

# **GREAT CHART PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**A Guide to School Attendance for Parent and Carers**

Based on KCC policy Rev April 2017

Adopted: 19th May 2017



# Great Chart Primary School believes in maximising LEARNING through maximum ATTENDANCE

## Statement of Intent

Great Chart 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 weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality, such as Attendance Ted and Punctuality Pup,

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

## 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 and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

**It is the parents' 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 is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.**

Pupils are expected to arrive and be ready to start by 8.40am. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded. This lateness will be monitored.

## The Role of the School Staff

At Great Chart Primary School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

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.

It is the responsibility of the School's 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 annually of the child's attendance figure

## Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance – the class teacher or form tutor to investigate and notify the School's Attendance Officer of concerns. School's Attendance Officer to contact parent if appropriate.

- 90 - 95% 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.
- 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.

## Lateness

At Great Chart the register is taken at 8.40am. We mark lateness from 8.40 to 9.00 as 'late' (Code 'L') and 9.00am onwards as 'unauthorised' (Code 'U'). Pupils arriving after this time must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded.

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

**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 (Lateness code U) 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 (Lateness Code U) is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence (Lateness Code U) 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 Notice 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).

### Penalty Notice Proceedings for Holidays

Holidays **will not** be authorised.

**For unauthorised family holidays (code "G"). 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 will 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.

### Exceptional circumstances:

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.

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.

## Penalty Notices

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.

## Procedures

### *What you should do if your child is ill*

If your child is too ill to attend you should telephone the school at the beginning of the day to say what is wrong with your child. The Headteacher will then make the decision whether or not to authorise the absence. If you do not tell the school why your child is absent, it will be recorded as an ‘unauthorised’ absence. If we do not receive a message on the absence line by 9am, we will start to contact parents to enquire why the child is absent.

### *What about medical or dental appointments for your child?*

- Let the school know about any medical or dental appointments you have made for your child and show them any letters or appointment cards. Full day absence for a medical appointment is usually unnecessary. If your appointment is during the day your child should attend school during the morning and be collected in time to go to the appointment. Your child must return to school after their appointment if fit to do so.
- Try to make appointments after school or in the school holidays.

### *How do I find out about my child’s school attendance?*

- A record of your child’s attendance will be written in his/her school report each year.
- You can ask the Attendance Officer about your child’s attendance at any time (620040 ext 215)

### *What does the School Liaison Officer do?*

At Great Chart, the School Liaison Officer (SLO) works closely with our school's Attendance Officer and monitors our pupils on a weekly basis.

- They check how many children have attended school and how many children have been absent or late.
- They may contact parents/carers if a child is often late or absent. They can visit students and parents/carers in their homes.
- They can take parents/carers to court where each parent/carer may be fined. A parent/carer may go to prison if he/she lets a child miss school often. This happened for the first time in May 2002.

### *What should I do if I learn that my child is truanting?*

If your child does not come to school and you do not know about this, or if your child leaves school in the day without permission, then he/she is truanting. An absence like this will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. If you think your child may be truanting you should contact the school. The school can work with you and your child to find out why he/she is missing school.