

## **Crockenhill Primary School**

*Learning together. Working together. Achieving together.*

### **Attendance Policy**

#### **Statement of Intent**

At Crockenhill Primary School, we are 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 encourage and promote 97%-100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendances will be considered, along with the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 Guidance – Gov.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

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

#### **Through this policy, we aim to:**

Provide clear procedures for the reporting and recording of pupils' absence. Ensure that it is clearly understood which absences will be recorded as authorised and which will be recorded as unauthorised.

#### **Strategies**

##### **The school will:**

- Treat all pupil absence equally and fairly
- Ensure that families new to the school are aware of the content of this policy
- Ensure that families are regularly reminded about the schools' policy on attendance
- Attendance to be reviewed termly and individual cases to be monitored
- Open the school gate at 8.40 am for a 'soft start for all classes.
- Contact parents or named contact person if a child is too unwell to remain in school
- Provide parents with information about their child's attendance record; on request and on the child's end of year report
- Inform parents if their child's absence is becoming a cause for concern.
- Where necessary, work with and support parents to improve a pupil's attendance

- Work with the School Liaison Officer, who is part of the Local Authority's Inclusion and Attendance Service, if a pupil's absence continues to be a concern
- Refer families who require more intensive support to the Early Help and Preventative Service
- In the case of persistent absence, the school will call upon the School Attendance Officer.

**The school expects that pupils will:**

- Attend school every day and arrive on time

**The school expects that parents/carers will:**

- Ensure that their child attends school every day
- Ensure that their child is in school by 8.50am for an 8.55am registration
- Ensure that their child does not arrive unattended unless they are in Year 5 or 6 and have permission to walk to and from school
- Inform the school immediately if a child is reluctant to attend school
- Send a child to school if they suspect that their child may not genuinely be ill
- Whenever possible avoid making routine medical appointments in school time
- If medical appointments have to be made in school time make sure that the appointment card is shown to office staff
- Contact the school on the day of any absence to explain why their child is not in school

**Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance**

- Termly monitoring of individual children's attendance will take place. If a child falls below 97%, the parents will be sent a letter to advise them that their child's attendance is being monitored.
- If attendance does not improve and it falls between 95 – 90 % parents will be invited into school to discuss how they can be supported.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are absences amounting to 90% or below, your child will automatically receive an unauthorised absence, unless evidence can be provided for a legitimate reason for absence. The school may 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. This could result in possible prosecution.
- 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 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.

## **The Attendance Officer**

Our Attendance Officer is Sim Kaur, who along with the school, will try to resolve any situation by agreement. However, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance has not made a positive impact and the unauthorised absences or lateness persist, the Officer will always endeavour to engage with parents/carers by inviting them into school for a meeting or maybe making a visit to the family home.

The EWO can request that the Local Authority use sanctions such as: Parenting Contracts, Education Supervision Orders, Parenting Orders or Fixed Penalty Notice fines or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or Local Authority.

## **Lateness**

At Crockenhill Primary School the register is taken at 8.55am and (KS1) 12.45pm (KS2) 1.15pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to school 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 9.25 am and 1.15pm. 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 after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

## **Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness**

When a penalty notice may be issued:

- Overt truancy
- Parentally-condoned absences
- 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 during school hours during the first five days of exclusion.

## **How to issue a penalty notice**

Following consultation, it is agreed that:

Kent County Council's Attendance Service will issue all penalty notices for all unauthorised absences and exclusions. This will ensure consistent and equitable delivery, avoid duplication of penalty notices, help to maintain good school/alternative provision-home relationships and ensure that there is not conflict with other enforcement sanctions

Penalty notices will only be issued by post and never as an on the spot action. The Attendance Service will receive requests to issue penalty notices from schools and alternative education providers, Kent Police and neighbouring local authorities.

## **Authorising Absence (not related to illness)**

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. Completing the school absence request form does not, in itself, authorise an absence. The Headteacher sees all request forms and a decision is made and communicated to the parents/carers.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised. Absence (leave) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will **not** be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific 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 proof of very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a Pathway 7 referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing. Severe unauthorised absence is when a child misses 50% or more of the school year.

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 Pathway 7 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 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 August 2024.

The national framework for penalty notices is based on the principles that penalty notices should only be used in cases where:

- support is not appropriate (e.g. a term time holiday) or where support has been provided and not engaged with or not worked, and
- they are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance for that particular child.

**When may a penalty notice for absence be appropriate?**

When the national threshold has been met: when a school becomes aware that the national threshold has been met, they must consider whether a penalty notice can and should be issued or not.

The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday or unauthorised leave of absence.
  - code O (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies), and
  - code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)
- 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.

If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. Kent County Council will consider applying for summons for prosecution in the Magistrates’ Court for such cases.

For the purpose of the escalation process, previous penalty notices include those not paid (including where prosecution was taken forward if the parent pleaded or was found guilty) but not those, which were withdrawn.

#### Key considerations prior to the issue of a Penalty Notice for school absence

The following considerations will be made before issuing (or requesting that another authorised officer issues) a penalty notice to ensure consistency of approach:

- Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
- Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010?
- Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given Kent County Council would be accepting responsibility for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment

In cases where support is appropriate, consider on a case-by-case basis:

Has sufficient support already been provided? Sufficient support will usually include Correspondence and telephone calls with parents, inviting parents to a meeting to discuss attendance, support from KCC services, health services, and partners in the voluntary and community sectors (VCS)

If the answer to the above questions is 'yes', then a penalty notice (or a notice to improve in cases where support is appropriate) will usually be issued. In cases where support is not appropriate (for example, for holidays in term time), consider on a case by case basis:

#### Notice to improve

A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

**Kent schools will issue a notice to improve for parentally condoned absence and unauthorised absence. It will not be necessary to issue a notice to improve for term time holidays or leave of absence.**

The Notice to Improve must include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences (a copy of the registration certificate should be included).
- The date range in which 10 or more unauthorised absences occurred.
- The benefits of regular attendance and parents' duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- Details of the support provided so far.

- Opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with.
  - A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period
- A clear timeframe for the 20 school day improvement period detailing to and from dates.
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like.

At the end of an unsatisfactory monitoring period, schools may request a penalty notice to be issued if this is considered this is the best course of action to improve attendance. The referral should include evidence of support offered by the school prior to issuing the notice to improve. The notice to improve must comply with Department for Education requirements.

Kent County Council (as the issuing authority) will issue a penalty notice if all aspects of the Code of Conduct have been met and as the independent prosecutor, will check reasoning on whether a penalty notice should be issued or not, including whether sufficient support has been provided before issuing a penalty notice.

- The first penalty notice issued to the parent for a child will be charged at £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid between days 22 and 28.
  - Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first offence, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable within 28 days. There is no reduced sum available in this instance.
  - Part payments or payment plans are not acceptable and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice.
- Payment after the deadline may be accepted in exceptional circumstances. In this situation, the higher amount of £160 is usually payable and must be paid immediately and in full.
  - When paying a penalty notice fine, parents are essentially agreeing to an out of court settlement in respect of the unauthorised absences to which the notice refers. Payment in full against the penalty notice discharges the parent's legal responsibility for the period of unauthorised absence outlined in the Notice and the parent cannot be subsequently prosecuted for that period.

Exceptional circumstances could include (at the Headteacher's discretion and with positive attendance to date):

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual 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 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

*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.

The Headteacher will act on behalf of the Governing Body in deciding whether absences should be authorised. Parents can make representation to the Governing Body if they disagree with the Headteacher’s decision. The Governing Body’s decision is however final. The Headteacher and/or SENCo can be contacted through the school office at: [office@crockenhill.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@crockenhill.kent.sch.uk) for any attendance support or issues arising.

Policy to be reviewed annually

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