



Kent County Council
Children, Families and Education Directorate

**ATTENDANCE POLICY
STATEMENT**

OF

DOWNS VIEW INFANT SCHOOL

Responsible People named in this policy

Chair of Governors

Felicity Moore

Head Teacher

Tracy Kent

Latest review: April 2019
Next review : April 2020

Statement of Intent

Downs View Infant 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/outstanding 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 weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Downs View Infant School.

Rewarding Good/Outstanding attendance

Weekly

The class with the best attendance for the week is rewarded with 'Attendance Ted' and the children given extra playtime/child initiated time for the week. The class who are the best at being on time are given 'Punctuality Pup' and rewarded in the same way. This is announced in celebration assembly and in the newsletter on Fridays and each class' attendance is displayed in the window of the classroom. Our overall attendance is displayed on the playground.

Termly

Children with 97% or above attendance will be rewarded, as follows:

(This is devised in consultation with the children throughout the year so is subject to change).

Term 2: FLO/HT/DHT and sticker

Term 4: Easter party/ craft activity with pupils

Term 6: Forest School/ outside picnic and medal/certificate

Children with the most improved attendance across the year will also be rewarded as above during terms 2, 4 and 6 when appropriate.

Children will be congratulated in assemblies. Acknowledgment will be made on the school's newsletter.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children 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 in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This can be done via parent mail, telephone or in person (if other sibling at school). This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

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

The Role of the School Staff

At Downs View there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers/Teaching Assistants complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late via SIMs (electronic data recording system). The class teacher is responsible for reporting any children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer 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 by phone call.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed of the child's attendance figure with school reports twice per year or sooner if attendance is below 97%.
- Where appropriate conduct a home visit when a child is absent, and school has been unable to ascertain a reason why.
- Consult with the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher if there is no answer when conducting a home visit. If there are immediate concerns for a pupil's welfare, under the direction of the Headteacher/Deputy Safeguarding Leads, the police and relevant agencies will be contacted.
- Send out attendance letters when appropriate. (i.e. if attendance is dropping, unexplained or there are a series of single days causing concern.)
- Hold attendance improvement meetings with parents/carers with the Headteacher when appropriate.
- Signpost families to supportive agencies e.g. Early Help, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, School Health Service and Social Services.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance – the class teacher to investigate and notify the Headteacher of concerns. The FLO/Headteacher will contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents. Where possible a discussion with the parent will be held prior to sending the letter.
- 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.

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Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher/ Attendance Officer 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

At Downs View the register is taken between 8.40am-8.50am (all pupils), 12.45pm (EYFS) and 1.00pm (Year 1 and 2). Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.10 am and 1. pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents and may be referred to the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) or Headteacher and/or School Liaison Officer (SLO, previously EWO). The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will frequently challenge parents at Reception and have regular discussions with parents where this is a re-occurrence. The impact that lateness has on the child will be pointed out to the parent/carer. It can provide grounds for prosecution or 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

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent 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/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's/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 January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- 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.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

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.

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.

Appendix 1

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

