Attendance Policy

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Contents

Aims

Legislation and Guidance

Roles and Responsibilities

Attendance Policy

Recording Attendance

The School Day

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Monitoring Attendance

Monitoring Arrangements

Links with Other Policies

Reducing Persistent Absence

Penalty Notices

Appendices

1. Attendance Codes

2. Attendance Referral Pathway

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.

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.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board will:

- Monitor the 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.
- Ensure that the Local Authority School Liaison Officer and Inclusion Advisor are informed about the long-term absence of any pupil.

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

The school's designated attendance officers:

- Monitor attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level to meet the school's individual, personalised attendance improvement target (ABIEs)
- Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Work 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
- Work alongside other schools, as part of the Attendance and Behaviour Hub programme, to reflect on current systems, share effective strategies and embed sustainable improvements.

All teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

Attendance Policy

All teachers are expected to promote and encourage regular school attendance and punctuality among pupils. Any concerns regarding a pupil's attendance or persistent lateness should be reported promptly to the school's Safeguarding Team in accordance with the school's attendance procedures. Attendance and punctuality concerns will be monitored regularly and will form a standing agenda item at the school's weekly Safeguarding meetings, ensuring that appropriate support and intervention can be identified and implemented where necessary.

They are expected to plan 'real and relevant' learning, providing exciting and stimulating learning opportunities in order to encourage the good attendance of all pupils.

School office staff:

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

Parents, guardians and carers will be asked to:

- Ensure their children attend school regularly
- Inform the school on the first day of non-attendance and for each day of absence either by phone or using the absence form on the school website.
- Provide written requests for planned absences to the school in advance
- Inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to absence

Recording Attendance

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 at the start of 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.

The School Day

Our school day starts with registration at 8.50 am for the whole school, and at 12.45 pm for EYFS, 13.00 pm for KS1 and 13.30 pm for KS2. Pupils who are not present for registration will initially be marked absent, but will be marked late if they arrive after registers close at 9.00 am.
Pupils arriving after registers close at 9am will be marked as having unauthorised absence for the morning session. Any pupil arriving after this time must be registered via the school office and sign in using the entry system.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practically possible. This can be done by contacting the school office by telephone (01622 734539) and using the automated system or by using the absence form on the school website. www.madginfordprimary.co.uk

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.

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.

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. Any request must be made in writing prior to the 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.

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

- 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.
- Exceptional circumstances: rare, significant and unavoidable events agreed in advance by the Headteacher, such as bereavement of a close family member.
- Off-site education such as participating in an approved sporting activity.
- Exclusions: when a child has been officially suspended or excluded.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. The start of the school day is 8.50am.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. The registers will close at 9am

Lateness which is marked as absent is followed up in the same way as persistent absence (see below).

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 email and telephone or a doorstep visit.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

Reporting to parents

The school reports to parents on their child's attendance record annually in the written end-of-year report. If there are concerns, parents will be informed of their child's attendance through letters and meetings with senior leaders.

Monitoring Attendance

The attendance team at our school monitors pupil absence on a monthly basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning or complete an absence form on the school website, if their child is going to be absent due to ill health. If the absence continues, they are expected to do this daily.

The school office will do daily calling and/or text messages for any pupil absent for whom we do not have a reason for absence. If parents cannot be contacted, a home visit will be carried out and school safeguarding procedures will be followed.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving the Local authority School Liaison Officer/advisor.

The school's target for attendance is 100%. 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.

The school collects and stores attendance data to:

- 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 being in need of intervention and support
- The school submits the statutory sickness and unauthorised absence returns to the Local Authority.

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.

Links with Other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Reducing Persistent Absence

Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.

School procedures for absence are robust and being adhered to:

- There is first day calling for any pupils who are absent without reason. Daily phone calls will continue.
- If a pupil continues to be absent without reason, this will be raised with a school DSL and recorded on CPOMS. Actions from this will include a doorstep visit and consultation with the LA School Liaison Officer or Advisor. Advice will be sought from LA Safeguarding team.

If staff are concerned about a pupil's attendance this is escalated to the attendance team and Year Group Leaders who are trained DSLs. They will be alerted using the school electronic recording system.

The attendance team will act early to investigate, support the family and meet statutory safeguarding duties. The attendance team will:

- Detail and discuss the reason for absence (e.g. illness, lateness) look for patterns (e.g. every Monday) including the absence of siblings. Look at upward and downward trends in attendance. Detail and discuss any additional support the pupil or family are having.
- School letters regarding absence will be sent home. These letters will detail the number of sessions missed in the academic year and also the overall attendance percentage.

- Continue to monitor and if there is no improvement follow up with a meeting with parents. At the meeting, barriers and appropriate support will be discussed and also a referral to Early Help.
- An action plan will be put in place with achievable steps, reasonable adjustments and managed catch up support for the child on return to school.
- If parents refuse to engage with Early Help or this support has no impact then the absence will be referred to the LA Officer PIAS vis the Digital Front Door and the Kent pathways will be followed.
- Where a case is not straightforward and there are family and social issues, the school will refer to the new Kent Support Levels Guidance.
- The school liaises with parents/carers and the appropriate services for long term absence due to ill-health and ensures pupils receive learning support

Penalty Notices

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated Local Authority Officers, Headteachers and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27 February 2004.

The Supreme Court has recently ruled on term time holidays from school which do not count as 'exceptional circumstances' and therefore cannot be authorised during school term time. However, in accordance with this ruling, Kent County Council has provided further guidance and the matter could be referred to the Attendance Service of the Local Authority who will consider issuing Penalty Notices in the following circumstances:

- Overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps) or unexplained absences
- Parentally-condoned absences without a valid reason
- Unauthorised leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term-time
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the school register has closed)
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place within school hours during the first five days of exclusion

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The 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 or withdraw the notice.

Under the statutory guidance, Working together to Improve Attendance 2024, Penalty Notices are issued to each parent for each child who is absent without the agreement of the Headteacher. Minimum Requirements: Below 90% overall attendance with recent sporadic periods of unauthorised absence totalling a minimum of 10 unauthorised days.

For the first offence, Penalty Notices carry a fine of £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days increasing to £160 per parent per child if paid between 22-28 days.
For the second offence (within 3 years), Penalty Notices carry a flat rate fine of £160 per parent, per child, with no early repayment discount.

There is no right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice because the authorisation of absence is the sole responsibility of the Headteacher.

Where Penalty Notice(s) are unpaid, the local authority may consider taking legal action under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 for failure to ensure a child's regular attendance at school
If this happens, the case will take place before magistrates who could issue the maximum fine of £1000 per parent per child for this offence.

The school follows the Kent attendance referral pathway

_____	_____	_____
(Signature)	(Role)	(Date)

Appendix 1

Attendance Codes

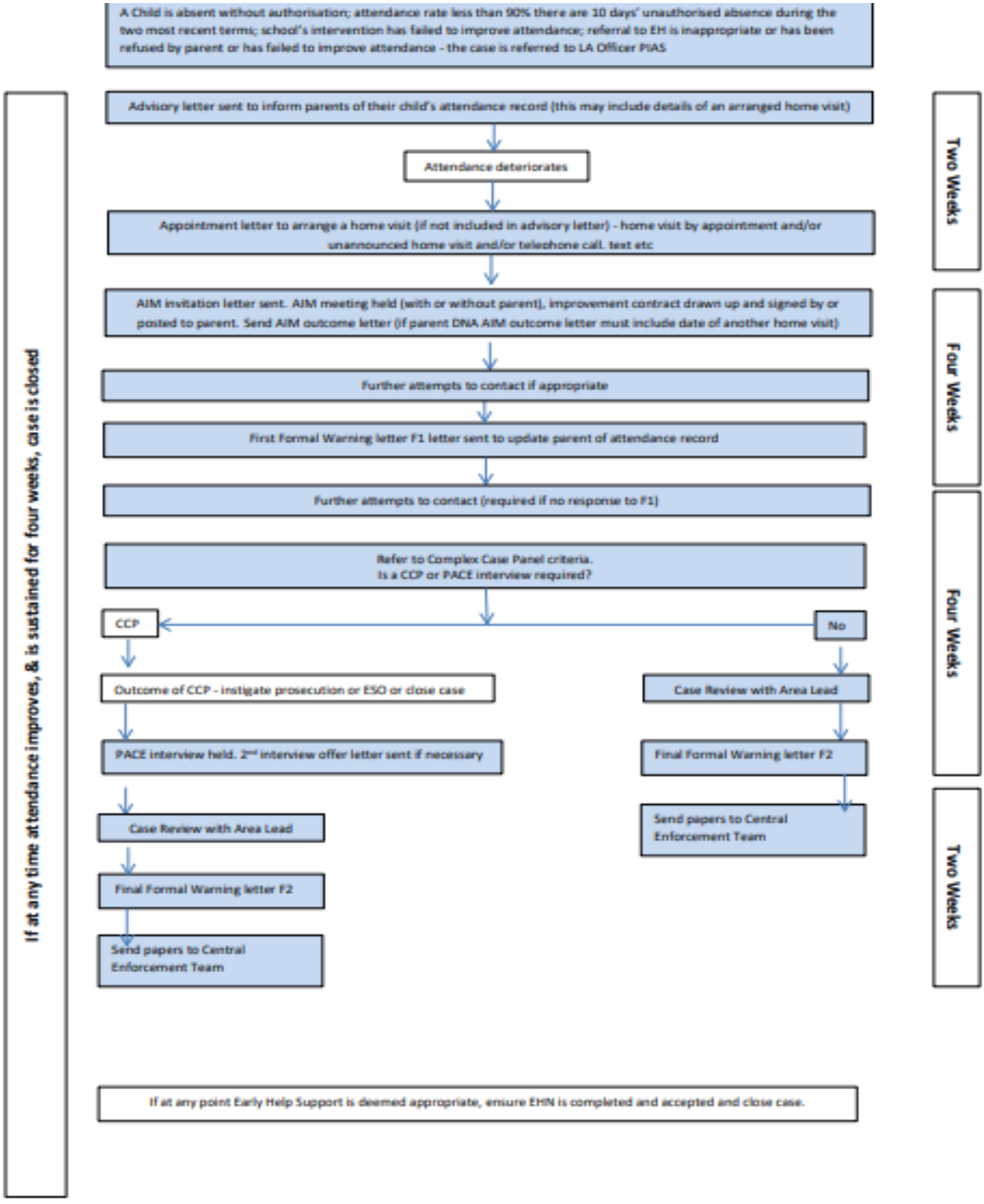
The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	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	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	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
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	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
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

Lateness is marked as marked as N and if the pupil arrives after the registers close, is then changed to U which is an unauthorised absence. Any unathorised holidays are marked as G.

Appendix 2: Attendance Referral Pathway



Kent County Council Fast Track Case Management Process 12 weeks