



Shears Green Infant School

Head Teacher: Mrs Hayley Kotze

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Statement of Intent

Shears Green 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 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 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 Shears Green Infant School.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time. Full 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 by law. 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 by 8:55am for registration. All pupils that arrive after 8:55am must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded. This policy is available to all parents on the school website and copies can be requested from the school office.

The Role of the School Staff

Mrs Hayley Kotze, Headteacher has overall responsibility for attendance.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulation 2006) Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies Mrs Kotze of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the school 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 response from parents after 2 days 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 are informed of their own child's attendance figure on a termly basis and in the end of year school report.

Timeline of School Action for Low Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance - class teacher / Attendance Officer to investigate and notify Mrs Kotze of any concerns.

- Below 95% attendance – letter sent from Headteacher outlining concerns over attendance and the need for improvement.
- Headteacher requests meeting with families to offer support.
- Regular meetings with Family Liaison Officer (FLO) to discuss possible referral to The Attendance Service or Early Help Notification.
- Admissions Officer holds updated guidance on what work should be undertaken by the school prior to referral.

Children Missing Education

No child may be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed.

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 have 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 Shears Green Infant School the register is taken at 8:55 and 12:30 (Foundation Stage), 1:00 (Year One) and 1:20 (Year 2). 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 register closes at 9:05; pupils arriving between 8:55 and 9:05 will be marked as late. (Code 'L').

Pupils arriving between 9:05 and 9:30 will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U'), this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent or patterns of lateness (eg. more than 10 lates in any term, or a specific day of the week when child is always late) noted at the attendance meetings will result in a letter home, this could then be followed by a referral to the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) or may result in a meeting with Headteacher and formal letter requesting improvement.

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 for approved reasons. Where there is doubt, the Headteacher, on behalf of the governing body, should take a consistent approach. The absence must be requested for an exceptional circumstance. All parents who make a request for absence receive a response slip. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised parents will be notified.

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” given as reason
- 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
- General holiday requests
- General family get-together/day out

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 consider each case carefully.

‘Five Steps’

1. Where there has been no contact from parents, first day calling for all pupils and FLO visits as appropriate.
2. Invitation to meet with school staff (informal)
3. Discussion with Attendance Officer or FLO to identify pupils with attendance below 90%, monitoring trends in pupil attendance and lateness, allocation of FLO support.
4. Formal request to meet with school Headteacher / Assistant Headteacher
5. Initiate a referral to The Early Help and Preventative Services and / or Referral to Attendance Service

Reasons for absence are recorded and retained by the school. When a referral to the Attendance Service is made, details of child’s attendance is printed from the school’s computerised registration system, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **MUST** be attached to the completed AS1 referral (Local Authority form) with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action

Where there is no improvement in a pupil’s attendance and/or there is at least 10 sessions (5 days) absence in a term the school will consider the following:

School Liaison Officer Actions

This may include:

- Attendance Improvement Meetings.
- Home visits.
- Sign posting to supportive agencies e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Social Services and Family Group Conference Service.
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Penalty Notices for Poor Attendance

- **Penalty Notices are issues in accordance with the attendance service Code of Conduct.**
- 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.

Penalty Notices will be issued in the following circumstances:

- Parentally-condoned absence.
- Persistent lateness after 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/Holiday

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 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.

Exceptional Circumstances

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

Requests for holidays in term time will **not** be authorised.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case will be referred to the Attendance Service who will issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school if the attendance figure of the child is below 90%. If the attendance figure is above 90% then the case will not be referred to the Attendance Service to issue a Penalty Notice but should the child's attendance figure drop below 90% within 100 sessions of the unauthorised absence it may be used retrospectively and a Penalty Notice will be issued. 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 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).
- Attendance Service issue Penalty Notice(s). (one per parent per child)
- If Penalty Notice(s) is/are not paid within 28 days of issue, Attendance Service may instigate court proceedings.

Reviewed November 2017

Date to be reviewed November 2018