



Lydden and River Primary School Federation

Attendance Policy

September 2024

This policy is written under guidance from the 2024 DFE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'

Introduction

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and is essential for children to maximise their educational opportunities. Attendance is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. All children should attend every day in term time, as long as they are well enough to do so.

Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance and believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:-

- attainment in school
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others

The Governors and Acting Headteachers, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at school.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk. The schools share the attendance percentage with parents at each parents' consultation meeting and more frequently where there are concerns.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent and daily thereafter for the duration of the absence. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe.

Pupils are expected to arrive between 8.45 and 8.55am, when the doors are open and children go to class. All pupils who arrive late must report to the school office, with their parent/carer who should sign the child/ren in and record the reason for lateness.

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.15am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence.

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, if a child is not accounted for, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

- a) Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- b) An appointment card or verification by the doctor/ dentist/hospital is required.
- c) If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.
- d) If your child is absent due to vomiting, they should not return to school for **24 hours** after the last bout of sickness. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at school.
- e) Medical certificates may be required for absences greater than five days

The Role of the School Staff

Although the Leadership team has overall accountability, the whole staff team share the responsibility for promoting positive attendance. This is rooted in our welcoming and inclusive ethos and our positive climate for learning.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers mark pupils present and the Attendance Officer marks pupil absent as appropriate. Pupil attendance is monitored weekly to highlight and take action where the attendance of individual children is causing concern.

Attendance Officers:

Attendance Administration: Miss Hart-River

Mrs Willis – Lydden

It is the responsibility of the school Attendance Officers to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence and a reason obtained
- If a child is absent without contact from home, contact the parent/carer to find out the reason.
- Where it is not possible to make contact with a parent/carer, use alternative emergency contacts provided by the parent/carer to help to locate the child and ensure their safety. If there is cause for concern it may be necessary to report to the duty social worker and/or the Police
- Where the reason for absence is unknown or unclear, or where information is conflicting, telephone or send an email to parents/ carers to share this and request reasons for absence.
- The appropriate national attendance code is entered into the register for each session for each child
- Parents are informed of their child's attendance percentage figure where there is cause for concern and via the class teacher at parent consultation meetings.

Potential Impact of Attendance at different Levels

96%+	Excellent –This will help all aspects of your child's progress, well-being and engagement in life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
94-95%	Average – Strive to build on this. The school will work with parents to continue to promote full attendance to move to 96%+
85-93%	Poor – Absence is likely to affect attainment and progress at school. School will contact parent directly to seek ways of working together to improve attendance.
Below 85%	<p>There may be unavoidable circumstances, such as a chronic illness or a condition managed by a GP or consultant that result in low attendance. The school will work with parents/carers to support learning where appropriate and to understand what can be done to support recovery and a return to school.</p> <p>Attendance at this level is unacceptable where the absence is unexplained, and where the reasons for absence cannot be authorised. Action will be taken to refer to the local authority where parents are not working with school to achieve a rapid and sustained improvement, where no reason for absence is provided or where there are a series of unauthorised absences.</p> <p>Absence to this extent will affect attainment and progress and disrupt the child's learning.</p> <p>A Penalty Notice is considered where absence is not authorised, and may be applied for if the Local Authority criteria are met.</p>

Action for Low Attendance

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case.

Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

- a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.
- b) Prior to referring to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer, the school will work with parents. If concerns remain, letters will be sent clearly defining these. It is hoped that rapid improvement in attendance will prevent the need for a referral.
- c) During term one, a child's attendance percentage may be disproportionately affected by an absence. If the child has a history of positive attendance, the emerging pattern will be monitored for improvement and any referral action considered will be deferred and implemented if there is no improvement by the end of term 2. Referrals will be made as needed in subsequent terms.

Children Missing Education

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, Acting Headteacher must be informed in writing. If parents are considering a move for their child, they are asked to share the reasons for this so that the school may offer support for transition.

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Acting Headteacher and the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school have failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Children cannot be removed from the school roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been offered and accepted. Children who stop attending and who cannot be traced cannot be removed from the school roll.

Lateness

The class register is taken at 8.55 am and at the start of the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their parents/carers should sign their child/ren in with our Inventory System, recording the reason for lateness. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L'). The register will close at 9.05am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') This national code counts as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness is disruptive to learning, both for the child concerned and the class. This will be discussed with parents, as the need arises, by a member of the attendance team or the class teacher. Frequent or regular lateness can provide grounds for prosecution or the issue of a Penalty Notice.

10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed over a ten week period can result in a Penalty Notice Warning Letter can be issued.

Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent emails or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Acting Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation' has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences that have never been properly explained.
- Holidays not agreed.

Authorising Absence

Only the Acting Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. The absence must be unavoidable. The Acting Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. An email or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school.

Granting leave of Absence

The schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission.

The schools will restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad: in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA). (For full details please see Code C1)
- Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable
- Exceptional circumstances: The schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. This must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. The schools will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the schools to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. The Acting 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 Head, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Acting Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a student'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 Acting Headteacher 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 following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that **will not be authorised**:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Parental illness [alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school – emergencies excepted]
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family holiday

Persistent/Severe Absence

If a pupil is absent for 10% or more of school sessions, the absence is will be classified as persistent.

If a pupil is absent for 50% or more of school sessions, the absence will be classified as severe.

In both cases the schools will work closely with the family and support as outlined below:

Level 1 letter – Explains that attendance has dropped below 95% which is the minimum expected level of attendance and outlines the importance of attendance at school and of improving attendance

Level 2 letter – Expresses concern, emphasises building a positive pattern of attendance and encourages parental engagement. Offers support. Consider meeting with Acting Headteacher.

Level 3 letter – Remain concerned over persistent absence. Includes summary and breakdown of absences and explanation of nationally expected level of attendance. Meeting with the Acting Headteacher. Offer of support for example, a referral to School Health Team or School Liaison Officer

Level 4 letter – Notice to Improve letter issued if appropriate warning that penalty notice could be requested

Level 5 Letter Notification that we are requesting a penalty notice from LA

Each case will be considered independently as appropriate.

Term Time Absence-Holiday Requests

The schools will not authorise a term-time holiday in any circumstances.

If the parent states that there is a family emergency or other exceptional circumstance, the school may consider asking for details of flight bookings etc.

Parental requests for term-time leave will be responded to by return. This ensures that parents have an opportunity to make an informed choice as to whether to take their child on holiday or not.

If the absence is not authorised and the leave/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.

Penalty Notices for poor attendance/lateness

Penalty notices are issued in accordance with The National Framework of Penalty Notices 2024 and KCC Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct August 2024

Penalty Notice Fines can be issued for 10 or more unauthorised absences (5 days) within a 10-week period. This includes unauthorised lateness and term time holidays. For example, if a child is late to school 10 or more mornings within a 10- week period, or a one week holiday is taken, a fine can be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be **£160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.**

If a second penalty notice is issued within a rolling 3-year period, then the charge will be at a **flat rate of £160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days.**

In both instances failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28-day period may result in **prosecution** by the Kent PRU and Attendance Service.

In the event of three or more periods of unauthorised absence within a 3 rolling year period, a penalty notice will not be issued. **A referral will be made to Kent PRU and Attendance Service Courts Team** who will consider the case for prosecution

A Notice to Improve letter may be issued before a penalty notice is issued. This is final opportunity for parents to engage in support and improve attendance. A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued where support is not appropriate

Signed: _____ Date: September 2024
Chair of Governors