



Kent County Council
Children, Families and Education Directorate

ATTENDANCE POLICY STATEMENT

OF

DOWNS VIEW INFANT SCHOOL

Responsible People named in this policy

Attendance Officer

Sam Ansell

Chair of Governors

Diane Turner

Head Teacher

Tracy Kent

Reviewed and amended: March 2021

Addendum added – Covid-19

Next review: March 2022

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.

An addendum is added to this policy in conjunction with Covid-19. Please see pages 7-11. The principles within this policy still remain paramount with acknowledgement of Government guidance and systems to ensure attendance is the best it can be for all children, despite the pandemic.

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.
-

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 am (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.

Addendum to Attendance policy March 2021

This document does not replace our existing Attendance Policy but it outlines our attendance procedures for the period of school re-opening from March 2021 until matters are reviewed in August 2021.

Background

In March 2020 when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, the Government made amendments to the legislation which meant, parents would not be penalised or sanctioned for their child’s non-attendance at school.

It is now vital for **all children** to return to school to minimise the long-term impact of the pandemic on children’s education, wellbeing and wider development.

School Attendance will be compulsory from 8th March 2021.

Your child will be welcomed back into school and the usual rules on School Attendance will apply,

- It is the duty of the parent to ensure that their child attends school regularly (where the child is a registered pupil) and is of compulsory school age
- It is the responsibility of the school to record attendance and follow up absence.
- The availability of the local authority to issue sanctions relating to unauthorised absence from school will now continue.

Who cannot attend school?

- **Pupils who have Covid symptoms.**
- **Pupils who live in the same household as someone who has Covid symptoms. Where this is the case, please refer to the NHS testing website and inform the school immediately.**

If someone in your household is extremely clinically vulnerable, the school will discuss individual cases with parents as necessary.

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. However:

- A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID19)
- Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the current advice on shielding
- Where you and your child have been delayed in returning to the UK or travelling abroad and have been told to remain at home, you should not attend school during the period of quarantine. Please discuss such circumstances with the school and provide documentary evidence in support of the absence; school will consider the circumstances of the trip/time abroad to inform our decision to authorise absence or not.
- If rates of the virus rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore, they may be temporarily absent.
- Some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to. You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at: COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we will offer access to education at home resources. We will monitor engagement with this activity to ensure learning is being accessed appropriately.

Where pupils are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

All other pupils must attend school.

Pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies and where the absence has been authorised for example;

- The pupil has been granted a leave of absence
- The pupil is unable to attend because of sickness
- The pupil is absent for a necessary religious observance

We understand that some pupils, parents and households may be reluctant or anxious about returning to school. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary,

those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such. This may also include some pupils with EHCP plans.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, please discuss your concerns with the school so that we can understand your situation and reassure you of the measures we have in place to reduce the risk in school. The school may contact the SEND and School Nursing Teams for advice and support, and we may require medical verification or other relevant documentation in order to assess risk.

Punctuality

Pupils will be given staggered start and finish times to keep 'bubbles' apart as they arrive and leave school. Staggered start and finish times will not reduce the amount of overall teaching time each child receives. Please ensure your child arrives on time and is collected on time in order to minimise disruption in line with the school's Covid risk management. Please contact the school ahead if you are experiencing difficulties. If lateness persists, the school will want to discuss this with you and agree some support measures; if matters do not improve, the lateness will not be authorised and the matter may be referred to the local authority School Liaison Officer.

Absence Procedures

- **Parents and carers should notify the school as normal** if your child is unable to attend on any given day. You must update the school regularly regarding any ongoing absence.
- Where a child is not regularly attending school, we will discuss this with you to understand what the difficulties are and agree some supportive measures to improve matters as early as possible. Normal absence procedures will be followed (please refer to our main Attendance Policy found on our website).
- Where the school's efforts do not result in an improvement in attendance or punctuality, and if there is no valid reason for the child to be absent, we will refer to the local authority School Liaison Officer for additional support, advice and statutory intervention.

Procedures for COVID related absence.

If a parent reports a pupil absence due to COVID symptoms they should stay at home, be advised to get a test immediately and engage with NHS test and trace process. Tests can be booked online through the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus website or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet.

- **Code X** to be applied during the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known.

- **Parents must inform school immediately of the results of a test:**
- If a pupil tests negative, they should return to school the following day if they are well.

- If the child tests positive they should follow the 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection' and must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. (This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone) The 10-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal.

- **Code X** should be used for the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known. If a positive result is confirmed the pupil should be recorded as code, I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

- Any siblings in the same household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days.

- **Code X** to be applied.

- If a pupil tests positive but has no symptoms for COVID-19 they must self-isolate for 10 days, starting from the day the test was taken.

- If they develop symptoms during this isolation period, **they must restart** their 10-day isolation from the day they develop symptoms.

- **Code X** should be used for the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known. Once a positive result is confirmed, the pupil should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

- After 10 days, if the pupil still has a temperature they should continue to self-isolate and seek medical advice. The pupil does not need to self-isolate after 10 days if they only have a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.

- **Code I** to be applied

- For all pupils in a 'bubble' who have been sent home and asked to self-isolate for 14 days

- **Code X** should be applied for all pupils who have been asked to self-isolate. The coding would be updated to **I** if any of the pupils subsequently develop symptoms and test positive for COVID.

Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine:

As usual parents should plan their holidays as part of school breaks. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK;

- **Code X** is to be applied

- **From March 8th 2021, the normal rules will apply during the period of absence relating to the holiday dates.** Please refer to our main policy for guidance regarding holidays taken during term time.

Referrals to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer

- All unauthorised absence is reported to the School Liaison Officer so the local authority can offer additional advice and support to parents as necessary. Where unauthorised absence is persistent, sanctions may be imposed to include warnings, penalty notices, and prosecution in the magistrate's court or an education supervision order through the family proceedings court.
- Where a child or family is away from home including abroad, and unable to return home, parents are expected to provide the school with detailed information as to the whereabouts, reasons for travel and estimated return dates. Where the school is not satisfied with the reasons provided, the absence will not be authorised, and this could result in the local authority issuing a Penalty Notice (please refer to our main Attendance Policy).
- Leave of absence can only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**, at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body. **Holidays in term time are not viewed as exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to time off during term time.**
- Where the school and the Education Welfare Service have failed to locate the child/family within 20 school days, the child will be referred to **the Local Authority Children Missing Education Pupil Tracking Officer** (CME officer) who will undertake additional checks with other agencies to locate them, including consultation with social care, the police, health and housing. Where these enquiries do not lead to confirmation of the child's whereabouts, the matter will remain open to that service who will widen their enquiries. In these circumstances, the school cannot guarantee to keep a school place open for your child.

Safeguarding

If at any time the school are concerned for a child's safety or welfare from any year group, we will consult with the relevant agencies and follow the local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

