



Attendance Policy

Summer 2023



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The UN Convention (Article 28) states that every child has the right to education.

This policy accords with “Working together to improve school attendance 2022 guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities” (Department for Education, May 2022).

The Trust Board, Local Governors and all staff, in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance in all schools within the Trust.

Statement of Intent

All schools in the Whinless Down Academy Trust are committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality. Including individual, class and whole school rewards.

Support

If there are any problems affecting a pupil’s attendance, we will work in partnership with parents/carers and other agencies to resolve problems as quickly as possible. We will adopt a focused intervention aimed at returning the pupil to full-time attendance.

We know that working together to ensure that children have good attendance is the most effective way if we are to ensure that children make good progress. We want to support all families where children find it difficult coming to school or where parents are finding it difficult in getting their children to come to school. We will offer:

- Support from our attendance officer
- Individualised support
- Peer support
- Referrals to outside agencies such as Early Help

The Impact of Good Attendance

The Whinless Down Academy Trust recognises the strong link between wellbeing, attainment and attendance and the critical role parents play in ensuring that attendance is as high as possible for their child/ren.

Good school attendance is crucial if children are to maximise their learning opportunities. It will also instil good habits for later life.

Poor school attendance is a significant problem in the UK and many other countries across the world. In 2019/ 20, it was reported as 4.9% overall, with special schools showing a higher rate equal to 10.5% and persistent absence at 13.1% in England (gov.uk 2020). Research has found that poor attendance at school is linked to poor academic attainment across all stages (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; London et al., 2016) as well as anti-social characteristics, delinquent activity and negative behavioural outcomes (Gottfried, 2014; Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001). However, evidence suggests that small improvements in attendance can lead to meaningful impacts for these outcomes.

To illustrate:

- 90% attendance is an average of one day out of school per fortnight over a school year.
- 90% attendance over 5 years is half a school year missed.
- 80% attendance over 5 years is the same as one whole school year missed.

Whinless Down Academy Trust Attendance Definitions

Descriptor	Threshold Attendance	Actual Attendance	Whole Days Absent	Learning Hours Lost
Excellent	100%	190 days	0	0
	99%	188 days	2	10
Good	98%	186 days	4	20
	97%	184 days	6	30
	96%	182.5 days	7.5	37.5
Cause for Concern	95%	180.5 days	9.5	47.5
	94%	179 days	11	55
	93%	177 days	13	65
	92%	175 days	15	75
	91%	173 days	17	85
Unsatisfactory	90%	171 days	19	95
	89%	169 days	21	105
	88%	167 days	23	115
	87%	165 days	25	125
Critical	86%	163 days	27	135
	85%	161.5 days	28.5	142.5
	84%	159.5 days	30.5	152.5
	83%	158 days	32	160
	82%	156 days	34	170
	81%	154 days	36	180
	80%	152 days	38	190

Key Personnel - Who to Contact

For the day to day absence it is the school office that you need to contact for our first day of absence procedures. This provides reassurances that all children are being safeguarded.

For more detailed support on attendance you will need to contact the Attendance officer for the school that your child goes to who will be able to both help and support you in finding ways in which to both encourage and secure improved attendance.

The Head Teacher may need to become involved if attendance does not improve or continues to decline. The Head Teacher may request that you meet to seek further solutions to improve absence rates.

	Priory Fields	St Martins	Vale View
Head Teacher	Kelly Brown headteacher@prioryfields.kent.sch.uk	Helen Thompson headteacher@stmartins.kent.sch.uk	Lisa Sprigmore headteacher@vale-view.kent.sch.uk
Strategic Lead for attendance	Shara Wheeler sharaw@prioryfields.kent.sch.uk	Helen Thompson headteacher@stmartins.kent.sch.uk	Amanda Abbott aabbott@vale-view.kent.sch.uk
Attendance Officer	Katie Carruthers (FLO) katiec@prioryfields.kent.sch.uk	Sonia Niemiec Office@stmartins.kent.sch.uk	Emma Jenkins office@vale-view.kent.sch.uk

Parental Responsibility

It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure that their child is receiving a full-time education in accordance with Section 7 Education Act 1996. Children registered at a school within the Whinless Down Academy Trust must 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. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour, instilling bad habits and impacting on their future life opportunities. Persistent unauthorised absence meets the criteria for intensive support level 3- children's services.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school office every day unless advised otherwise. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that your child is safe.

Timings

It is important that all children arrive at school in time to be ready for day and their lessons. All schools within the Whinless Down Academy Trust provide opportunity for children to come into school before the day gets started. This enables children time and opportunity to socialise with their friends, take part in additional learning opportunities and prepare for the day. It is important that children arrive before the register is taken.

Priory Fields Start and Finish Times:

Key Stage 1 gates are opened at **8:50am** and the register is taken at **9:00am**.

All Key Stage 1 pupils who arrive late, but before **9:20am**, when the register closes, will be marked as late (L code). Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U code).

Key Stage 2 gates are opened at **8:40am** and the register is taken at **8:50am**. All Key Stage 2 pupils who arrive late, but before **9:10am**, when the register closes, will be marked as late (L code). Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U code).

School ends at 3:15 for all pupils.

St Martin's Start and Finish Times:

School is open from **8:30am** and the register is taken at **8:45am**. Pupils arriving between **8:45am** and **9:00am**, when the register closes, will be marked as late (L code). Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U code).

School ends at 3pm for all pupils

Vale View Start Times:

School gates are opened at **8:30am** and the register is taken at **8:45am**. Pupils arriving between **8:45am** and **9:00am**, when the register closes, will be marked as late (L code). Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as unauthorised absence (U code).

School ends at 3pm for all pupils

The Role of the School Staff

The Head teachers, supported by the Executive Head teacher, has overall responsibility for attendance.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement and so it is important that children attend for both the morning and afternoon sessions as teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The attendance officer notifies the Head teacher of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the 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 .
- A home visit will be made if appropriate by a member of staff responsible for attendance such as the FLO, attendance officer, PSA, Learning Mentor or other members of staff as appropriate.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes – [Appendix 1](#)).
- Parents are informed of child's attendance figure in writing in Terms 2, 4 and 6.
- Parents of persistent absentees (below 90%) will be informed of their child's daily and weekly attendance every Friday until they reach an acceptable level.
- Identify concerns and communicate with parents as required and inform parents
- They liaise with parents/carers and other agencies as appropriate

Punctuality

All pupils who arrive late must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded. Pupils who arrive late without a legislative reason after the register is closed is marked in accordance with the Attendance Code with a U which is treated the same as an absence.

Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents at parent consultations and will be referred to the Attendance Officer or other member of staff responsible for attendance. This can provide grounds for prosecution or Penalty Notice.

Authorising Absence

Only the Head teacher can authorise absence.

Where there is doubt, the Headteacher, on behalf of the school and the Trust Board, will take a consistent approach. The absence must be unavoidable. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. Medical evidence may be requested should attendance be a cause for concern.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

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

- Persistent non specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping/lack of sleep
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Parental ill health
- headlice
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Transport issues
- Family Holidays

If a new pupil transferring from a different school has a history of poor attendance at their previous school, at the pre-start meeting, attendance will be discussed and expectations of the Whinless Down Academy Trust explained to ensure good attendance can be established right from the start.

The school has a 'five-step' approach to monitoring absence and lateness. It will not always be appropriate to progress through all of these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed. Responsible staff will use discretion and discuss each case carefully.

The Seven Steps to reduce both persistent absenteeism and late arrival absenteeism

1. Where there has been no contact from parents, an attendance officer or another member of staff responsible for attendance will call or home visit the parent to confirm the reason for absence and the FLO, PSA and/or the member of staff responsible for attendance will make home visits as appropriate.
2. Regular meetings will take place with the attendance officer and the senior leader responsible for attendance to identify pupils with attendance below 90%. These pupils are then monitored weekly and further action is taken as appropriate.
3. Invitation to meet with the attendance team, where support will be offered.
4. Referral to Early Help or other external services if appropriate
5. Implement an informal parent contract
6. Initiate an absence monitoring period notified to parents, with any unauthorised absence in that time being referred to the Local Authority for a penalty notice or further action
7. Referral to the Local Authority

On occasions where there is no parental engagement during this process, referral to the local authority may be initiated sooner.

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

Timeline of School Action for Low Attendance

- 96% - 100% attendance – no concerns, but monitoring as required.
- Attendance falls below 96% - monitored through regular in-school review meetings.
- Below 90% - Follow seven steps (above)

Children Missing Education

No child missing education may be removed from the school roll without consultation with the Head Teacher.

Where a child is missing from education, the statutory guidance for Local Authority June 2022 will be followed by completing a referral for the following circumstances:

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school have failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school and have not given a forwarding address
- Where family have notified of a forwarding address but there are safeguarding concerns

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Penalty Notices can be issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from June 2020.

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions may lead to a referral to the SLO (KCC's School's Liaison Officer) at the Inclusion and Local Authority for a Penalty Notice Warning letter to be issued.
- The Penalty Notice Warning letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded, this includes lateness.
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, 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 may instigate court proceedings.

Penalty Notices for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from June 2020.

- The Local Authority issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Penalty Notices will be issued in the following circumstances:

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

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Leave of Absence/Holiday

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

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

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 Trust Board (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Head Teacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- With leave (given permission by the school)
- Due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- Religious Observation
- Failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child to be absent from school.

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

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Unauthorised Holiday Absence

- Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (AS) Code of Conduct.
- AS receives a request to issue a penalty notice for an unauthorised holiday of 10 or more school sessions (5 days)
- AS issue Penalty Notice(s) (one per parent per child)

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.

GDPR Statement

In managing your data we comply with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). You can view our GDPR policy and Privacy Notices on the Whinless Down Academy Trust website (www.whinlessdowntrust.co.uk) . Should you have any concerns please contact the Trust Business Manager, Michelle Noden – email tbm@whinlessdowntrust.co.uk

Review

These guidelines and procedures will be reviewed in Spring 2026, or when changes have been identified or when required due to a statutory requirement.

School attendance and attainment are very closely linked.

Please do not leave it until it is too late. If you are having problems with your child's school attendance make an appointment as soon as possible so that we can provide advice and support.

We can make a difference together