

Weald of Kent Grammar School

School Attendance Policy

Introduction

Weald of Kent Grammar School is committed to the academic excellence and personal success of its students. Regular attendance is critical if our students are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. High standards of attendance and punctuality are fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. The Trustees, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents and carers and students have a duty to promote good levels of attendance, and to reduce absence and its effect on student progress and well-being. Parents and pupils have accepted a place at the school, and must understand that education is delivered on site.

Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. This policy takes account of the DfE's latest guidance: Working together to improve school attendance (September 2022).

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy is linked to the:

- Positive Behaviour Policy.
- SEN and Inclusion Policy.
- Safeguarding Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students

Students are to attend Weald of Kent Grammar School on each of the school days as set out in the school term dates.

Students are to register every morning at 8.45am and remain on site until 3.30pm.

Students are to arrive punctually to lessons, ready for the published start time. In the event of absence, students are to make every effort to catch up on missed learning.

All students that arrive late, after 8.45am, must report to the school reception where the reason for lateness is recorded. All students that leave the site during the school day must sign out at school reception with a reason and proof of parental approval (either written or a phone message).

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers 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. The DfE define parental responsibility on school attendance as:

“Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.” (Working together to improve school attendance, 2022: pgh 6)

Parents and carers should note that the school defines regular attendance as at least 96% of the school year to date.

- 95% attendance equates to 9 days absence or 45 lessons a year.
- 90% attendance equates to 19 days absence or 95 lessons a year.
- 85% attendance equates to 29 days absence or 145 lessons a year.
- 80% attendance equates to 38 days absence or 190 lessons a year.

These levels of absence severely disrupt a child’s education and leaves them vulnerable to falling behind.

It is the responsibility of parents and carers and carers to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know each child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents and carers should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

Parents and carers have access to their child’s attendance figure via the parent app. Attendance figures are included on school reports.

The School

The school’s guiding principle is to work together with parents and carers, families and pupils to ensure high levels of attendance. The school understands that children fall ill, can be unsettled and that families can experience challenging circumstances which make attendance difficult. We encourage parents and carers, pupils and staff to maintain good communication and seek solutions to difficulties both at school and outside of school that impact on attendance.

As stated in the DfE guidance, the school recognises “that attendance cannot be seen in isolation and that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils want to attend and can learn and thrive.” (2022: pgh 16).

At Weald of Kent Grammar School there is a designated senior leader with whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The school has a responsibility to set high expectations of attendance and punctuality, demonstrate the benefits of good attendance, build this into wider school improvement strategies and make good attendance a central part of the school’s vision, ethos and values.

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use. The school must recognise that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues.

It is important that students recover from illness and as such, it is not standard practice to set work for absent students. Some academic work may be set to pupils in order to aid a planned reintegration to education on site. On return to school, the student will be fully supported. The Head of Year or Family Liaison manager will usually organise and oversee the support.

The school must take into account the specific needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance (pgh 18; 2022). Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. All students have the same right to an education; that said, the school will be mindful of the barriers that are faced. The school seeks to build positive relationships with families. This will include explaining the link between good attendance, attainment and wider wellbeing, challenging parental views on what good attendance looks like, and also providing appropriate support in school.

In cases where extensive absence is accrued through intermittent absence, work may not be set by staff. Parents and carers and pupils must note that the school wishes to avoid the legitimisation of absence through allowing students to work continually at home.

The school will provide remote learning in the event of a school closure, for example, due to extreme weather. This will only be provided when a whole cohort are not expected to attend on site. Remote learning, such as joining a live-streamed lesson, will not be made available to pupils on an individual basis.

The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. The trust is ultimately responsible for ensuring due regard to guidance and compliance within the law on school attendance.

The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the trustee board. The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary. The headteacher is responsible for authorising parental requests for term-time absence.

Attendance Officer

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date.
- Parents and carers are contacted on the first day of absence via the parent app, where no adequate reason has been provided.
- Where there has been no communication, absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and further contact made with parents and carers requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see Appendix 1).
- The monitoring of attendance data at the school and individual pupil level.
- The reporting of attendance concerns to pastoral or senior school leaders.
- The headteacher is advised when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

Head of Year

The Head of Year will monitor and review attendance of their year group on a regular basis. In particular, the Head of Year will review Persistent Absence and take action as appropriate to improve attendance. This will include regular meetings with colleagues to discuss action with regards to students whose attendance falls below 96%. This may include the selection of students for attendance letters, attendance plans, detentions for lateness and the organisation of work and support for students who have long term absence. Heads of Year will arrange communication and meetings with parents and carers to discuss attendance and may create attendance plans and set targets for improvement and review.

Class teachers and form tutors

Class teachers and form tutors are responsible for recording attendance using the correct codes at the times required by the school.

Form tutors and teachers are to monitor levels of attendance and punctuality in their classes and raise concerns with the Head of Year.

School procedures

Attendance register

By law, Weald of Kent Grammar School is required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. Form tutors will complete a register at 8.45am for pupils in all year groups. All class teachers will complete a register at the start of the fourth lesson of the day. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement as set out in Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Staff will mark pupils as:

- Present (/),
- Absent (N),
- or late (L), adding a note of minutes of lateness.

Staff may not override attendance codes already inputted by the attendance officer on registers, such as:

- Attending an approved off-site educational activity (B).
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (C).

Please see Appendix 1 for the full list of National Attendance Codes. These can also be found on pages 55-65 of *Working together to improve school attendance (2022)*.

Procedures for managing attendance and absence

Staged Approach for Managing Attendance

96-100% attendance	Expected level of attendance	The Attendance Officer will monitor attendance and notify the Head of Year of any concerns. Parents will be contacted if appropriate.
Below 96% attendance	Below expected level of attendance	The School will send attendance letters when appropriate and may arrange meetings with students and parents and carers. Discretion will be applied.
Below 90% attendance	Persistent Absence	The School will arrange specific support for the student and/or family when appropriate, which may include an Attendance Plan.
Below 50% attendance	Severe absence	The School will liaise with the family and are likely to engage external support.

Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school can make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.

The school has a safeguarding duty to investigate any unexplained absences under Section 175 of the Education Act (2002). For cases that require intensive pupil and/or family support, the school may make a referral to Children's Services or consult the Area Safeguarding Team. The school can arrange home visits to meet students and their families.

The school is expected to identify and support students who miss 10% or more of school, (known as persistent absence). The school should make the top priority those pupils who miss more school than they attend, i.e. below 50% attendance (severe absence). These pupils may require a concerted effort to remove barriers to attendance, and a coordinated effort across all relevant services.

The school will place these two groups – persistent and severe absence – within regular data monitoring and attendance analysis. This data is shared regularly with pastoral and senior leaders to aid discussions with students and their families.

While the school must apply this policy fairly and consistently, the individual needs of students and their families will be considered, along with the school's obligations under the Equality Act.

Lateness

Pupils arriving after the completion of morning registration must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.30am and 1.50pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Late marks will also be recorded on Class Charts.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and carers and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Absence

The decision to authorise an absence lies with the school, not the parent. Authorisation of absence requires a written note from parents and carers.

All planned absence requires advance written notice from a parent.

In the event of unplanned absence, parents and carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence and then keep the school regularly updated about when their child will return to school.

The school is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation for absence. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence due to illness

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents and carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. The school will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and a parent will be notified of this in advance.

While it is accepted that some absence during the school year may occur due to illness, continuous absence may be deemed excessive and will require further medical evidence in order to enable the school to authorise future absences for this reason. Therefore, absences due to illness that last longer than three consecutive school days will require medical evidence. Failure to produce medical evidence will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

Other Absences during term time

Absence during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will **not** be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific 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
- Travel disruption

Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance written notice from a parent is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents and carers to make routine medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. This should not exceed a half day unless a significant treatment is planned.

Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time

Parents are to avoid taking holidays during term time as this will not be an authorised absence and can lead to a penalty notice.

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. 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 Trustee Board (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.

The application must be made at least two weeks in advance and the Headteacher must be satisfied that there are truly exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents and carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents and carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes.

Attendance and Safeguarding

Children who are absent from education

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2023) includes this new definition. "All staff should be aware that children being absent from school or college, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future." (KCSIE page 144).

As well as a range of our own support strategies, the school can make a referral to the local authority inclusion and attendance service (PIAS) to help support parents and carers who are finding it hard to ensure their child attends school.

Children Missing Education

"A child missing from education is a compulsory school-age child who is not on the roll of a school, not placed in alternative provision by a Local Authority (LA) and who is not receiving suitable education at home.

It is potentially a safeguarding issue when a child is moving away without the school knowing the forwarding address and the details of the new school. When a child is missing from a school or is moving away, schools have the initial responsibility to make reasonable enquiries and to establish the whereabouts of a child or the key information of the new address." (Kent County Council).

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 has failed to locate them.

- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the school but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

None of our pupils will be taken off the school roll unless informed by a parent/carer, or instructed by the local authority or another school confirms attendance of the pupil and a CTF has been requested.

Legal sanctions for unauthorised absence

The guiding principle for the school is to understand the barriers to attendance and approach these with sensitivity. The school is first and foremost a place of support and safety, and strategies used before reaching for punitive measures.

Schools can refer parents and carers to the local authority who may fine parents and carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. Kent County Council's Attendance Service will issue all penalty notices for all unauthorised absences and exclusions.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents and carers 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.

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

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

The decision on whether or not to instigate proceedings leading to a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents and carers will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and carers and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- 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.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will 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)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

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 will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Weald of Kent Grammar School reserves the legal right to issue penalty notices 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

Reduced Timetables

The school recognises that for some pupils a part-time timetable may be necessary, for example, returning from a long-term illness. This will be set by a senior leader in partnership with the pupil and their parent/carer, and take into account guidance from other professionals. Any part-time arrangement should be exceptional, temporary and regularly reviewed. Where the school agrees that a pupil may be absent for part of a school day, this will be authorised (code C). The school will record the part-time timetable with the local authority attendance service portal.

Author/s:	Chris Love	Date:	July 2023
Next Review Date:	July 2026	Link Trustees:	Liz Kinnersley
Ratified:	September 2023 FTB Meeting		

Appendix 1: School Communications regarding attendance and absence

Concern 1.

Example of use: early concern, attendance below 96% by the end of Term 1 or Term 2; concerning pattern of absence/reason of absence in Term 1 or 2.

Dear Parent/carer

Re: Attendance concern

According to our data NAME's current attendance stands at % as of DATE. As you know, it is our expectation that all students aim for 100% attendance and that no one falls below 96%. I am sure you appreciate the negative impact that lower attendance can have on a student's ability to reach their full potential at school.

We understand that, at this early stage of the year, only a few days can have a huge impact on the overall percentage attendance figure and I am grateful that on each occasion you have notified the school with valid reasons for absence. I am sure you are keen to ensure that NAME's attendance in school improves, so that they do not miss out on too much teaching time and find the catch-up of missed work overwhelming.

If I can support your child's school attendance in any way or you wish to speak to the Attendance Officer or School Nurse, please do not hesitate to contact us. We will continue to

monitor NAME's school attendance and contact you again in the event of no significant improvement.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year

Concern 2, requesting a parent/school discussion.

Examples of use: concerning patterns of absence, sporadic absence, unexplained absence, multiple absences due to minor illness.

Dear Parent/carer

Re: Attendance concern

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that NAME has been absent from school. According to my records, NAME's current attendance rate is ATT%. As you know, it is our expectation that all students aim for 100% attendance and that no one falls below 96%.

A student's absence can seriously disrupt their learning, not only do they miss out on teaching while they are away but they are less prepared for future lessons when they return. In our school attendance policy we have outlined the following:

- 95% attendance equates to 9 days absence or 45 lessons a year.
- 90% attendance equates to 19 days absence or 95 lessons a year.
- 85% attendance equates to 29 days absence or 145 lessons a year.
- 80% attendance equates to 38 days absence or 190 lessons a year.

These levels of absence severely disrupt a child's education and leaves them vulnerable to falling behind.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve NAME's attendance. Please can we arrange a time to discuss your child's school attendance. Please contact me on HOY EMAIL to arrange a meeting date and time.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year

Concern 3, further absences will require medical evidence.

Dear

Despite previous correspondence, I note with concern that there has been no significant improvement in your child's attendance. NAME's attendance at school is currently ATT%, which will have an impact on their education which we cannot ignore.

I must advise you that further absences from school as a result of illness will require medical evidence (e.g. copy of a prescription, Doctor's/Dental appointment card). If medical evidence is not provided when required, further absences will be marked as unauthorised.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve NAME's attendance. It is important that we arrange a time to discuss your child's school attendance. Please contact me on HOY EMAIL to arrange a meeting date and time.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year

4. Request for term time absence is authorised by the school

Dear Parent/carer

Re: Request for an Authorised Absence

Thank you for your request dated DATE regarding an authorised absence request for NAME from DATE in order to REASON.

I am able to confirm that Mrs Clark has agreed that the absence for the above period may be recorded as authorised due to the exceptional circumstances and the register will be updated accordingly.

Please note that although the absence has been authorised it is on the understanding that NAME will liaise with teachers in advance of the absence in order to ensure all class work and homework is completed and submitted on time.

Please note that although the absence has been authorised it will still affect attendance rate, we would therefore request that you are mindful when considering absences in the future as at Weald of Kent we expect an attendance rate of at least 96%.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. S. Blazer
Attendance Officer

5. Request for term time absence is not authorised by the school

Dear Parent/carer

Re: Request for an Authorised Absence

Thank you for your request dated DATE regarding an authorised absence request for NAME from DATE in order to REASON.

Unfortunately, whilst we understand the reason behind your application and also that you have given the matter considerable thought we cannot formally support the absence. New Department for Education guidelines have significantly reduced our powers in this respect.

We appreciate you advising us of your plans and regret that on this occasion this may not be the outcome you had hoped for. Should you continue with your plan for a term time absence, this will be coded as unauthorised on the student's attendance record.

Yours sincerely

Mr Booth
Headteacher

6. Request for term time absence is not approved, with further explanation.

Example of use: request for family holiday, family event, unauthorised trip or visit.

Dear Parent/carers

Re: Request for an Authorised Absence

Thank you for your request dated DATE regarding an authorised absence request for NAME from DATE in order to REASON.

Unfortunately, whilst we understand the reason behind your application we cannot formally support the absence.

From 1 September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will no longer be authorised. The Headteacher may only authorise absence (leave) 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.

An "exceptional circumstance" would, in my opinion, have to be regarded as an unavoidable cause. The High Court has defined this as a one-off emergency situation which would prevent the child from attending school. A family holiday, which may be justified, could not be considered to be "unavoidable".

I must advise you that if you do take your child out of school for this time the Attendance Service may issue a penalty notice of £120 to each parent for each child, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale this may result in prosecution by The Attendance Service.

We consider attendance and these legal powers very important, this is why we are bringing this to your attention. A student's absence can seriously disrupt their learning, not only do they miss out on teaching while they are away but they are less prepared for future lessons when they return, and this will impact on future results.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely

Mr Booth
Headteacher

7. Noting attendance improvement, continued monitoring

Dear Parent/carers

Re: Attendance improvement

Further to my previous letter regarding NAME's attendance at school, I am pleased to report that NAME's attendance has made an improvement and is currently ATT.%.

Whilst this is really encouraging, I would like to advise you that NAME's attendance at school will continue to be closely monitored. It is our expectation that all students aim for 100% attendance and that no one falls below 96%.

I understand that some absence may be unavoidable, however, I would ask that you continue to consider your child's attendance record when deciding whether any future absence is strictly necessary.

If I can help in any way to improve your child's attendance, perhaps via our School Nurse or Attendance Officer, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year

8. Reintegration Letter, requesting a parent/school discussion.

Example of use: absences with genuine medical reasons, to set up a parent/school meeting to discuss strategy for reintegration following significant illness, operation or procedure.

Dear Parent/carer

Re: Attendance concern

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that NAME has been absent from school. According to my records, NAME's current attendance rate is ATT%. As you know, it is our expectation that all students aim for 100% attendance and that no one falls below 96%.

We fully understand that NAME has genuine medical reasons for absence and as a school we wish to support the student and family to return to a regular pattern of school attendance. There are strategies we can employ to help the student in their recovery.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve NAME's attendance. Please can we arrange a time to discuss your child's school attendance. Please contact me on HOY EMAIL to arrange a meeting date and time.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year

Appendix 2: National Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance. The codes are included here to help students, parents and carers and staff understand the reasons taken for recording student attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered

J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 3 School Referral Pathway

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

