LORDSWOOD SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Date: September 2025
Review Due: September 2026

Reviewed Annually

Attendance Lead / Champion: Jayne Lusinski

Ratified by Chair of Governors: Sabrina Reilly

Date: 9th September 2025

Part 1 - Policy

1. Introduction

At Lordswood, our ambition is for all pupils to strive for 100% attendance. We set clear expectations for excellent attendance and expect pupils to be present for every session, every day that school is open to ensure they can benefit from the Proud Traditions, Wide Horizons and High Achievement that Griffin Schools offer. We believe this is fundamental to pupils achieving their full potential and securing positive lifelong outcomes.

Our Attendance Policy reflects this commitment and acknowledges that regular attendance positively influences pupil motivation, attainment, and wellbeing. It is a core component of our school ethos.

We recognise that some pupils may face greater challenges in attending school regularly. Therefore, at every stage of improving attendance, we will work collaboratively with parents/carers, pupils, and relevant partner agencies to identify and remove barriers. We are committed to building strong, trusting relationships that support sustained attendance. Promoting and securing excellent attendance is a shared responsibility across our school and wider community.

Lordswood School expects all pupils to maintain attendance of at least 96%, in line with expectations set by Medway Local Authority and National standards. We also acknowledge that some pupils joining our provision may have experienced extended periods of absence. This will be taken into account when addressing and supporting their attendance.

Regular and punctual attendance provides the means for children to take advantage of all educational opportunities. It ensures continuity, promotes responsibility and a purpose which can be carried into adult life. A pupil who is late or absent, misses the introduction to a lesson or a new concept, causes disruption to others and is likely to have missed the instructions to the lesson, thus putting themselves at a disadvantage.

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect current legislation and guidance. The Department for Education's guidance, Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024), states that school attendance is "essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances."

Aims and ethos

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by ensuring every pupil has access to a full-time and efficient education to which they are entitled. Lordswood School acts early to address any patterns of irregular attendance aiming to create a culture in which the importance of good school attendance is understood, valued, and supported by all.

By providing a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn is the foundation of securing good attendance. Working together to put the right support in place at the right time, all school staff, parents/carers, pupils, and partners can work together to remove any barriers affecting attendance.

This policy sets out our school's position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents[1] must follow to report their child's absence from school and to remind them of their legal duty, to ensure their child attends school regularly.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently, considering the individual needs of our pupils and their families who may have specific barriers to attendance. We have considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At Lordswood we follow the DfE Working together to Improve School Attendance Approach:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age. Therefore, the school encourages parents of nursery and reception children who are not yet of compulsory school age

[1] A child becomes of 'compulsory school age' on the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday and ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of Year 11.

to send their children to every session that is available to them. Every child enrolled at our school is expected to attend every day they are required to, on time, so that they can achieve their full potential. We monitor and manage attendance and punctuality across all year groups and expect parents to notify the school of any absence.

At Lordswood, we will support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory[2] school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

We want our pupils to attend school every day unless they are not well enough to do so. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our pupils to enjoy school and grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential requirements in the workplace and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend, will be better prepared for the world.

In April 2017 the Supreme Court clarified the definition of regular attendance to be attendance "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school", therefore if an absence is not authorised by the school, the pupil's attendance is deemed to be irregular.

We will do all we can to encourage our pupils to attend. We will also make available the best provision we can, for any pupil who may experience any barriers preventing regular attendance.

One of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and a sense of belonging. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved and as part of the wider school community.
- Raise pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents, pupils and staff.
- Work in partnership with parents and carers, including regularly informing them about their child's absence and attendance levels.
- Work with external agencies where required, such as health, the LA and local organisations to support our pupils, parents and school.
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge learning gaps.
- Celebrate good and improved attendance and punctuality.

2. Why is Attending School Regularly So Important?

Evidence shows pupils with excellent school attendance are more likely to reach higher standards of achievement and be at less risk of exposure to crime and other safeguarding risks.

[2] A child becomes of 'compulsory school age' on the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday and ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of Year 11.

Pupils who attend regularly are more likely to achieve better results than their peers that do not, both at Key Stage 2 tests in the Primary phase, and in GCSEs at Secondary.

Excellent attendance enables pupils to be part of the school community and develop a sense of belonging. This further supports each pupil's development socially, morally, and ethically, enhancing personal well-being.

If attendance over the school year is:	...a pupil will miss this many days:
100%	0
95%	10
90%	19
85%	29
80%	39
75%	49
70%	58

3. Safeguarding and Attendance

At Lordswood, we routinely monitor attendance data to identify trends and patterns of absence across all pupils as part of our standard procedures. We recognise that both sudden and gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may be indicative of underlying safeguarding concerns.

In line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, the school will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding issues to the appropriate authorities. As part of our safeguarding responsibilities, and in accordance with our procedures, we will notify the Local Authority and/or the Police of any pupil who is absent from school and whose whereabouts cannot be established, despite reasonable enquiries such as home visits. This action will be taken where there are concerns for the pupil's welfare or safety.

For further details, please refer to our Safeguarding Policy.

4. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance, and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures. These documents are drawn from legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance including:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Children Act 1989
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Sentencing Act 2020
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2024

5. Using data to support improvements in attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason. For pupils who miss more than 50% of possible sessions they are defined as 'severely absent' (SA).

The school will ensure that data is routinely monitored to identify emerging attendance issues and will seek to prevent any pupil becoming persistently or severely absent. This will include: identifying the individual needs of pupils; working closely with families and wider support services to remove barriers to attendance; and where a formalised approach in conjunction with the local authority is required in line with the statutory DfE guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

6. Understanding Barriers to Attendance

In relation to understanding barriers to attendance, we will ensure all pupils and parents are treated with dignity and staff will model respectful relationships to build a positive understanding between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. In communicating with parents, we will highlight the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing to enhance understanding of what good attendance looks like. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance we will identify who is best placed to work with them to address issues.

We will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily.

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the school to work in conjunction with relevant partners.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. In working with parents to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers such pupils may face and will put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

In line with DfE expectations reduced timetables will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for a limited period, to support pupils to reintegrate back into education and access full time provision.

The school is committed to share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and external partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

In accordance with statutory guidance, school must report to Medway Local Authority when a pupil has been absent for 10 consecutive school days without explanation, and also when a pupil has accrued 15 days of absence due to medical reasons. These reports should be made promptly to ensure appropriate safeguarding and support measures can be considered.

7. Staff Training on Attendance

Improving attendance requires knowledge of guidance and regulations but also expertise in working with families to remove barriers to attendance and safeguard pupils. Just as those

barriers are regularly evolving, so too is the training that school staff require to address them. The school therefore will facilitate training for all staff to understand:

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances,
- the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of pupil registers
- the school/trusts' strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance,
- processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support for pupils who need it.

For staff with specialist attendance responsibilities, they will receive training to include the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data and any additional training that would be beneficial to support pupils experiencing attendance challenges.

Part 2 - What the Law Says and Our School Procedures

Contents of the Admissions Register

At Lordswood, we maintain our admissions register (also referred to as the school roll) in accordance with the requirements set out in Regulation 8 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The register must include specific personal details for every pupil, including:

- Full name and name used at school
- Sex
- Date of birth
- Home address
- Full names and addresses of each parent/carer
- Emergency contact details (at least two telephone number per parent/carer the pupil normally lives with)
- Date of admission or re-admission
- Name and address of the last school attended (if applicable)
- Boarding status (where relevant)
- Any additional addresses where the pupil will normally reside and the date this begins
- Details of any other school the pupil is attending concurrently

Pupils are entered onto the admissions register on the first day the school has agreed with, or been notified by, the parent/carer that the pupil will attend. If no date has been agreed, the pupil is entered on the first day they attend.

A pupil's name may only be lawfully removed from the admissions register if one of the specific conditions outlined in Regulation 9 of the 2024 Regulations applies. Any removal outside of these conditions constitutes unlawful off-rolling.

It is essential that the admissions register is kept accurate and up to date. Therefore, Lordswood regularly requests updates from parents/carers regarding changes to:

- Home address
- Emergency contact telephone numbers
- Email addresses

The school will formally issue a data collection request each academic year. Where parents/carers do not respond to these requests, the school will take further steps to obtain accurate information. This may include direct contact, home visits, or referral to relevant agencies if safeguarding concerns arise.

Contents of Attendance Register

In addition to the admissions register the law makes it clear that schools must take an attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second (afternoon) session. On each occasion the school must record whether each pupil is:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Attending an approved educational activity; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Effective and timely use and sharing of register data is critical to improve attendance and is supported by the use of our Management Information System (MIS) to record attendance information.

Present at School (and Lateness)

Pupils are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration, they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

The Head will meet with parents of those children who are frequently late arriving at school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.

All children in Years R-6 are expected to be in school 8.45am to 3.15pm.

Nursery children are expected between 8.30am and 11.30am / 12.15pm and 3.15pm

Morning Registration is taken in class between:

Nursery - 8.30am – 8.40am
Year R - 8.45am – 8.55am
KS1 - 8.45am – 8.55am
KS2 - 8.45 am – 8.55am

Afternoon Registration:

Nursery - 12.15pm – 12.20pm
Year R - 12.45pm – 12.50pm
Year 1 - 12.50pm – 12.55pm
Year 2 - 1.00pm – 1.05pm
KS2 - 1.20pm – 1.25pm
Lordswood Lane and Courtfield gates will open at 8.35am and 3.05pm.

Registration closes at 8.55am. A child arriving between 8.55am and 9.25am will be recorded Late (L Code).

Should a child arrive after 9.25am they will be given an unauthorised absence mark (U Code).

2.1 Effects of Late Arrival at School

When a pupil arrives late to school, they miss notable events such as assembly, tutor period, teacher instructions and introductions. Children can often feel embarrassed having to enter a classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others:

Minutes late per day…	**Equates to days of teaching lost in one year…**
5 mins	3 Days
10 mins	6 Days
15 mins	9 Days
20 mins	12 days
30 mins	18 days

3. Authorised Absence

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away from the school or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Parents/carers cannot authorise any absence, only the Head can do this. However, parents/carers can provide reasons for absence for the school to consider.

The following information outlines the main circumstances where absence may be authorised by the .school:

3.1 Illness

The NHS has produced a helpful guide for parents regarding childhood illness and school: Is my child too ill for school?

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by parents/carers following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school follows DfE guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence.

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some exceptional circumstances, the school may ask the parent to for further clarification, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil's GP/Paediatrician directly to help support the needs of the individual pupil.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order to best support the child or young person and to be able to authorise any future absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent/carer. Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the parent/carer on the first day, or subsequent days of absence may not be authorised.

Parents are expected to call and / or email the school office. If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school on each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

In accordance with statutory guidance, schools must report to Medway Local Authority when a pupil has accrued 15 days of absence due to medical reasons. These reports should be made promptly to ensure appropriate safeguarding and support measures can be considered.

Support for children with additional needs

If your child has a learning disability or autism, these websites can help:

- Mencap offers expert advice and support for children with learning disabilities, as well as their parents and carers.
- The National Autistic Society provides valuable resources and support for parents or carers.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our school supports pupil mental health and wellbeing following DfE Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact our school's Attendance/Designated Safeguarding Lead for further information on the support available.

Online Mental health support and advice can be accessed: NHS Children's Mental Health – Every Mind Matters.

Young Minds advice for parents

Parents can also contact their GP or the NHS Helpline by telephoning 111 for advice if they are concerned. In case of emergency parents should dial 999.

Where to find mental health support for children

- The NHS offers advice on Mental health support for children and young people.
- Action for Children helps children and families look after their mental health with simple tools and support to feel better and cope with challenges.
- The Childhood Bereavement Network offers guidance on supporting a child through grief.
- Visit NHS - Advice for parents for support if you think your child may have an eating disorder.
- The Young Minds Parents Helpline offers parents free and confidential advice via phone, email, or webchat.

- Teachers, school nurses, social workers, and GPs can help you find the right support.
- If have any concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing, you can contact the NSPCC Helpline to talk to dedicated child protection specialists. They will be able to advise and take any necessary action. The Helpline is open 7 days a week, and can be contacted by:
    - visiting the website
    - emailing help@nspcc.org.uk or
    - calling 0808 800 5000.

Where to get urgent help for mental health

If you or your child are in a mental health crisis, get help straight away.

Visit the NHS urgent mental health support page to find 24/7 helplines, crisis services, and emergency support.

Pupils taken ill during the school day

If a pupil needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the pupil must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult and signed out.

3.2 Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents should always try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are urgent or unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day of schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult and signed out.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

3.3 Religious Observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

3.4 Traveller Absence

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil (mobile child)[3] of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school

know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In such situations the child will be dual registered at that school and this school will remain their 'main' school.[3]

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as all other peers. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

3.5 Suspensions

If the school decides to send a pupil home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an E code, for a suspension or Permanent Exclusion (PEx). The school will follow the statutory DfE Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance.

Any suspension/permanent exclusion must be agreed by the Head.

The school will notify the parent of the exclusion in writing. If the pupil is a Child in Care, the school will notify the pupil's carer, social worker and the Virtual School. In other instances, where a pupil is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

The pupil must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult and signed out.

4. First Day of Absence Response

If the office has not been notified of any absence then they will ring and / or send an In- app message. Parents may also be emailed. Social workers will be emailed for absent children, open to social care.

Parents will be asked to supply details of at least two people who can be contacted in an emergency, and these details will be reviewed at parent evenings.

In the event that the school is unable to make contact with any of the emergency contacts provided to confirm a pupil's whereabouts, a home visit may be initiated. If concerns remain regarding the pupil's welfare and safety, the school may consider making a safeguarding referral to the Local Authority.

This procedure is in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and reflects our commitment to safeguarding as outlined in statutory guidance.

School will notify Medway Local Authority of children who are absent for 10 consecutive days.

[3] The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 (3)"mobile child" means a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place;[3]

5. Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance

Attendance is celebrated weekly in assembly with the presentation of a trophy. 100% attendance certificates are issued at the end of the year. The class with the highest attendance chooses a reward at the end of the year.

6. Leave of Absence Requests – 'Exceptional Circumstances'

The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.

In line with DfE expectations only very exceptional circumstances will warrant an authorised leave of absence. The school will review each application individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case. If any leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times.

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least four weeks before the absence. Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing. Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) or Forced Marriage we will follow the necessary protocols.

All term time absence for children in care should be discussed at the child's Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting, in advance where possible, to be considered alongside social care staff and the Virtual School. This permission should be gained before school is approached for approval. The school will contact social care/ the Virtual School in relation to any requests made for term time absence for a child in care.

Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand.

7. Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school has not been given a reason or is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it remains the school's decision whether to authorise an absence or not.

Unauthorised absences may include:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Absences for shopping, birthdays, day trips
- Absences whereby parents are stating they are waiting at home for a washing machine to be mended, or a parcel to be delivered
- Long weekends and holidays in term time (unless very exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing, in advance by the school)
- In the case of term time leave - if a pupil is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

Notices 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. A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

Where a Notice to Improve is issued, it will be issued in line with processes set out in the Medway Local Authority Code of Conduct in which the pupil attends school.

The Notice to Improve is expected to include:-

• Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences.

• 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 improvement period of between 3 and 6 weeks.
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like.
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

What sufficient improvement looks like can be decided on a case by case basis taking the individual family's circumstances into account. For some families, no further unauthorised absences will be appropriate, for others some absence may be considered acceptable if improvement is seen. Details of what sufficient improvement looks like for each case should be made clear in the Notice to Improve.

Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to request Medway Local Authority issue a penalty notice before the improvement period has ended. For example, a Notice to Improve stated there should be no further unauthorised absences in a 6 week period but the pupil is absent for unauthorised reasons in the first week. Parent/carers will be informed before a penalty notice is issued if it is before the end of the improvement period.

Unauthorised absences may result in legal sanctions, use of penalty notices or prosecution.

Persistently and Severely Absent pupils (PA and SA)

A pupil is classed a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

A pupil is classed as 'severely absent' if they miss 50% or more of their school across the school year for whatever reason.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any pupil that is seen to have reached the PA or SA thresholds or is at risk of moving towards that level, will be prioritised by school. Parents will be informed accordingly.

8. Approved Educational Activity

When pupils are attending educational activities off the school site, that have been approved by the school, the register will be marked to show this is the case.

If a pupil is attending an alternative education provider such as another school, Alternative Provision or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all of their education, our school will arrange for the pupil to be dual registered at the other setting and mark our registers accordingly.

If a pupil is attending an alternative education provider, which is not a school or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all of their education, we will mark the sessions which the pupil attends the alternative setting as code B (off-site educational activity). We will liaise regularly with alternative providers to ensure we become aware of any attendance concerns as soon as possible and take follow up action as necessary.

Any attendance concerns will be followed up by us, in conjunction with the AP setting.

9. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (as set out in DfE attendance guidance)

In accordance with DfE school attendance guidance, our school will record pupils as 'Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances' in the following circumstances (such circumstances are not recorded as absences):

- Our school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause
- The transport provided by the Local Authority is not available and the pupil's home is not within statutory walking distance. (See the DfE's 'Home to school travel and transport' guidance document.
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.
- The pupil is in custody, but still on the school roll.
- If the school has evidence that the pupil is attending educational activities, we can record those sessions as 'present at approved educational activity'.

10. Support for Poor School Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave)

Sometimes pupils can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and pupils to be open and honest with us about the reason for the pupil's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way.

When we have concerns about the attendance of a pupil, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. Where there are no genuine reasons for the absences, parents may be asked to meet with the Head and or Pastoral team to discuss the matter. In some cases, this may result in a formal attendance action plan or parenting contract being drawn up.

If our school is unable to work in partnership with parents to overcome any barriers preventing regular attendance we may refer a case of poor school attendance to Medway Local Authority for legal sanctions. We will show all the steps we have taken to support parents and pupils and that we have warned the parent/carers that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. This will be evidenced via the sending of a warning letter and school records will be shared with Medway Local Authority.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school will take a holistic, early help approach to the issue and will involve other agencies if deemed necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies or fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/carers that they are at risk of receiving a penalty notice or other legal sanction.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil who is absent, we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

11. Pupils on Reduced (Part-time) Timetables

Pupils are entitled to a full-time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities that they may have.

If, for any reason, our school is unable to provide a pupil with a full-time education due to the pupil's needs, we will work with the pupil, parent and other agencies where appropriate, to come to a mutually convenient arrangement. Any reduced timetables will be for the shortest amount of time possible (max 6 weeks), whilst arrangements are made to support the pupil's return to full-time provision as soon as possible. Our school will submit all signed reduced timetable agreements to Medway Local Authority (LA) reducedtimetables@medway.gov.uk in line with Medway LA Reduced Timetable Policy.

12. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent but may have day to day care of the child.

Unauthorised absence from school can result in a number of different outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered individually.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school their parent(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter.

Escalation Procedures for Poor School Attendance

School sends letter of school's expectations at beginning of the academic year to all parent/carers

School to send falling attendance letter to parent/carers

↓

School to send letter with invite to attendance meeting to discuss current inventions and support in place, parent/carer and pupil able to raise any concerns.

↓

Attendance meeting - discuss any further academic or pastoral support/interventions to be implemented.

↓

School to send letter to parent/carers, annotating whether they attended or not and detailing all academic/SEN and pastoral interventions/interventions in place. If parents/carers did not attend, advise they should contact to arrange a meeting to raise any concerns. Warning that medical evidence is required for future absence to be considered for authorisation, and that further absences school will consider issuing a Notice to Improve.

↓

Further decline in attendance, unauthorised sessions recorded, school to issue a Notice to Improve, clearly annotating all support/interventions in place, time period for improvement, 3-6 weeks.

↓

Further decline, unauthorised absence recorded.

School to consider requesting enforcement from Medway LA, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold for a penalty notice to Medway Local Authority for legal action unless there are reasonable grounds for not doing so. The outcome of a referral to Medway Local Authority may be a penalty notice or prosecution.

Penalty notices are intended as a sanction for low level offences and a tool to support improved school attendance, for example in circumstances associated with an unauthorised holiday taken during term time. They are an alternative to prosecution and may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to a pupil's irregular attendance.

Penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2024, as amended and can only be issued by a Head or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police. They must also be issued in line with Medway Local Authority Code of Conduct.

See DfE's statutory guidance on School attendance parental responsibility measures for more information

Penalty Notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent who holds parental responsibility for a child and are applied individually for each child with irregular school attendance. For example, in the case of Penalty Notices: if two children have irregular attendance and both parents share responsibility, a total of four Penalty Notices would be issued—one per parent, per child.

Please note that Penalty Notices carry fixed amounts and payment deadlines. They cannot be paid in instalments.

The Head has the responsibility for authorising any absence. Parents/carers cannot authorise any absence however, parents/carers can provide reasons for absence for the school to consider.

The local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice. The payment must be made directly to the local authority, following receipt of the penalty notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

• **First offence** - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

• **Second Offence** (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

• **Third Offence** and Any Further Offences (within 3 years) - the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

N.B Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, **during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion** (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process. In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

13. Children Missing Education (CME)

Lordswood will add and remove pupils from the admissions register in accordance with Regulation 8 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. A pupil's name may only be lawfully removed from the register if one of the specific conditions outlined in Regulation 9 applies.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil may be missing education or has potentially moved out of Medway Local Authority, we will consult with our Local Authority Attendance Officer within five school days. In line with safeguarding responsibilities, the school will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the pupil's whereabouts. These may include:

- Conducting a home visit
- Contacting schools attended by siblings
- Liaising with the allocated social worker/keyworker, where the family is known to Social Care/Family Solutions/Early Help

If the pupil's location remains unknown, or it is confirmed that they have left Medway, the school will complete and submit a Children Missing Education (CME) referral form to the Local Authority Attendance Officer within ten school days.

This process is aligned with statutory safeguarding duties and reflects the expectations set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Improve School Attendance. It also supports Medway LA Children Missing Education policy, and commitment to identifying,

tracking, and supporting children missing education, ensuring that all pupils receive suitable education provision.

14. Following up Unexplained Absences

Where no contact has been made with the school, the school will contact parent/carers by In-App messages, email, or telephone to try and establish the reason for a child's absence. When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence. If we are unable to establish the reason for the absence within 3 school days, we will make the absence as unauthorised, using the O code. If we are concerned about a pupil's absence and are unable to contact the parent/carers, we may contact the pupil's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the pupil's whereabouts and safety.

15. Reporting to Parents

Parents/carers are informed of their child/children's attendance at parents evening and in their annual report at the end of the year. Parents can see their child's attendance on the Arbor App on a daily basis. Where a child's attendance falls below expected, for whatever reason, our school will contact parents to highlight this.

16. Recording Information on Attendance and Reasons for Absence

Reasons for absence are recorded on our Arbor, our management information system.

17. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a half termly basis (six times a year). They should also support the promotion of regular attendance and provide support and challenge holding the Head to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Head

The Head is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. Detailed reporting of attendance includes analysis of all groups of children.

The Head supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and requests fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

Pastoral Team

The Head works closely with the pastoral team who ensure families of our vulnerable children are supported.

Class Teachers

Class teachers promote good attendance and liaises with parents and the Pastoral team.

Office Staff

- School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. Office staff will ensure the attendance lead is informed of any urgent attendance related concerns.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Head and Pastoral team.
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Co-ordinates requests for Term-time Leave of Absence and advises the Head as requested.
- Collate all paperwork for the Local Authority regarding attendance referrals and Penalty Notices.

18. Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head, or more frequently if there are changes to legislation and guidance. At every review, the policy will be ratified by the governing body.

19. Links with other policies/procedures

This policy is linked to our:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Relationship Policy,
- SEND Policy,
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Early Help Offer,
- Medical Needs Policy

20. Attendance codes

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CODES 2025-2026

Present/Authorised Codes	
/ \	present during registration
B	educated off site and taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed
P	Sporting activity with prior agreement from school
V	educational visit or trip
W	work experience
Absent Codes	
Authorised Absences	
C	exceptional circumstances
C1	in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	absent due to part-time timetable
D	dual registered
E	suspended or permanently excluded
I	illness (not medical or dental appointments)
J1	job/school/college interview

M	medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as C if agreed)
S	study leave
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes (no fixed abode)
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	unable to attend due to whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
Unauthorised Absence	
G	holiday (not agreed)
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	late after register has closed
Z	pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (eg holidays, insets and polling station days)

Key Contacts

School Attendance Lead Name: Jayne Lusinski
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School Attendance:
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