

Eastry Church of England Primary School



Attendance policy

November, 2024

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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 & section 444 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 Notice of Improvement when appropriate
- 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 9:15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm 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 9.00am 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 9.00am 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
- Mobile Child/Children (previously known as 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 mobile 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

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.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the Education Act 1996. They can only be issued in relation to pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, pupil referral units, academy schools, AP academies, and certain off-site places as set out in section 444A(1)(b).

A penalty notice must will be considered for absence of 10 sessions or more (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a 10 week rolling period including INSET days. A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change parental behaviour without the need for a criminal prosecution.

- The first penalty notice issued to the parent for a child will be charged at £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid between days 22 and 28.
- Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first offence, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable within 28 days. There is no reduced sum available in this instance
- A third penalty notice must not be issued within a 3 year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) times within those 3 years, a penalty notice cannot be issued and alternative action may be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

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 unauthorised absences the school will consider an issuing a Notice of Improvement
- . 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 not 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.

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.

Attendance Codes

/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Education off site (not dual registration)
C	Other authorised circumstances
C1	Absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad
C2	Pupils on part-time timetables
D	Dual registration
E	Excluded
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
I	Illness
J1	Leave of absence to attend an interview for employment or admission to another education institution
K	Education provision arranged by a local authority, rather than the school
L	Late (before register closes at 9.15am or 1.30pm)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity
Q	Pupils unable to attend school due to lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closes at 9.15am or 1.30pm)
V	Education visit or trip
W	Work experience
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Y1	Unable to attend - Absence due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend - Widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend - Part of school closed

- Y4 Unable to attend - Unexpected whole school closure (different from # for planned closures)**
- Y5 Unable to attend - Pupils in the criminal justice system**
- Y6 Unable to attend - Absence due to public health guidance or law**
- Y7 Unable to attend - Any other unavoidable cause**
- All should attend / No mark recorded**

Late Arrivals

Registration/Gates close at 8.50am

Children arriving between 8.50-9.15am or 1.00-1.30pm marks as L (late)

Children arriving after 9.15 or 1.30pm mark as U (Reg closed)

Appendix 2 – Late Letter (Attendance code L)

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 Late Letter (Attendance Code U)

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 Notice of Improvement, 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 Absence Letter

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 School Attendance Invite to a Meeting

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 Notice of Improvement (10 or more unauthorised sessions)

Dear

Re Child's Name – Notice of Improvement

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

«Name»'s attendance at school is currently «Number» % which includes 'Number' unauthorised sessions from the '(date to 'date)'. We have enclosed a copy of their registration certificate.

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 would refer you to our Attendance Policy and section 7 of the Education Act 1996 regarding parent's responsibility for their child's school attendance.

We have 'written/phoned/spoken' to you regarding xxxx school attendance (give details) and we are disappointed that their attendance has not improved. We therefore invite you to a meeting on 'date' to discuss the Notice of Improvement and what support we can give you to meet this notice.

The Notice of Improvement timeframe will run from '(a 20 school day period)'. If XXX has any further absences within this period we may request a Penalty Notice be issued or prosecution considered. Penalty Notices are issued to **each parent** of **each child** and the amount of the penalty will be £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 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.

We look forward to seeing you on XXX

Kind regards,

Headteacher

Appendix 7 Penalty Notice Warning (not holiday absence)

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 10 week period.' A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

On receipt of the Notice, the penalty will be £160, reduced to £80 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 8 Penalty Notice Requested (not holiday absence)

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 9 Holiday Refusal (under 10 sessions in last 10 week period)

M &M XXX
FULL ADDRESS

XXX

Dear XXX

Request for leave during Term-Time XXXX

I have received your email advising us that you are taking XX and XX out of school for a family holiday between XXX to XXX, a total of XXX school sessions (XX days).

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. Please can I refer you to our attendance policy and regulations which states that 10 school sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in the last 10 school weeks may result in a penalty notice being requested.

Penalty Notices are issued to **each parent** of **each child** and the amount of the penalty will be £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 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.

Kind regards

Appendix 10 Warning Penalty Notice for Holiday Absence

*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 £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 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 11 Penalty Notice Requested (Holiday Absence)

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 12 Penalty Notice Requested (Holiday Absence not requested)

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 £160 per parent, per child, but if payment is made by you within 21 days of receipt of this Notice it will be £80 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 13 Mobile Children (Previously Traveller) Absence

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 may 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 14 Mobile Children (Previously Traveller) Absence – No Return Details

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 15

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

