



Lenham Primary School

Take Pride; Be Proud

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Attendance Policy

September 2024

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

Lenham Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. This policy represents our commitment to expect 100% attendance from all our pupils, which is achieved by many children. It sets out our expectations and the strategies that the school will undertake to achieve this.

In accordance with Department for Education (DfE) advice to schools, Lenham Primary School will:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every child has access to full-time education.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

The Governors, Headteacher and school staff will work in partnership with parents and carers to achieve excellent attendance at Lenham Primary School.

The term 'parent' includes all natural parents, any person who has parental responsibility and any person who has day to day care of the child.

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement - it is a parent's/carer's legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children while they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is irregular will be considered vulnerable.

Aims

- To ensure that all children attend school regularly and punctually, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development. Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%.
- To safeguard pupils to the best of the school's ability.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and Governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence. Any pupil with attendance below 90% is classed by the DfE as a Persistent Absentee (PA). Schools are required to identify all PA pupils and report to the DfE at regular intervals during the academic year.
- To improve the life chances of the children attending school and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood. Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training.

Promoting Attendance

Lenham Primary School will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the Home-School agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and children.

The School will:

- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality using newsletters and other forms of communications with parents making attendance a high priority.
- Employ a key member of staff with responsibility for monitoring, improving and evaluating school attendance. At Lenham Primary School, this role is fulfilled by the Attendance Officer and Headteacher and their contact details are available on the school website- office@lenham.kent.sch.uk
- Follow a structured process for managing poor attendance. This may include writing to parents, inviting them to attend meetings and making arrangements in school to support their child to attend school more regularly.
- Encourage our children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Celebrate good attendance by issuing rewards, stickers, certificates and other incentives.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored using our electronic registration system and that absences are followed up promptly.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies (GPs, Kent County Council Integrated Children's Services, School Health etc) to support children with any issues there might be.
- Meet the legal requirements for recording pupil absence using the correct registration procedures and codes with reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence. It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This will include ensuring that the pupil is supported to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils. Please speak to the <role/ name of staff member> and your child's teacher on their return.
- Make arrangements to meet the requirements of pupils with additional educational needs or an Education Health Care Plan.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and sometimes puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know your child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Parents should regularly update the school during any period of absence from school and inform the school when their child is returning.

We expect parents to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality, with their child aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Keep absences to a minimum.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- Telephone the School when their child is unable to attend on the first day of the absence and each day thereafter with the reason for this. Parents should also let the School know if their child is going to be late eg if a car breaks down or an urgent appointment has been made.
- Provide a written explanation for the absence when their child returns to school.
- Parents should provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician, if asked to do so. Whenever possible all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours unless an emergency has arisen.
- Contact the school at the earliest opportunity if their child is experiencing any difficulties and the school will do everything possible to resolve the issues.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility under **Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act** and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school may create an offence in law.

We expect pupils to:

- Attend every day unless they are too ill, or the absence has been authorised by the school.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Go to registration and all lessons on time.

The Role of School Staff

At Lenham Primary School there is a whole school approach to ensuring excellent school attendance with some staff having specific responsibilities.

Andrea McCluskey, Headteacher has overall responsibility for school attendance.

Class teachers or form tutors will keep accurate registers, completing the register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance register twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers will mark pupils present, absent or late.

It is the responsibility of Tanya Thwaites, Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date.
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence.
- Where there has been no communication from parents, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered on the register.
- Parents are informed three times a year of their child's attendance.

Lateness

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8:50. All pupils who arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late in the register (registration code L).

The register will close at 9:00. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration and this will count as an unauthorised absence (registration code U).

Frequent lateness after the register has closed will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for further action.

Absence

A child's absence will be authorised if approval has been given by the school in advance or an acceptable reason has been given afterwards.

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. 'poorly' or '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/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (see 'leave of absence' above)

The Headteacher may authorise other absences 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. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. The principles for defining 'exceptional' are: rare, significant, unavoidable and short. An absence might be considered unavoidable if the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. Once a child has been absent without permission, the absence cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in statutory referral to the Local Authority. The school will follow the appropriate procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the pupil's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings will be attached to the completed referral form with any other relevant information.

Children Missing Education

Parents must inform the School in writing if they are planning to remove their child from the school roll. This must include the details of the arrangements that will be put in place for the child's education.

The school will follow the Department for Education guidance relating to Children Missing Education (CME). If after ten day's continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will make a referral to the Local Authority.

Penalty Notices

Lenham Primary School may make use of Penalty Notices to address poor school attendance in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

A penalty notice can be issued as a result of the following:

- Parentally condoned absence
- Unauthorised leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term-time
There is no longer the scope to authorise a term-time holiday in any Circumstances
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion.

Holidays in Term Time

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be **£160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.**

If a second penalty notice is issued within a rolling 3-year period, then the charge will be at a **flat rate of £160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days.**

In both instances failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28-day period may result in **prosecution** by Kent PRU and Attendance service.

In the event of three or more periods of unauthorised absence within a 3 rolling year period, a penalty notice will not be issued. **A referral will be made to Kent PRU and Attendance Service Courts Team who will consider the case for prosecution.**

Notice To Improve

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In both instances failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28-day period may result in **prosecution** by Kent PRU and Attendance service.

In the event of three or more periods of unauthorised absence within a 3 rolling year period, a penalty notice will not be issued. A statutory attendance referral may be made to the Kent PRU and Attendance Service.

This policy will be reviewed September 2025