

Attendance Policy

Headcorn Primary School



This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, and at any other time if changes are required to comply with changes in legislation, regulation or national or KCC advice. Any amendments will require the approval of the Full Governing Body.

Date of approval by Full Governing Body	5 th March 2024
Signature of Chair of Governors	J Keeler
Signature of Head Teacher	S Symonds
Date Due for review	March 2025 or earlier if required

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Statement of Intent

Headcorn Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils, and we use a variety of strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality.

In accordance with Department for Education (DfE) advice to schools, Headcorn Primary School will:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every child has access to full-time education.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

The Governors, Head Teacher and school staff will work in partnership with parents and carers to achieve excellent attendance at Headcorn Primary School.

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
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/part/VI/chapter/II>
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/part/3/chapter/3>
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/part/7/chapter/2/crossheading/school-attendance>
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contents/made>

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/757/regulation/2/made>

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

Parental Responsibility

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes puts pupils at risk encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' and carers' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Parents and carers should regularly update the school during any period of absence from school and inform on when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.50am. All pupils that arrive late need to report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded by the Attendance Officer.

We expect parents and carers to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality, with their child aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Keep absences to a minimum.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- Telephone the school when their child is unable to attend on the first day of the absence and each day thereafter with the reason for this. Parents/carers should also let the school know if their child is going to be late eg if a car breaks down or an urgent appointment has been made.
- Provide a written explanation for the absence when their child returns to school.
- Parents/carers should provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician, if asked to do so. Whenever possible all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours unless an emergency has arisen.
- Contact the school at the earliest opportunity if their child is experiencing any difficulties and the school will do everything possible to resolve the issues.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility under **Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act** and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school may create an offence in law.

Promoting Attendance

At Headcorn Primary School there is a whole school approach to ensuring excellent school attendance with specific staff having specific responsibilities. Headcorn Primary School will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the Home – School agreement, newsletters, certificates for good or significantly improving attendance. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and children.

The school will:

- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality using newsletters and other forms of communications with parents making attendance a high priority.
- Employ key members of staff with responsibility for monitoring, improving and evaluating school attendance. At Headcorn Primary School, this role is fulfilled by the Family Liaison Officer, Mr Benfield in partnership with Mrs Bennett, the Administrator. Their contact details are available on the school website.
- Follow a structured process for managing poor attendance. This may include writing to parents/carers, inviting them to attend meetings and making arrangements in school to support their child to attend school more regularly.
- Encourage our children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored using our electronic registration system and that absences are followed up promptly.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies (GPs, Kent County Council Integrated Children's Services, School Health etc) to support children with any issues there might be.
- Meet the legal requirements for recording pupil absence using the correct registration procedures and codes with reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence. It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This will include ensuring that the pupil is supported to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils. Please speak to the Family Liaison Officer, Mr Benfield, and your child's teacher on their return.
- Make arrangements to meet the requirements of pupils with additional educational needs or an Education Health Care Plan.

Roles and Responsibility

The Governing Body

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

The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

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

The Attendance Officer and Family Liaison Officer (FLO)

The School Attendance Officer and Family Liaison Officer (FLO) will:

- If no reason for absence has been provided, the attendance officer will ensure that parents/carers are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call. These phone calls will be made in addition to and separately from other correspondence made by any other School department.
- Monitor attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Report concerns about attendance to the Head Teacher
- Work with Local Authority School Liaison Officer to tackle persistent absence
- Ensure, where there has been no communication, that contact is made with parents/carers requesting reason for absence. Should there be no communication for 3 days then it is the responsibility of the Family Liaison officer / School administrator to arrange a local authority welfare check.
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues. In the first instance parents /carers will receive up to 2 letters which will seek to work with families and address barriers which cause low attendance.
- Advise the Head Teacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Class Teachers

Class teachers will keep accurate registers, completing the register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers mark pupils present and the Attendance Officer marks in any absence or lateness.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance – monitor and notify the FLO/Attendance Office of concerns. Attendance Officer to contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance – school intervention letters/meeting with parents/carers if applicable. *(Although this percentage seems a high expectations, it is important to note that 90 – 95% attendance means that a child has lost between 2 – 4 weeks of learning opportunities across a year.)*
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised 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.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Head Teacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the 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 has 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.

Lateness

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.50am. All pupils who arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late in the register (registration code L).

Frequent lateness after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration and this will count as an unauthorised absence (registration code U).

Frequent lateness after the register has closed will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

Authorising Absence

A child's absence will be authorised if approval has been given by the school in advance or an acceptable reason has been given afterwards.

Only the Head Teacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Head Teacher is not obliged to accept a parent/carer's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in 'exceptional circumstances'. The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. 'poorly' or 'unwell'
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child/family birthday
- Shopping trip

- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings need to be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from June 2020.

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/62126/KCC-Penalty-Notice-Code-of-Conduct.pdf

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent, per child).

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent 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's 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.
- Or where the school has evidence that there are other pressing personal issues for a family that would warrant a short break from school.

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 Head Teachers 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.

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 Head Teacher 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 Teacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Head Teacher’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.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The school promotes attendance in a number of ways:

- Conveys a clear message and vision for attendance to all members of the school community, including parents and pupils, with clear communication including newsletters, assemblies, emails and social media.
- Clear messaging about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes.
- Recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement and Pupil Premium strategy.
- Promote attendance through class and individual rewards, including as part of the weekly celebration assembly, including for example a punctuality raffle and class attendance trophy.
- Attendance is highlighted clearly to parents in a child’s school report.

Appendix 1
Appendix 2

Extraordinary Leave of Absence Form
School Referral Pathway

Appendix 1



Headcorn Primary School
Kings Road, Headcorn, Kent TN27 9QT
Phone: 01622-891289
Website: www.headcornschool.kent.sch.uk
Email: admin@headcorn.kent.sch.uk



Extraordinary Leave of Absence Request – Exceptional Circumstances

Dear Parent/Carer,

This form is for the purpose of applying for a short leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances. This request form should be submitted at the earliest possible date; preferably at least two weeks prior to the planned absence.

PLEASE NOTE - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 states that the Head Teacher should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

PLEASE FILL IN SECTION A and return this form to the School Office.

SECTION A:

Name of Pupil: _____ Class: _____

Dates(s) of absence: From _____ To _____ Number of days: _____

Please state reason for absence below:

Details: _____

Signed: _____ Parent/Carer Date: _____

For office use only:

SECTION B: Extraordinary Leave of Absence Request – Exceptional Circumstances

To the parents/carers of: _____ Class: _____

Your request for leave of absence for exceptional circumstances on (date) _____
is AUTHORISED / NOT AUTHORISED

Signed: _____ Head Teacher Date: _____

Appendix 2

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

