Pupil's name»**

Despite previous warnings, I note with concern that your child's attendance at school has made no significant improvement. «Name»'s attendance at school is currently «Number» % which means he/she has missed «Number» sessions. or «Number» days. This will have an impact on your child's education which we cannot ignore.

As there has been no improvement in «Name»'s attendance, I must advise you that further absences from school as a result of illness will require medical evidence (e.g. copy of a prescription, Doctors/Dentist appointment card.) If medical evidence is not provided, further absences will be marked as unauthorised.

I am inviting you to attend a School Attendance Meeting. The time and date have been set for «Date» at «Time». It is important that you and «Name» attend this meeting for us to explore the issues around poor attendance. The meeting will be attended by:

«Name»

«Name»

If this appointment is inconvenient, I would be grateful if you could contact me on «Telephone number» so that an alternative time can be arranged.

If you do not attend this meeting and «Name»'s absence continues to deteriorate, a referral may be made to the Inclusion and Attendance Service.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 6 (Penalty Notice)

Dear «Name»

**Re «Child's name»**

At «School Name» School we consider attendance of utmost importance and I am therefore bringing this information to your attention.

Our monitoring process has shown that «Name» has been absent from school for a total of «Number» unauthorised sessions («Number» days ). I refer you to legislation regarding Penalty Notices.

*‘As from 2005, Kent Local Authority (LA) introduced Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school of at least 10 sessions (5 days) during any 100 possible school sessions.’* A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

*On receipt of the Notice, the penalty will be £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the LA.*

Please note this is a warning letter that a Penalty Notice could be requested if a total of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) are reached.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me.

If further unauthorised absence occurs you will be contacted and invited in for a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher



## Appendix 7 (Penalty Notice)

Dear

With reference to our letter dated **(date)**, **(child's name)** has now reached a total of **(number)** sessions of unauthorised absence. As a result we will now be requesting a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.

A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 8a (Eastry CEP School Holiday Refusal)

Date

Dear

**Re: Holiday for XXXX**

I have received your request to take XXX out of school from XXXXX. Though I sympathise with the circumstances of your request I am duty bound by the following regulations.

From September 2013 the Department of Education have amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term time will **not** be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- Agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body;
- Each case will be judged on its merits;
- My decision is final;
- Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.

I have considered your request but I am writing to confirm that on this occasion the leave will not be authorised.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 8b (Penalty Notice)

### \*Holiday request – Refusal letter

Dear «Name» **PLEASE ALWAYS WRITE TO BOTH PARENTS**

### Request for leave during Term-Time

«Child's Name»

I have received your request to take «Name» out of school for a family holiday between «Date» and «Date», a total of «Number» school sessions.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will **not** be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- each case will be judged on its merits
- my decision is final
- leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

I have considered your request but I am writing to confirm that on this occasion the leave will not be authorised. If you decide to take «Name» out of school I will make a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

**Or**

You failed to apply in advance for permission for «Name» to be absent from school. As stated above, I am unable to authorise leave retrospectively and I will be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to **each parent** of **each child** and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 9 (Penalty Notice)

Dear

**(Child's Name and Date of Birth)**

With reference to our letter dated **(date)**, the leave of absence taken between **(dates)** has now been recorded as Unauthorised Absence and as a result a Penalty Notice has been requested.

A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 10 (Penalty Notice)

**\*Information you may wish to use in a letter to parents if you believe they have taken their children on holiday during term time but haven't requested it**

**Please always write to all parents/carers**

Dear

You failed to apply in advance for permission for «Name» to be absent from school.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. *(State why you are treating this absence as a family holiday)*

Requests for holidays in term-time will **not** be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

I am unable to authorise leave retrospectively and I will be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

The penalty notice gives you the opportunity to pay a penalty instead of being prosecuted for the offence given above. The amount of the penalty is £120 per parent, per child, but if payment is made by you within 21 days of receipt of this Notice it will be £60 per parent, per child. If you pay this penalty within the time limits set out below, no further action will be taken against you in connection with the offence as set out in this notice, i.e. your liability for the offence will be discharged.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 11

Dear «Name»

### Traveller Absence

I am writing to say how concerned I am over the number of times «Name» has been absent from school. Since «Date», Name has missed «Number» half day sessions achieving an overall attendance rate of «Number»%.

Traveller children have to attend school for 380 sessions (190 days) each year, which is the same for all children and you are at risk of being referred to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer if «Name»'s attendance falls below 90%. I am unable to authorise any absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances

If «Name»'s attendance does not improve and a referral is made to the Attendance Service, you could be prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court unless you can prove that:

- the child has no fixed abode  
OR
- because of the nature of your trade or business ( work) you have to travel from place to place and your child has attended school as often as possible  
AND
- your child has attended for at least 200 sessions in the past 12 months (for children aged 6 years and over)

If you would like to speak to me about «Name»'s attendance, please telephone the school to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 12

Dear «Name»

### Traveller Absence

Thank you for contacting me to say that «Name» will be absent from school from «Date» as you will be travelling due to your work.

The law allows me to authorise «Name»'s absence if your trade or business means that you have to travel from place to place. However, you have not let me know when «Name» is likely to return to school. Unless you contact me during the next 10 school days to confirm a date, I will refer «Name» to the Local Authority as a Child Missing Education.

After 20 days absence, the Local Authority may give me permission to take «Name»'s name off the school roll and you will have to re-apply for a school place when you return.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 13

### Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

