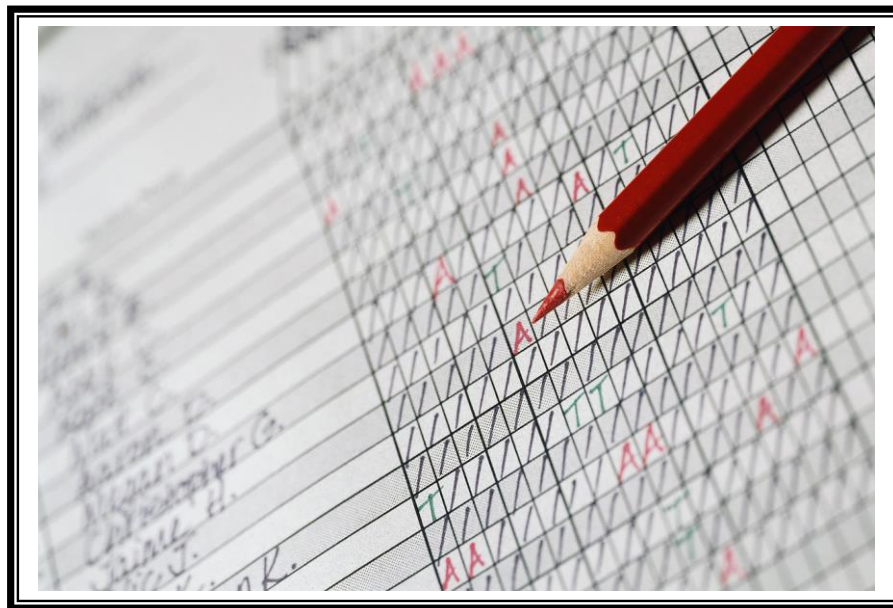


# **Kent County Council Attendance Service**

## **Ditton C of E Junior School Attendance Policy**



Agreed by  
Chair of Governors  
31 January 2018

## **Statement of Intent**

Ditton C of E Junior School is committed to the continual raising of achievement of all 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 both this, and punctuality.

The Governors, Head Teacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Ditton C of E Junior School.

## **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 the educational opportunities available to them. Poor attendance undermines their education and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk which can encourage anti-social behaviour.

**It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent and all subsequent absences. This can be done either by phoning the School Office and speaking to a member of staff, leaving a message on the school answer machine or by submitting an absence notification through Parentmail. Parents must explain the specific nature of the child's illness. It is NOT sufficient to say that their child is absent because they are "unwell" This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that your child is safe.**

**Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.45am and 1.00pm for the afternoon session. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent, to the School Office, where the reason for lateness will be recorded.**

## **The Role of the School Staff**

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for attendance.

### **Class teacher**

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, 2006. Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher will notify the Head Teacher, or Attendance Officer, of children whose attendance is causing a concern. The class teacher will have an initial discussion with parent/carers about any concerns regarding attendance.

### **Office Manager/Attendance Officer**

It is the responsibility of the Office Manager/Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, the School will make every effort to contact parents on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day.
- Where parents have not phoned the school and the school has not been able to contact parents during the period of absence, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence with a seven day reply deadline before the absence is marked as unauthorised.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes)
- Where there is a concern about attendance, parents will be contacted to arrange a meeting with the Head Teacher

### **Assistant Headteacher/Attendance Officer:**

- To monitor monthly attendance data and send out letters, as appropriate
- To ensure the school Attendance Policy is followed
- Have meetings with the KCC Attendance personnel

### **Headteacher:**

- To meet parents where all other procedures have been followed and no subsequent improvement is evident.

### **School Action for Poor Attendance**

The school will take one or a number of the following actions to deal with poor attendance:

- Class teacher meeting with parent/carer
- Letters sent home to parents/carers
- Meeting with the Head Teacher
- Referral to Early Help, School Nurse or Attendance Service
- Penalty Notice referral where the absences have not improved or have been unauthorised

***Please refer to Appendix 11 for guidance on what work should be undertaken by the School prior to referral.***

### **Children Missing In Education**

No child may be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Head Teacher and the Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance should be followed, which involves completing a CME form.

### **Lateness**

At Ditton C of E Junior School the register is taken at **8.45 am** and **1.00 pm**. 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 once registration has closed at **8:55am and 1:10pm (Code 'L')**.

The register will close at **9.15 am and 1.30 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.

### **Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness**

- Children who are persistently late (10 or more sessions after the registers have been closed in a school year)

### **Authorising Absence**

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. Where there is doubt, the Headteacher, on behalf of the Governing Body, should take a consistent approach. The absence must be unavoidable. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and a 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 (leave) during term time can only be authorised in "exceptional circumstances" see appendix with guidance from NAHT. 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 very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family holidays
- Funerals of anybody other than parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters

### **Attendance and Lateness**

If a new pupil has a history of poor attendance at their previous school, there will be a pre-start attendance meeting held. The school has a 'five-step' approach to monitoring 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 review each case carefully on its own merits.

#### **'Five Steps'**

- 1. Where there has been no contact from parents, first day calling will occur for all pupils.**
- 2. Invitation to meet with class teacher**
- 3. Invitation to meet Head Teacher**
- 4. Referral to Attendance or Health Service**
- 5. Consider initiating a Common Assessment Form (CAF)**

Reasons for absence are recorded and retained by the school. When a referral to the Attendance Service is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **must** be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

### **Local Authority Action**

Where there is no improvement in a pupil's attendance the school will consider the following:

### **School Attendance officer/Head Teacher**

**This may include:**

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Signposting to supportive agencies e.g. EIT or other preventative services
- Fast Track to Prosecution

### **Penalty Notices for Poor Attendance**

- Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the Attendance Service Code of Conduct.
- The Attendance Service 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 Notices will be issued in the following circumstances:

- Truancy
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed
- Being present in a public place, without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of any fixed term or permanent exclusion.

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 may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

### **Leave of Absence**

From September 2013, the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.

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 LA 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 Head Teacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Head Teacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

### **Family Holidays**

Family holidays, for whatever reason, cannot be authorised, even if the parent is unable to take time off work at any other time.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

An "exceptional circumstance" would have to be defined as an unavoidable cause eg, a one-off emergency situation which prevents the child from attending school. (see NAHT notes)

Requests for holidays in term time will not be authorised.

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

### **Penalty Notice Proceedings for Unauthorised Leave**

- Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the Attendance Service Code of Conduct.
- Attendance Service receives a request to issue a Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of 10 or more school sessions (5 days) in a possible 100 sessions
- Attendance Service issue Penalty Notice(s) (one per parent per child)
- If Penalty Notice(s) is/are not paid within 28 days of issue, the Attendance Service may instigate court proceedings.