



## Attendance Policy

2022 – 2023

<b>Approved by:</b>	Kate Espley	<b>Date:</b> September 2023
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<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	September 2023
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## Holywell Primary School, Upchurch Attendance Policy

*Holywell School is a safe school and follows  
Government PREVENT protocols to ensure it stays that way.*

### **STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Holywell School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular and punctual attendance at school or alternative education provision is both a legal requirement and is essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

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.

The Governors, Head Teacher and staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Holywell School and ensure this is rigorously monitored. Therefore, any attendance which falls below 90% will require a medical certificate as evidence of absence.

### **CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

As a school that respects the rights of the children and adults in our school family, community and beyond, we aim for each school policy to adhere to articles from ***UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child***.

In this policy, we are working towards the following articles:

- **Article 3** - The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect them
- **Article 18** - Parents share responsibility for bringing children up and should always consider what is best for them. The school supports parents by creating support services for children and give parents the help they need to raise their children
- **Article 28** - Every child has the right to an education
- **Article 29** - Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full

### **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. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that your child is safe.**

Pupils are expected to arrive at school between 08:30 and 08:50 am. All pupils that arrive late must report, **with their parent**, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

### **PRINCIPLES OF THE HOLYWELL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

At Holywell School, we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping pupils achieve the best that they can. Education is important. Pupils should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. All research shows that pupils who attend well achieve well.

<b>Descriptor</b>	<b>Attendance over the academic year</b>	<b>Equals number of days absent</b>	<b>Approximate Learning hours lost</b>
Excellent	100%	0	0
	99%	2	10
Good	98%	4	20
	97%	6	30
	96%	7.5	37.5
Satisfactory	95%	9.5	47.5
Cause for Concern	90%	19	95
	89%	21	105
	88%	23	115
	87%	25	125
Unsatisfactory	86%	27	135
Serious Cause for Concern	85%	28.5	142
	84%	30.5	152
	83%	32	160
	82%	34	170
	81%	36	180

The government has laid down guidelines which they expect pupils to achieve in terms of attendance. They are currently set at 97%.

**A pupil will fall below 97% if they miss as little as half a day over a 2 week period.**

It is the expectation of Holywell School that all pupils **will** achieve at least 97% attendance. There are a variety of reasons for pupils missing school. Some are unavoidable but we would ask that you support us in ensuring that your child's attendance meets both the school's and the government's expectations. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out at an early stage. We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel



there is an issue. Where there may be an issue and we fail to see an improvement it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the pupil receives the support required to bring about an improvement.

<b>Excellent</b>	<p><b>Your child's attendance is above 98%</b> As well as being an excellent attender your child will almost certainly achieve the best grades for his/her ability and have a real opportunity in their future education and the world of work.</p>
<b>Good</b>	<p><b>Your child's attendance is 97-98%</b> Your child is likely to achieve grades that will give them real opportunities to continue their studies and in the world of work.</p>
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<p><b>Your child's attendance is 96%.</b></p>
<b>Concern</b>	<p><b>Your child's attendance is 90-95%</b> <b>They are below the national government threshold of 97%.</b> Your child will miss up to <b>18 days</b> each school year and this will make it difficult for him/her to achieve his/her best.</p>
<b>Serious Concern</b>	<p><b>Your child's attendance is below 90%</b> If your child's attendance is below 90% and they are 'Persistently Absent' you may face a fixed penalty fine or further legal prosecution if your child's attendance does not improve. Medical evidence will be required to explain absence <b><u>Your child is missing so much time from school that it will be almost impossible for him/her to keep up with their lessons and their learning.</u></b></p>

## **THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL STAFF**

The Head teacher has overall responsibility for attendance.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies the Family Liaison Officer of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the Family Liaison 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.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence with a seven day reply deadline before the absence is unauthorised.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes).
- Parents informed termly of child's attendance figure.



## **TIMELINE OF SCHOOL ACTION FOR POOR ATTENDANCE**

- *95 – 96% attendance* – class teacher to investigate and notify the Family Liaison Officer of concerns.
- *90 – 95% attendance* – monitored through attendance meetings with School Liaison Officer (SLO), school intervention letters/meetings with parents.
- *Below 90%* - consider Attendance Service or Penalty Notice referral where the absences have not been authorised and referral criteria are met.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for guidance on what work should be undertaken by the school prior to referral.

Should attendance fall below 90% the school will seek medical evidence for all absence.

## **DAILY PROCEDURES: REGISTRATION**

Under the 2006 Education Regulations the school is **legally** required to register pupils twice daily. Registers are marked in the morning between 08:45 and 08:50 and in the afternoon between 13:00 and 13:10. It is essential that all pupils are registered on both occasions.

School starts at 08:45 when all pupils should be in their classrooms in preparation for the register being taken at 08:50am. **It is a legal requirement that a register is taken at the start of the day.** Not only does the process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a pupil checklist in respect of health and safety issues – e.g. Fire Drill.

Each year a school calendar is sent out and is also available on the school website which clearly indicates the days when your child is expected to be in school. If your child tells you that school is to be closed on a day not indicated on the school calendar, please check by telephoning the school.

## **ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**

Regular attendance at school is the responsibility of parents and carers. Under the 1996 Education Act parents commit an **offence** if the child does not attend school regularly. **If your child cannot come to school because of illness you should advise the school on the first day of absence via telephone (01634 388418) or email ([office@holywell.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@holywell.kent.sch.uk)) and provide a valid reason for your child's absence.** If no message is received we will make every effort to contact you. It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as telephone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned we may make a home visit or request the police undertake a 'Safe and Well' visit. Parents are encouraged to ensure that their child brings in a letter confirming the reasons for the absence when their child returns to school.



**Once contact (verbal and/or written) has been made with the parent the school will determine if the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher's decision is final.**

The school will only **authorise** an illness or medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. Should your child be absent from school for illness or medical reasons for more than 2 days the school may request medical evidence including: Medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence.

The Head teacher may not authorise medical absence without this evidence.

The school **may** authorise absence under certain specific circumstances. However, the parent must contact the Head teacher in advance to secure authorisation. This **may** include supervised sporting events, theatre performances and participation in acts of religious worship.

### **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. These are an **Offence** by the parent. Such circumstances may include :

- Going shopping for school clothes
- Not attending school because it is his/her birthday or that of a family member.
- Meeting a visiting relative
- Attending a hospital/doctor's appointment for another family member.
- A late night due to the family having returned late the previous evening from a family holiday.
- Looking after younger siblings
- Not returning to school in the afternoon when they have attended a medical appointment in the morning.

### **SAFEGUARDING**

The school reserves the right to invite parents into school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns, i.e. – female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, forced marriage, radicalisation. In addition if the school suspects that a pupil may be at potential risk as a result of their absence from school the safeguarding team reserve the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate external agencies, i.e. – social care, police. The school will inform parents/carers if a referral is to be made. However, this may not be appropriate in every circumstance depending on the nature of the safeguarding concern and a referral may be made without informing the parent/carer.



## **CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION**

The school recognises that when a child goes missing from school it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. Under section 8h of the Education Regulations Act (2006) the school will make 'reasonable' enquiries into the location of pupils with 10 days continuous unauthorised absence or for those who fail to return from leave of absence granted during term-time. A referral will be made to the Children Missing Education (CME) team to be investigated further by their safeguarding panel and appropriate interventions taken at that level, i.e. – refer to police.

The school reserves the right, however, to contact relevant agencies to seek advice if any child is absent from school for more than five days without confirmation from parents. Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents to ensure the child is safe and well, including home visits by the Family or School Liaison Officers. The school will contact relevant agencies after a maximum two days absence without confirmation from parents/carers if the child is subject to a 'Child in Need' plan or considered vulnerable in other ways.

When a pupil returns from a period of extended absence appropriate daily attendance checks will be carried out and their attendance, behaviour, emotional and physical well-being will be monitored closely by the safeguarding team in school. Parents/carers will be invited into school with the pupil to meet with the safeguarding team as part of the reintegration programme and relevant support will be offered to the pupil/family as necessary.

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM-TIME**

From September 2013 the Department for Education amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. The Head teacher may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances**'. An 'exceptional circumstance' would be defined as rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable', it implies that the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. 'Exceptional circumstances' may include the following:

- 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 the funeral of a person close to the family.



If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, a referral will be made to the Attendance Service who will issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

**It is important for parents/carers to note that the school will not authorise ANY leave of absence unless the school feels the circumstances are unavoidable.**

### **PENALTY NOTICE PROCEEDINGS FOR UNAUTHORISED LEAVE**

Under DFE guidelines the school may consider taking legal action against a parent(s)/carer(s) who take a leave of absence without the Head teacher's permission and apply for a Penalty Notice to be issued. Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the Attendance Service Code of Conduct for unauthorised absences of 10 or more school sessions (5 days). A Penalty Notice is issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

### **PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM**

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of pupils whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. Pupils with attendance below 90% may fall into the 'Persistent Absentee' category. This is particularly relevant if any of the pupil's absences are unauthorised.

According to the DFE guidance (March 2013); if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the Local Authority'. In addition 'Local Authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

At Holywell School, we regularly monitor the attendance of every pupil using a Five-step approach to monitor absence and lateness. It will not always be appropriate to progress through all of these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed. Responsible staff will use discretion and discuss each case carefully.

### **FIVE-STEPS**

- Where there has been no contact from parents, first day calling for all pupils and FLO (Family Liaison Officer) visits as appropriate.
- Discussion with SLO (School Liaison Officer) or Attendance Service Staff to identify pupils with attendance below 90%, monitoring trends in pupil attendance and lateness, allocation of FLO support.
- Invitation to meet with school staff.
- Initiate referral to Early Help.
- Referral to Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice.





## **PUNCTUALITY**

The 1996 Education Act requires that every pupil should attend school and be punctual.

At Holywell School the register is taken at 08:50am and 13:00pm. 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. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code L).

The register will close at 09.00am and 13.10pm. 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 at open evenings and may be referred to the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) and/or School Liaison Officer (SLO). It can provide grounds for prosecution of Penalty Notice.

## **PENALTY NOTICE PROCEEDINGS FOR LATENESS**

- 5 days (10 sessions of unauthorised absence including arrival after the registers have closed in a term may lead to a referral to the Attendance Service (AS) for 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, Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child).
- Where Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue, Attendance Service may instigate court proceedings.

## **KEY PEOPLE**

Headteacher – Mrs K Espley

Assistant Head – Mr T Ball

SENCo – Mrs J Warner

Inclusions Lead– Mrs J Warner

Family Liaison Officer/Attendance Clerk – Mrs T Shellard

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The effectiveness of this policy is regularly monitored and evaluated annually by the Headteacher and Staff. The Headteacher reports to Governors about the effectiveness of the policy.



## Appendix 1

### **IMPROVING ATTENDANCE – WHAT PARENTS CAN DO**

- Try, wherever possible, to make medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time. Obviously this is not always possible but in such cases, try to minimise the disruption to the day by getting an early morning appointment so that your child can attend afterwards or a late afternoon appointment so that your child can complete the majority of his/her timetable before leaving.
- Avoid taking family holidays during term-time. Headteachers cannot authorise absence for the purpose of a family holiday unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. If there are no 'exceptional circumstances', the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in a Penalty Notice being issued.
- Encourage your child to come to school even if he/she is feeling slightly unwell. Many aches and pains are easily forgotten about when they are with friends and the school will contact you if it becomes necessary. Medicines can be administered in school if necessary.
- Check on the school's website or contact the school directly if you are unsure of term-dates, non-contact days or unscheduled closures e.g. adverse weather.
- Ensure your child arrives at school punctually every day. Encourage your child to develop a routine to ensure they are ready for school on time.
- Ensure your child has sufficient sleep so that they are not too tired to attend school. Good bedtime routines will help to ensure that your child is relaxed and happy when they go to bed and they will get a good night's sleep.
- Inform your child's class teacher or the Family Liaison Officer if there are any issues that may affect your child's attendance. This might include bullying, difficulty with work, family bereavements, serious/terminal illness and parental separation/divorce.



## **IMPROVING ATTENDANCE – WHAT SCHOOL DOES**

- Marks the registers in accordance with the law twice a day.
- Contacts any parents/carers to establish the reason for any unreported absences on the first day of absence.
- Maintains detailed records and monitors the attendance of every pupil regularly.
- Authorises absence in accordance with current government guidelines.
- Contacts parents/carers when a child's attendance falls below an acceptable level and/or when particular patterns of absence are causing concern.
- Provides access to staff with which attendance related issues can be discussed.
- Works with external agencies to maintain good attendance and to support the pupil/family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality.
- Maintains a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.