



Attendance & Punctuality Policy Of Queenborough School And Nursery

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1. Introduction and Background

Growth Community of Sheppey Schools is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance and positive behaviour are critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 97% attendance and above 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 Growth Community of Sheppey Schools

2. Parental Responsibility

Parents 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. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent by telephone or text message before 9.30am and subsequent days after whilst the child is unable to attend. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe. Parents should regularly update the school and inform on when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.40 a.m. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded and the Office Staff sign the child in.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

3. Promoting Regular Attendance

School Responsibilities

At all Growth Community of Sheppey Schools there is a whole school, staff responsibility and approach for monitoring & improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

Mrs Mumford has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers 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. The class teacher notifies the Attendance Officer of children whose attendance is causing concern. Class teachers and teaching assistants are expected to routinely welcome children back to school and check how they are following an absence:

- It's lovely to see you back at school, are you feeling better? What was wrong with you?

This demonstrates care and that the pupil has been missed but equally shows we follow up all absences as attendance is high on our agenda.

It is the responsibility of **Mrs Mumford** 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 or text message.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence and to ensure records are up to date and accurate written notification is required for all absences.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed termly if their child's attendance has dropped in to a new monitoring group and the attendance percentage including any lateness record.
- We encourage all pupils to remain at school until the close of day unless agreed otherwise.

Timeline of School Action for Poor Attendance

- 96 - 100% attendance - class teacher to investigate and notify the **Attendance Officer** of concerns and to contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 96% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents
- 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.
- Below 90% - Where the absences have not been authorised consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer and a referral to PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service may be considered or for intensive family support an Early Help Notification should be raised.
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To help us all to focus on attendance we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters.
- Publish school % attendance figure poster and share attendance data on the website stating the school and class % attendance each week.
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's 96% target for attendance or if they move in to a lower monitoring group.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and events.

4. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.40 a.m.** and we expect all children to be in school whilst registers are being marked during this time. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded and signed in by the Office Staff. Your child will receive a late mark, (Code '**L**').

After 20 mins the registers will be closed **9.00 a.m.** In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence, (Code '**U**').

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer and/or Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness – Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council’s Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from April 2017.

- 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

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

5. Understanding Types of 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.

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)

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.

6. Leave of Absences in Term Time

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)

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**. 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.

If a Penalty Notice is imposed for a leave of absence, 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.

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.

7. Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. **Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.** We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include:

- allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Family Liaison Officer, Well Being Manager, Pastoral Support or School Liaison Officer.

If a child's attendance drops to 95%, their attendance will be monitored on a weekly basis and a Medical Evidence letter will be sent from the Attendance Officer. This letter will state that medical evidence will be required for all periods of absence.

If medical evidence is not provided, a penalty warning letter may be actioned. A penalty fine will follow if the parent(s) continues to not provide medical evidence. Once a child's attendance drops to 90% or below, the parent(s) will be invited to a meeting with the Attendance Officer and/or Head of School to discuss the matter and find a way to resolve the issue. Failure to attend the meeting or continued absence, will result in a referral to the School Liaison Officer or a Penalty Notice raised.

8. Absence Procedures

If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.30.
- Or they can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Request medical evidence if the absence lasts longer than two days.
- Request medical evidence for every absence if the attendance drops over a period of time.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer, if absences persist or non-engagement.
- Refer the matter to the School Liaison Officer if all other strategies have been used and court proceedings are the next step.

9. The School Liaison Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties are not resolved in this way, the school may refer the child to the School Liaison Officer.

He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the SLO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

10. Children Missing in Education

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

11. Responsibility & Implementation of Policy

Headteachers of Sheppey Schools and the Governing Body

12. Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Rewarding Attendance

Weekly

Tracking of attendance diamond, praise, certificates

Punctuality Pup rewarded to the class for least lateness in Key Stage 1

Best Time Keepers Award

Awesome Attenders Award - Roaming Attendance Trophy and Ted

Termly

Certificates for 100% attendance and entry into 100% Attendance Raffle

Best Time Keepers Raffle – Every pupil who has arrived on time every day will be entered

Awesome Attenders Award

Annual

Certificates and prize for 100% Attendance

All 100% attenders entered in a raffle to win a prize

Awesome Attenders of the Year Award

Most Improved Attendance Award

