

Kent County Council

School Attendance Handbook

*A guide for schools, governing bodies, academy trustees
and local authority practitioners in Kent*

Document Owner	Simon Smith, Service Manager (Kent PRU and Attendance Service - KPAS)
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Foreword

The importance of regular school attendance has never been greater following the Covid-19 pandemic which caused significant disruption to the education of children and young people across the country, and the impact for families continues to be felt far and wide today. Local and national attendance data shows there have been green shoots emerging and although a long way to go, the commitment to improving attendance has been impactful and reflected not only in the data, but in the many positive examples of good practice going on across schools and the network of support services.

The Department for Education (DfE) published non-statutory Working together to improve school attendance guidance in May 2022, which outlined expectations of schools, governing bodies and academy trustees, and local authorities across the country to tackle persistent and severe absence. On 19th August 2024, the DfE re-published its [Working together to improve school attendance](#) guidance which is now statutory. A number of changes to the Working together guidance have seen the introduction of a new national framework for penalty notices, updates to attendance and absent codes, and amendments to legislation set out in [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). Closer to home, the PRU Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS) has had a rebrand and now known as the [Kent PRU and Attendance Service](#) (KPAS).

This handbook brings together useful information, links and advice from a range of pieces of guidance and legislation, and particularly how Kent County Council is navigating its journey to meet the expectations laid out in the Working together guidance this to ensure we make best use of resources and have the greatest impact to improve attendance. It also includes reference to other related subjects such as exclusions and children missing education where guidance was re-published in August 2024.

The DfE attendance guidance itself could not have a more meaningful title as working together across our schools, local authority services and with wider partners to help overcome barriers to children's attendance in the most collaborative way is a recipe for success. We hope you find this handbook informative and look forward to hearing even more success stories from schools and partners across the county.



Simon Smith
Service Manager, Kent PRU and
Attendance Service (KPAS)

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This handbook is located on this [page](#) on the Kelsi website and best read electronically due to a wide range of links contained throughout.

The handbook will be reviewed in July 2025 to maintain its accuracy in accordance with local and national guidance. However, it may be subject to change sooner to reflect any amendments made to Department for Education guidance or other legislation prior to the review date. All links and references are accurate at time of publication of this handbook.

Any queries, comments or feedback can be reported to the Kent PRU and Attendance Service by emailing southkentpia@kent.gov.uk and adding 'School attendance handbook' in the title of the email.

- 1. Terminology:** This handbook correlates with the Department for Education’s statutory guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#) which was published on 19th August 2024. The following DfE terminology and abbreviations will be substituted in some sections of this handbook to apply it specifically to Kent County Council:

Department for Education (DfE) terminology (from)	Terminology in this handbook (to)
Local authority (LA)	Kent County Council (KCC)
School attendance support team	Kent PRU, & Attendance Service (KPAS)
Virtual School Head (VSH)	Virtual School Kent (VSK)
Working together to improve school attendance	Working together guidance

Other key terminology with corresponding acronyms and abbreviations be found below, and more detail related to their meanings will be provided throughout the handbook:

Terminology	Acronym		Terminology	Acronym
Persistent Absence / Persistent Absentee	PA		Part-time timetable	PTT
Severe Absence / Severe Absentee	SA		Targeting Support Meeting	TSM
Emotionally Based School Avoidance	EBSA		Attendance Network Meeting / Best Practice Meeting	ANM / BPM
Attendance Improvement Meeting	AIM		Child(ren) Missing Education	CME
Attendance Contract	AC		Digital Front Door	DFD
Parenting Order	PO		Registration Certificate	Reg Cert
Education Supervision Order	ESO		Elective Home Education	EHE
School Attendance Order	SAO		KPAS Attendance Officer	KPAS AO
Penalty Notice	PN		KPAS Exclusion Intervention Adviser	KPAS EIA
Single Justice Procedure	SJP		Kent Education Learning, Skills and Information	KELSI
Permanent Exclusion	PX/PEX		Senior Attendance Champion	SAC

2. **Links to DfE guidance:** The DfE published its main attendance guidance along with a summary table highlighting key expectations for parents, schools, governing board, academy trustees and local authorities. The link to the documents can be found [here](#), or can be opened directly by hovering over the images below by pressing the Ctrl button and clicking. Schools are advised to use the versions which mirror the front page layout below and discard any versions printed when the original version was published on 29th February 2024 up to 18th August 2024 as there were some minor changes made by the DfE.



The *Working together to improve school attendance* guidance states that it should be read alongside the following statutory guidance documents published by the DfE:

Children Missing Education (August 2024)
Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (December 2015)
Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs (December 2023)
Suspensions and permanent exclusions (August 2024)
Alternative provision (January 2013)
Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024)

In February 2023 the DfE also published [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#) guidance.

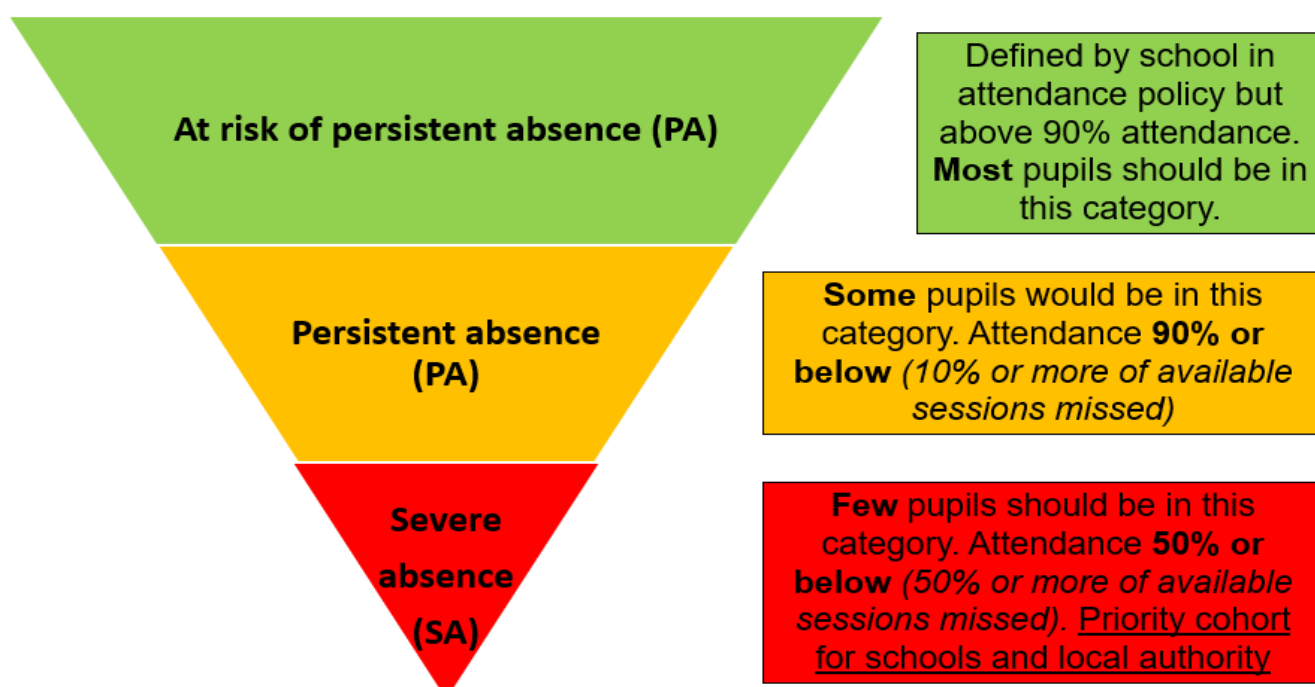
3. **School attendance - key principles:** KCC believes there are some key principles which define how school attendance should be considered, and some of those listed below are detailed in the DfE Working together guidance:

- ✓ Absence is always **symptomatic of wider issues** and may be the **first or only indicator** of barriers to attendance in school or beyond the school gates.
- ✓ Attendance is **everyone's responsibility**, and a **multi-agency approach** will always be **the most effective**.

- ✓ Championing the **young person's voice** is crucial to help identify and understand any push and pull factors affecting their attendance.
- ✓ **Early intervention** is essential to try to remedy the causes of a pupil's absence.
- ✓ Early help should be viewed as an **overarching system** rather than a single service, workforce, or individual person when aiming to improve pupil attendance.
- ✓ Regular attendance at school acts as a consistent **protective factor** for pupils to minimise or eradicate any potential physical and psychological harm.
- ✓ **Support** should come before more punitive measures are pursued.
- ✓ Prosecution is one **intervention** to try to improve a pupil's school attendance*

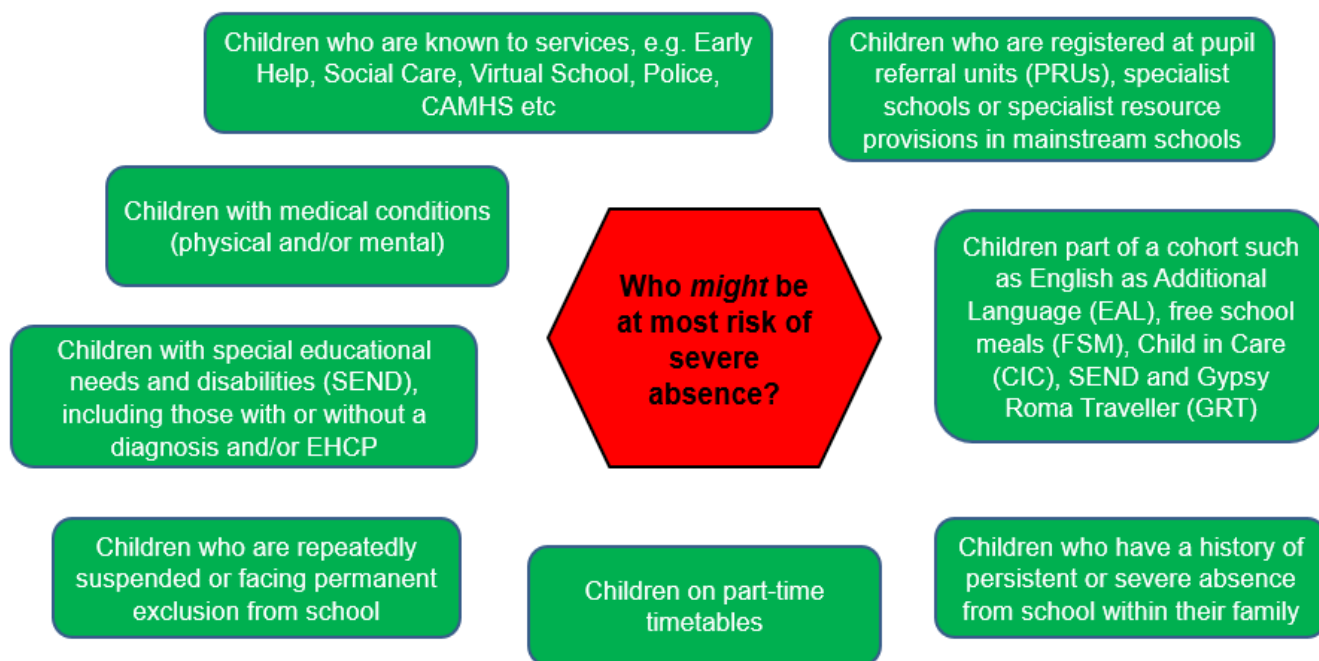
* Kent County Council is the independent prosecutor responsible for discharging its legal duties in respect of school attendance. All prosecutions are in accordance with the [Education Act 1996](#) and although the goal is to change parental behaviour resulting in an improvement in a pupil's attendance, KCC may still discharge its duties irrespective of whether legal intervention is likely or not to improve attendance.

4. **School attendance - Priority pupils and cohorts:** The DfE created a new category of absence in May 2022 which is referred to in [Chapter 5](#) of the *Working together to improve school attendance* guidance and known as **severe absence (SA)**. A pupil who has missed **50% or more** of school is classed as being **severely absent**. The DfE states that SA pupils should be the top priority for all partners. Pupils who miss **10% or more** of school (i.e. have an attendance rate of 90% or below) continue to be classified as **persistent absentees (PA)**. Pupils who are PA or SA are expected to be a focus of regular data monitoring by schools and KCC.



Pupils with specific profiles, experiencing certain circumstances (e.g., trauma), educated part time, or not accessing mainstream school may be more likely to sit or fall in the severe absence classification. Persistent or severe absence does not distinguish between types of absence, for example a child can be classed as a persistent absentee even if all of their absences are authorised. DfE guidance emphasises the importance

of **prevention** and **early intervention** to address absence before it becomes habitual. Very poor attendance may be a child protection issue in its own right – when it becomes ‘educational neglect.’ However, this does not mean that all children with poor attendance are being neglected and it does not mean that children who are being neglected always have poor attendance. Ofsted published a webinar in March 2023 focused on [Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence](#).



5. **LA roles and responsibilities:** In its [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#) guidance the DfE sets out clear expectations for **parents, schools, academy trustees/governing bodies, and local authorities**. There are specific core functions for KPAS to provide to **all schools** (free of charge) outlined in Chapter 4 of the DfE *Working together to improve school attendance* including:

Communication and advice	Regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.
Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs)	Hold regular conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.
Multi-disciplinary support for families	Provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance
Legal intervention (LI)	Take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.

KCC began delivering the core functions above when May 2002 version of the Working together guidance was published, and some were in place prior to that. Greater detail

about how the four core functions are provided to support schools can be found throughout this handbook. In addition, KCC is expected to:

- ✓ **Rigorously track local attendance data** to devise a strategic approach to attendance, prioritising the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
- ✓ Monitor and improve the **attendance of children with a social worker** through [Virtual School Kent \(VSK\)](#).

6. KCC directorate structure: The Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS) is positioned within the **Education & SEND** division of the **Children, Young People and Education** (CYPE) directorate alongside a range of other services:

Education & SEND	Integrated Childrens Services (ICS)	Childrens Countywide Services
Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS)	Early Help	Virtual School Kent
Fair Access (<i>including Admissions, Transport, Children Missing Education, Elective Home Education, Education Programme</i>)	Children's Social Work teams	Safeguarding, Professional Standards & Quality Assurance
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities	Adolescent Services	Front Door
Area Education team	Open Access	Corporate Parenting
Kent Educational Psychology Service (KEPS)	Youth Justice	Disabled Children and Young People teams

Note: Not all KCC services are included in the above table.

Although KPAS sits within the Education and SEN division, the relationships with neighbouring teams and services from other divisions remains strong and KCC is committed to a multi-disciplinary approach to improving school attendance.

- 7. KPAS objectives:** The core objective for PIAS is to ensure all children and young people are engaged, thrive, and achieve their potential through regular school attendance. Working closely with practitioners in the CYPE directorate in KCC as well as external partners, the service will aim to empower mainstream schools, specialist schools and alternative provisions to reduce levels of persistent absence, severe absence, and exclusions. Information about the service, including resources for schools and how to make referrals can be found on the Kelsi website [here](#).
- 8. KPAS structure and roles:** There are four area teams countywide, with each area team working in three districts each.

The Director for the Education & SEND division in Kent is **Christine McInnes**.

The Service Manager for KPAS is **Simon Smith** Simon.smith2@kent.gov.uk

There are five KPAS Area Managers line managed by Simon Smith:

Area	Districts	PIAS Area Education Lead(s)
North	Dartford, Gravesham, Sevenoaks	Maxine Gamage*
West	Maidstone, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells	Catherine Edwards (Mon to Wed)** Danielle Jenken (Thu & Fri)**
South	Ashford, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe	Lee Kennedy*
East	Canterbury, Swale, Thanet	David Boyd*

*Full time, **Full time, part time.

In addition to the KPAS Area Managers, each area team is made up of staff in one of two specific roles. Some are employed full time to ensure that KPAS is able to be represented at meetings which take place in the school holidays. The two main officer roles changed title on 1st September 2024:

- ✓ **KPAS Attendance Officers:** Providing advice and guidance to schools, parents and multi-agency partners relating to school attendance and specifically the [Working together](#) guidance. Facilitating Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs) with schools about individual pupils and whole school approaches to attendance improvement. Coordinating termly network meetings with groups of schools and investigation of potential children missing education (CME) referred by schools. Leading statutory attendance investigations which may result in prosecution of parents in accordance with the Education Act 1996.
- ✓ **KPAS Exclusion Intervention Advisers:** Providing advice and guidance to schools, parents and multi-agency partners relating to suspensions, permanent exclusions, part-time timetables, and movement of pupils (including managed moves and off-site directions) in line with the [Suspensions and permanent exclusions](#) guidance. Representing the LA at meetings which must be held in accordance with statutory exclusions guidance, such as governing board panels and independent reviews. Providing exclusion training for governing board and academy trustees as well as senior leaders in schools.

Contact details for all area KPAS Officers countywide can be found [here](#) on the Kelsi website. Area KPAS Officers are linked to the school in the Kent district at which a pupil is registered as opposed to the Kent district where the pupils lives.

KPAS has two additional teams which are countywide:

- ✓ **KPAS Courts Team:** The team is managed by **Alison Taylor**, KPAS Courts Team lead. The role of the Courts Team is detailed in the Legal Intervention section of this handbook relating to expectations of LAs (see page 19).
- ✓ **KPAS Child Employment and Entertainment Team:** The lead for this team is David Boyd, KPAS Area Manager (East). There are two Child Employment and

Entertainment Officers. The LA has a statutory duty to promote the safeguarding of children and young people engaging in part-time work and participating in performances, e.g. theatre, television and modelling. The team is responsible for issuing work permits, chaperone licenses, child performance licenses and Body of Persons Approvals (BOPAs). The Child Employment and Entertainment Officers regularly visit premises and inspect performances. Further information can be found [here](#) on the Kelsi website. The team can be contacted if there is a concern about a child in employment using this [form](#). The team can be emailed through childemploymentandentertainment@kent.gov.uk

- 9. KPAS capacity:** To ensure the statutory expectations set out in the Working together guidance are met, and particularly the core expectations in Chapter 4, discretionary activities delivered in previous years are currently on hold. These include truancy sweeps, projects in schools, pupil assemblies, early/late gates, and induction events for parents of new reception aged pupils.
- 10. Access to KPAS:** The entry point for the initiation of any formal work to be undertaken by KPAS Officers is via the [Digital Front Door](#) (DFD) located on the Kelsi website and there are 11 pathways in total. The DFD has been refined to align with the expectations on LAs and terminology detailed in the DfE's Working together guidance as well as other existing DfE statutory guidance and [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#).

The DFD is the designated pathway for schools to complete statutory notifications to the LA of any suspension, permanent exclusion, child missing education, attendance return, sickness return and deletion return (for attendance and sickness returns see [regulation 13](#) of the school attendance regulations 2024 in the paragraph above, and for deletion returns see [regulation 9](#)).

The DFD also enables schools to request representation from KPAS officers at formal attendance meetings led by a member of the school's senior leadership team, as well as to request for KCC to issue a penalty notice to a parent, make a request for statutory attendance intervention (which may lead to prosecution by KCC), request single registration of a pupil at a pupil referral unit, and request exclusion intervention advice for a pupil facing suspension and/or permanent exclusion.

There is also a separate pathway for KCC professionals to request advice or direct involvement from KPAS around attendance or exclusion matters. This form is not for school use.

Following submission of any form, it will be directed to the mailbox of the relevant KCC team depending on the information inputted by the referrer.

Referrers may choose to register for an account which will keep a record of all forms submitted, but can also complete forms without an account. Registering for an account can be initiated by opening one of the forms to the page which states **Create an account or log in**.

For cases of persistent or severe absence, KPAS has produced a diagram to show at what stages intervention from the service may be appropriate and what this would involve in line with the types of DFD requests and referrals. This can be found in the appendices on page 42 of this handbook.

Referrals are allocated to the named KPAS Officer for the **school where the pupil is registered**. There may be cases where a pupil attends school in one district, borough, or LA, but lives in another. KPAS is still responsible for holding an attendance case if the school is based inside the Kent authority boundary even if the pupil does not live in Kent. The same applies in cases of permanent exclusions where the Council has a duty to put day 6 provision in place and find long term education for a pupil if required.

11. Working with private companies: Some Kent schools employ the services of private companies to improve pupil attendance. KPAS and wider services will work in partnership with representatives from private companies and provide the same level of support to schools as set out in chapter 4 of the DfE [Working together to improve school attendance](#) guidance. Unlike some other LAs in England, KPAS does not trade any of its services outside of the four statutory core functions detailed in paragraph 87 of the guidance. However, any offer of additional support beyond the core functions remains at the discretion of KPAS based on the resources available at the time.

12. Expectations of parents: Parents have a legal responsibility under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#) to ensure their children of [compulsory school age](#) receive a suitable full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. This can be through regular attendance at school, alternative provision, or otherwise (e.g. the parent can choose to [electively home educate](#) their child). *A parent means all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).* For any pupil who is registered at a school and is compulsory school age there is an expectation that parents:

- ✓ Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- ✓ Notify school as soon as possible when their child will be unexpectedly absent.
- ✓ Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, and in advance.
- ✓ Book any medical appointments which are not urgent outside school hours.
- ✓ Work with the school and KCC to help them understand any barriers to their child's attendance.
- ✓ Proactively engage with support offered to prevent need for more formal support and/or legal intervention.
- ✓ Adhere to requirements set out around school attendance and punctuality in any home-school agreement.
- ✓ Be proactive in providing any medical evidence if requested by school.
- ✓ Promote good routines and positive attitude towards attending school to their child.

13. Expectations of schools: Schools play a significant role in proactively managing and improving attendance across their community. The DfE produced an overview of the Working together guidance for schools in a [webinar](#) in May 2024.

Paragraph 16 of the guidance states: *The most effective schools consistently **promote** the benefits of good attendance at school and make schools a place pupils want to be, set high **expectations** for every pupil, **communicate** those expectations clearly and **consistently** to pupils and parents, systematically analyse their **data** to identify **patterns** to target their improvement efforts, and work **effectively** with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. They also recognise 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 can learn and thrive.*

[Section 2](#) of the *Working together to improve school attendance guidance* details some key priorities for schools including:

- ✓ **Developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.** This includes having a designated senior leader with overall responsibility to champion and improve attendance at the school. KPAS has produced a **job description** which includes some duties an existing senior leader might have as the 'Senior Attendance Champion' and can be found on [Kelsi](#).
- ✓ **Having a clear attendance policy on the school's website which all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents understand.** The DfE does not intend to publish a national model attendance policy for local authorities and schools, with the rationale that schools will have different systems, structures, processes, and communities which makes a 'one size fits all' policy unfeasible. Consequently, KCC will take the same approach, but to aid schools, KPAS has created an **attendance policy checklist** on the [Resources for Schools](#) page on the Kelsi website which has been updated to reflect the most recent DfE guidance. Information can also be found in paragraphs 26 to 30 of the DfE Working together guidance.
- ✓ **Accurately completing admission and attendance registers.** Schools are expected to keep registers using the national attendance and absent codes prescribed in **chapter 8** of the Working together guidance, and in accordance with **Regulation 10** of [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). **N codes** should be converted to the most accurate code within **5 school days** of it being recorded on the register. **B codes** should only be recorded where a pupil is attending an off-site educational activity *approved by school and supervised by someone authorised by school*. Therefore, using code B schools are certifying the education is **supervised** and measures have been taken to **safeguard** the pupil. A summary of the new attendance and absent codes can be found on page 43 in this handbook.
- ✓ **Having robust day to day processes to follow up absence.** Schools should not be routinely asking for medical evidence to support illness (see paragraphs 365 and 366 of the Working together guidance).
- ✓ **Regularly analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.** The Working together guidance places weight on the use of data to inform decisions and actions.
- ✓ **Sharing information and working collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.** This includes a legal duty to share information from their registers with the local authority, in particular deletion, attendance and sickness

returns. This can be done through the [Digital Front Door](#). More information can be found on pages 34 to 36 of this handbook.

- ✓ **Being particularly mindful of pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.** This includes understanding the individual needs of the pupil and family, working in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with other the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available) and regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

Other expectations include:

- ✓ **Building strong relationships with families to understand barriers to attendance, aiming to address any which are within school.** The DfE promotes a 'support first approach.' The diagram in paragraph 14 of the *Working together* guidance describes the importance of listening, understanding, facilitating, and formalising support (which may include initiating an attendance contract).
- ✓ **Signpost and support access to any required services where barriers are outside of school.** This may include support from KCC services, health services, and partners in the voluntary and community sectors (VCS).
- ✓ **Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the LA.** This cohort should be the highest priority for schools and multi-agency services.
- ✓ **Act as lead practitioner in cases where other agencies are involved, and it is agreed school is best placed to do so.** If the family is open to Early Help or Social Care, then the relevant family practitioner may be best placed to lead the case.
- ✓ **Where there is lack of engagement from the family, hold more formal conversations with parents to be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.** (See paragraph 20 of the *Working together* guidance). Schools may wish to invite their link KPAS Officer to a **formal attendance meeting** via the [Digital Front Door](#) who will attend if the circumstances are appropriate (i.e. absences are unauthorised and enforcement is being considered).
- ✓ **Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.** Pupils will not meet criteria for support level 3 or 4 due to school absence alone, therefore evidence of harm (which may result in increased absence) must be provided. See [Kent Support Level Guidance](#).

Other expectations for schools which may promote best practice include:

- ✓ Sharing **KCC's key principles for school attendance** outlined in section 4 of this handbook, especially the support first model advocated by the DfE in its guidance.
- ✓ Engaging with **Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs)** and ongoing commitment from the school's Senior Attendance Champion.
- ✓ Attending termly **network meetings** for schools facilitated by KPAS area teams.
- ✓ Ensuring the school's Senior Attendance Champion represents the school at **formal attending meetings** with parents as well as **Attendance Improvement Meetings (AIMs)**, which are chaired by KPAS Attendance Officers as standard procedure for a statutory attendance referral, which could lead to legal intervention.

- ✓ Submitting all **notifications** as per statutory requirements via the [Digital Front Door](#) (i.e. suspensions, permanent exclusions, potential children missing education and deletions from the admissions register).
- ✓ **Deleting pupils** from the school's admissions register only under one of the grounds set out in [regulation 9](#) of [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) (also referenced in chapter 7 of the *Working together* guidance). A pupil must **not** be deleted due to general persistent or severe absence and doing so for this reason or other reasons outside of the specified grounds would constitute 'off rolling.'
- ✓ **Ensuring the use of attendance and absent codes are consistent and accurate** to enable the identification of pupils who need additional or more intensive support as well as ensure any case where attendance legal intervention is pursued is done so with the information a true and accurate record. See [regulation 10](#) of [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) and chapter 8 of the *Working together* guidance).
- ✓ Making **home visits** in cases where a parent is unresponsive, a pupil is absent for a prolonged period without justifiable cause, or where there may be potential barriers to regular attendance to explore which may not be visible in school (reference to home visits is made in paragraph 25 of the *Working together* guidance). KPAS Officers will visit family homes for statutory child missing education (CME) referrals and statutory attendance intervention requests only.
- ✓ Registering for the DfE [attendance data collection](#) system (if school has not done so already) which will enable more current data recording analysis.
- ✓ Accessing the **Emotional Based School Avoidance** (EBSA) resources developed by the Kent Educational Psychology Service (KEPS) and requesting case consultations where required. See [Educational psychology interventions](#).
- ✓ **Notifying** the pupil's family practitioner directly (e.g. Early Help worker or Social Worker) if there are any unexplained absences and if the pupil's name is to be deleted from the admissions register.
- ✓ **Ensuring** part-time timetables are used only as a short-term measure to deter from a pupil becoming a persistent or severe absentee. (They must not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour). KCC should be notified of any new part time timetable through the [Digital Front Door](#) (even though this is not a statutory requirement).

The *Working together* guidance expects LAs to advise schools about what should offer before involving LA services, and particularly before considering attendance legal intervention. The table contains some ideas on practice which should be explored before referring to KCC services (unless there is an immediate risk to the pupil's safety and wellbeing in which case safeguarding procedures must be followed). The content in the table is not exhaustive and is generalised as detailing what schools might put in place would need to be determined on a case-by-case basis:

- ✓ **Communication with family** (i.e. building relationships).
- ✓ **Facilitating support** (i.e. to identify and unblock barriers which may be within school, but also beyond the school dates).
- ✓ **Reaching out** (signposting and access to universal and additional support).
- ✓ **Formalising approach** (i.e. intensifying support, which would start to bring involvement from KCC, but not a focus on punitive measures at this stage).

Communication with family Build relationships	Facilitate support Identify and unblock internal barriers	Reach out Signpost to / access universal and additional support	Formalise approach Intensify support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold meetings in school and ensure the right staff with the right skills participate depending on circumstances. Make reasonable adjustments to promote family's attendance at meetings. Use a strengths-based and solution focused approach in all meetings. Make home visits where parents are unresponsive, pupil's absence sustained, or other potential concerns which may not be visible without outreach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The voice of the child should always be prioritised. Consider all push and pull factors between home and school. Follow a plan-do-review cycle – sustaining attendance never ends. Deploy relevant school-based interventions available to remedy any barriers stemming from within school. Use any data available to assist in identifying any habitual patterns of absence. Keep chronology of key events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KCC Early Help link worker KCC PIAS link officer District conversation (KCC Youth Hub/Children's Centre) Virtual School Kent Advisory Team re Ever 6 Children with Social Worker (CWSW) and previously looked after children (PLAC) KCC area Education Safeguarding Advisers Information, Advice & Support Kent (IASK) District contextual safeguarding meetings (DCSM) Forums such as EBSA consultations Online resources (e.g., Resilience Hub and apps) Health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore any changing or emerging barriers to attendance as circumstances evolve, and practical solutions. Consider a parenting / family contract. Invite link PIAS Officer to a formal attendance meeting via the Digital Front Door. Make a request for support where concerns meet criteria at level 3 or above of the Support Levels Guidance using the Kent Children's Portal. <i>(Seek parental consent unless a serious or urgent Child Protection concern).</i>

To support schools to align their practices and processes to the expectations set out in the Working together guidance and the supporting summary table, KPAS has designed a checklist which focuses on key themes within the DfE guidance to enable schools to determine any areas for enhancement. There is no mandatory requirement for schools to complete this checklist or share it with KCC. A PDF version of the attendance checklist can be found in the [Resources for Schools](#) page on the Kelsi website. Please email you link KPAS Attendance Officer for your school for a Word version if required.

The DfE has a range of [webinars](#) delivered by the DfE related to topics in the Working together guidance such as attendance and absent codes, data returns, role of the Senior Attendance Champion and the national framework for penalty notices. See pages 39 and 40 of this handbook for the individual links.

14. Expectations of academy trustees and governing bodies: As improving attendance requires a whole school approach which needs to be robustly reviewed, [Section 3](#) of the Working together guidance highlights the importance of the role played by school trustees and governors. They are expected to:

- ✓ Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- ✓ Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- ✓ Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- ✓ Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

Trustees and governors should have attendance on the agenda at board meetings and have regular discussions about it. Schools may have a governor with experience or interest in attendance matters who wishes to participate in meetings with parents, Targeting Support Meetings with a KPAS Attendance Officer, or other forums (where

their time and commitments allow) to ensure a good understanding of the needs and challenges facing the school community in improving attendance.

15. Expectations of the Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS): The DfE working together guidance outlines the responsibilities for local authorities in [section 4](#). There are four core functions which KPAS must provide to all schools in Kent at no cost:

i) Communication and advice: KPAS is committed to ensuring there is ongoing excellent communication with schools coupled with the provision of high-quality advice and support from its staff across all teams and roles. This includes:

- ✓ Outlining at what point the LA will become involved (which includes other KCC services in addition to KPAS). Page 15 of this handbook provides some guidance about what **actions schools should take first** in broad and generic terms.
- ✓ Providing each school with a **named point of contact** from KPAS to support with any queries and hold Targeting Support Meetings (see **section 16 ii** below). KPAS has always had a model with a link Officer for each school to support with queries and coordinate attendance referrals, as the service views having consistent and robust relationships with schools as imperative. In Kent, all mainstream, special, PRU and independent schools have two points of contact; a named KPAS Attendance Officer for attendance related matters *and* a named KPAS Exclusion Intervention Adviser for exclusion matters.. Details for each KPAS Officer and schools they are linked with can be found on [here](#) on the Kelsi website. KPAS Officer links are subject to change based on the business need and other circumstances; however, the priority is to keep links consistent where possible. KPAS will have a single point of contact for a group of schools in the same geographical area and/or across a group of schools in the same multi-academy Trust where practicable.
- ✓ Sharing effective practice between schools is invaluable, and since the first version of the Working together guidance was published in May 2022, KPAS has facilitated a series of meetings countywide with groups of schools in the four areas to discuss the DfE attendance guidance, local processes, and resources available for schools and families. Meetings have been held either in person or via Microsoft Teams and have various names in different areas, such as **attendance network meetings** or **best practice meetings**. KPAS will continue to coordinate these events and promote opportunities for schools to share what has worked well for them to improve attendance. Guest speakers from partner agencies will also be invited. Schools will be encouraged to recommend agenda items based on what themes they feel are most relevant at that time. Due to the commitment for KPAS to meet the expectations set out by the DfE, there may be occasions where a network meeting is substituted by a newsletter, pre-recorded webinar or other form of communication. Groups of schools may wish to hold their own network meetings independently of KCC.

ii) Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs): KPAS has a legal duty (from 19th August 2024) to meet with each school (of all types) to discuss attendance in general and what is relevant to the specific school, as well as discuss individual pupils who are severely absent and where there is not already a joint school and KCC plan to try to improve their attendance.

TSMs will be facilitated by the school's link KPAS Officer (contact details can be found [here](#) on the Kelsi website) and dates of the meetings will be mutually agreed between the school and KPAS. There is no requirement or facility for schools to make a formal referral for a TSM.

For schools with attendance levels below the national average for their phase, KPAS will meet with them on a termly basis (3 times per academic year). For schools with attendance levels above the national average for their phase, the frequency will be one Targeting Support Meeting per school year.

Schools and their link KPAS Officer may decide to hold TSMs in person at the school or prefer virtually via Microsoft Teams or another platform. KPAS has created a TSM Terms of Reference available on this Kelsi [webpage](#) for TSMs, and provides greater detail about best practice for effective TSMs based on the experiences KPAS Officers have had facilitating them over the past two academic years.

KPAS has created a **TSM Record of Consultation form** to record conversations and can be viewed on the [Resources for Schools](#) page on Kelsi. Both the school and KPAS should retain a copy of the form (the school should have the original). The form and TSM process is not an assessment or audit of the school's performance, and TSMs themselves should be an equal partnership between school and KPAS.

iii) Multi-agency support for families: Attendance is everyone's business and working together to improve school attendance is imperative, especially as absence is often a symptom of wider issues in a pupil's life. Although multi-agency support for families is a core function for KPAS to provide, working directly and intensively with children and their parents (like KCC services such as Early Help, Children's Social Care, or other services where practitioners have a caseload), is outside the scope of KPAS Officers. However, KPAS works closely with partner services both within and external to KCC to impart knowledge and expertise with the aim of improving school attendance for pupils known to KCC family practitioners. A range of priorities as outlined in the DfE summary table are:

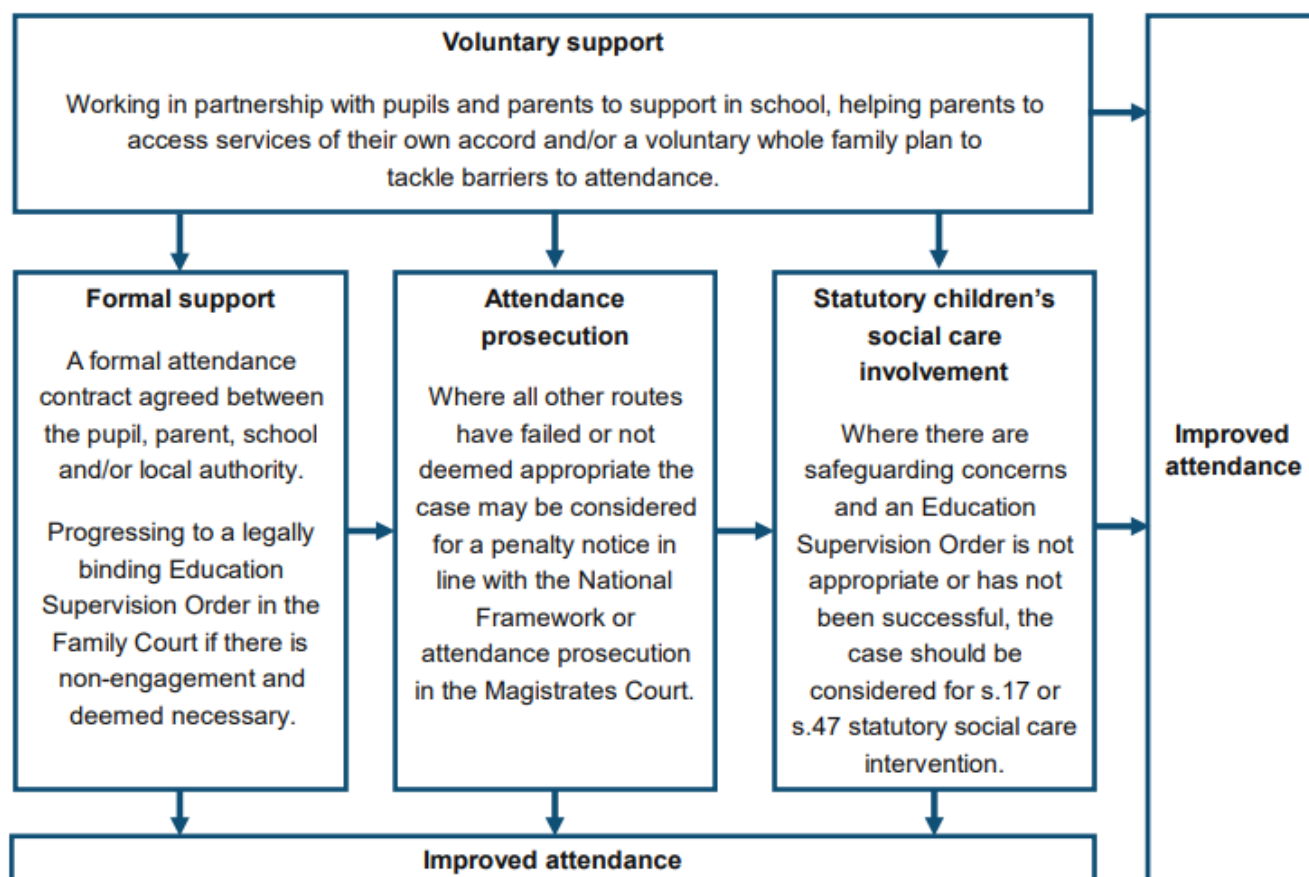
- ✓ Providing identified pupils with **access to services** they need where there are **out of school barriers**, including facilitating a **voluntary early help assessment** where absences persist and appropriate, and a KCC practitioner to act as **lead professional** where agreed they are best placed to do so. Schools and families can access a range of interventions and resources to help address barriers to attendance (some of which are detailed in the appendices). There are a vast range of reasons why a child does not attend school, therefore the correct support will depend on the individual circumstances, the needs of the child, what has been tried already, what is available in the area, and the level of engagement with support. Some ideas include:
 - Seeking advice from the link **Early Help unit** or **Early Help link worker**, if the school has one assigned to discuss any universal services and additional support which may be pursued before referrals for intensive and specialist support from family services are made.

- Seek advice from the [Virtual School Kent](#) for Kent children in care (CIC), previously looked after children (PLAC) or those children not in either of these two cohorts but who have or had a social worker in the last 6 years (Ever 6 Children with a Social Worker – CWSW).
 - Signposting parents to the [Information, Advice and Support Kent](#) (IASK) service if the child has SEND and they require independent advice.
 - Referring the pupil to a **District Contextual Safeguarding Meeting** (DCSM), if appropriate, and there is risk of harm to the child or young person where a multi-agency response is required (this is usually for secondary aged pupils).
 - Accessing the **Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) case consultations** facilitated by the Kent Educational Psychology Service (KEPS).
 - Completing a **request for intervention** at Support Level 3 or 4 from an intensive or specialist service. A conversation with the KCC area [Education Safeguarding Adviser](#) may be helpful first if the pupil is not at immediate risk of harm which otherwise requires an emergency referral.
 - Completing an invitation via the [Digital Front Door](#) for a KPAS Attendance Officer to join a **formal attendance meeting** to discuss any further sources of support to try to identify and resolve barriers to attendance, and lay out potential legal intervention measures if applicable.
 - Signposting to online resources such as websites and apps focused on emotional wellbeing, e.g. [Kent Resilience Hub](#) or health services such as [Kent School Health](#).
 - Referring to other organisations such as [Young Lives Foundation](#) for mentoring or befriending support.
- ✓ **Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure there is a robust collaborative approach between the school, children's services, and other statutory safeguarding partners:** KPAS will ensure that training is offered to all KCC practitioners from Early Help and Children's Social Care to ensure monitoring attendance and helping to unblock any barriers resulting in absence is a priority. This will also include ensuring attendance is built into child protection plans, child in needs plans, and any other documents such as moving forwards plans when a case closes. Training will also extend to child protection conference chairs countywide as well as external partner organisations such as School Health and the Police.
- ✓ **Make severely absent (SA) pupils a top priority for support.** KCC acknowledges that children who are missing more school than they are attending often have vulnerabilities and school is an essential protective factor. KPAS will work with school to identify SA pupils, and also using targeting support meetings as an opportunity to identify pupils where intensification of support could deter them from moving into the SA cohort.
- ✓ **Ensuring improving attendance is a key focus for all frontline council staff:** The strategic approach from KPAS has been the creation of an Attendance Working Group headed up by the KPAS Service Manager and made up of a range of KCC staff from different teams and services across the county. The group has focused on key tasks such as improving the effectiveness of targeting support meetings, developing ways to report and analyse attendance data, and create a training package for KCC integrated children's services focused on improving attendance. KCC and Medway Council also hold joint local attendance alliance meetings to

bring partners together to address attendance matters at a strategic level, which is an initiative created by the Secretary of State for Education.

iv) Legal intervention: Where voluntary support has been unsuccessful or not appropriate, schools can request for KCC (seeking advice and evidence from any family practitioners involved) to take forward attendance legal intervention by either formalising support and/or enforcing attendance. The diagram in paragraph 136 of the DfE Working together guidance demonstrates this process and the various interventions such as attendance contracts, education supervision orders, statutory social care involvement and attendance prosecution:

Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



[Section 6](#) of the Working together guidance outlines the full range of legal interventions in more detail.

In line with the requirements in the DfE guidance, KCC is committed to ensuring that:

- ✓ Parents are given **clear information and notice** if any legal intervention is pursued by the local authority.
- ✓ Integrated children's services are expected to **build attendance expectations** into any family plans or assessments so that there is clear evidence the LA has exhausted all efforts to improve attendance before punitive action is pursued.
- ✓ Penalty notices are always issued in line with the KCC [Code of Conduct](#).
- ✓ Attendance prosecution is taken forward as a **last resort** where all other routes (such as voluntary and formal measures) have been exhausted or inappropriate.

Schools, Trusts and KCC are expected to work together to determine which legal intervention measure is most likely to change parental behaviour resulting in an improvement in the pupil's attendance. All measures apply to pupils of **compulsory school age** and to **each parent of each child**. The main measures in more detail are:

- ✓ **Attendance contracts** (*paragraphs 140 to 152*): Formally known as parenting contracts, attendance contracts sit within the attendance legal intervention section of the DfE guidance, but are **not** legally binding. However, attendance contracts (under the [Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003](#)) can be used as evidence towards other measures such as attendance legal intervention (attendance prosecution). In KCC, a decision has been taken that due to the statutory expectations on KPAS to deliver the core functions, KPAS Officers will not be able to be the lead practitioner for attendance contracts. Schools will however be able to seek advice from KPAS Officers about the process, and KPAS has produced a **parenting contract template, checklist and frequently asked questions guide** for schools which is available [here](#) on the Kelsi website.
- ✓ **Education Supervision Orders** (*paragraphs 153 to 160*): An Education Supervision Order (ESO) is an alternative to prosecution, involving KCC (under [section 36 of the Childrens Act 1989](#)) applying to the family of high court for a district judge to issue an order to parent(s). KCC is expected to have explored the option of an ESO before considering attendance prosecution.

Schools will be unable to request an ESO directly, and a decision will ultimately be taken by KPAS if an ESO is appropriate. When a school makes a request for statutory attendance intervention via the [Digital Front Door](#), KPAS will set up an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) whereby all options will be considered and a decision made to either pursue the ESO or attendance prosecution route. If an ESO proves unsuccessful there will still be an option to subsequently follow the attendance prosecution to the Magistrates Court.

The responsible officer for an ESO and overseeing the process will be a KPAS Attendance Officer, with support from another KCC service to work directly with the family to try to improve the pupil's attendance. Although considered on a case-by-case basis, KCC will generally recommend an ESO in cases where there is visible evidence of parental responsiveness and not in cases where there is clear parental disengagement from professionals with no likelihood of bringing about a consistent level of responsiveness from the parent(s).

- ✓ **Attendance prosecution** (*paragraphs 161 to 171*): KCC has the power to prosecute parents in the Magistrates Court under [Section 444 of the Education Act 1996](#). The two types of offences are section **444(1)** where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section **444(1A)** where a parent *knowingly* fails to ensure their child attends school regularly. The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence may result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500). Parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision may be prosecuted under section **444ZA**. Sentences for a 444(1) offence

may also include parenting orders, conditional discharges, and absolute discharges. Sentences for a 444(1A) offence may also include a curfew, community order, rehabilitation activity requirement, or custodial sentence of up to 3 months. From 19th August 2024, KPAS Attendance Officers will investigate the offence under section 444(1A) automatically, even if there have been no previous convictions.

All statutory attendance referrals will be managed by a KPAS Officer from the relevant area team. This may include home visits, phone calls, and letters to parents as well as referrals to other services where evidence arises (e.g., referral to children's social care). Due to the remit of the service, KPAS Officers will be unable to provide intensive support for families (which should have been offered and provided prior to the referral to KPAS). The referral can run alongside any other agencies involved but all parties should agree with the legal intervention route before it is initiated.

Before being transferred to the KPAS Courts Team, the KPAS Attendance Officer holding the case will schedule and facilitate an **Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM)** in school to devise an **attendance improvement agreement** with parent(s) and the pupil (where age and aptitude appropriate). Other agencies may be invited and a **representative from the school's leadership team** (this may be the Senior Attendance Champion) should be present to make any decisions on behalf of the school where they may arise. If unauthorised absences persist the KPAS Attendance Officer will send a formal warning, and then if there are still unauthorised absences a final warning letter will be sent to parent(s). The AIM and both warning letters are included as evidence when the KPAS Attendance Officer writes their witness statement for court.

The lead KPAS Officer will offer the parent(s) a voluntary interview under caution in line with the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act](#) (PACE), 1984. This provides an opportunity for parent(s) to supply any evidence or mitigating factors and to show willingness to engage in efforts to improve their child's attendance. This evidence can be used in the Magistrates Court. Failure by the parent to respond to the opportunity of a PACE interview may be used as evidence of non-engagement in preparation for sentencing. If there are any other services involved KPAS may call a professional and seek advice from the district's children's social care manager where there is a possibility of a custodial sentence. Social care intervention may be deemed more appropriate as an alternative or in addition to prosecution if absence is severe and there is evidence of neglect.

The criteria for a statutory attendance intervention request can be found on the [Resources for Schools](#) webpage on Kelsi. There is also guidance on the initial web pages of the request form on the [Digital Front Door](#) located on Kelsi. *KPAS will close a statutory attendance referral if there are **no unauthorised absences** on the pupil's registration certificate in the most recent **20 school days*** (this is the same length of time as the notice to improve period for penalty notices (see below).

There is no guarantee that a request for statutory attendance intervention will automatically result in prosecution as it will depend on a range of potential circumstances. Examples include if the family move out of county or the country, the

pupil becomes electively home educated (EHE), there is a significant change of family circumstances (e.g. the pupil is taken into care), the parent is able to supply evidence in line with the [statutory defences](#) outlined in the Education Act 1996, the pupil's attendance improves significantly for a sustained period of time, or there is evidence of malpractice by the school and/or KCC. If a pupil is on a part-time timetable, legal intervention cannot be pursued as this would not be classed as regular attendance. All cases must adhere to the [Code for Crown prosecutors](#) and pass the **public interest and evidential tests**.

- ✓ **Parenting orders** (*paragraphs 172 to 175*): Parenting orders are an ancillary order which the Magistrates may choose to impose if a case has been presented by KCC for attendance prosecution. In a similar way to an ESO, the responsible officer for a parenting order will be a KPAS Attendance Officer, but another KCC service will become involved to work with the family directly to try to improve the pupil's attendance due to KPAS not having a remit to work intensively with families. Should a parent breach a parenting order they may be returned to court which could result in a fine of up to £1,000. A parenting order could last up to a year.
- ✓ **Penalty notices** (*paragraphs 176 to 202*): On 19th August 2024, a **new national framework for penalty notices** was introduced across England. All state schools must consider whether a penalty notice (PN) for absence is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the **national threshold**. With the introduction of the escalation process, penalty notices are charged at **£160** if paid within 28 days, reduced to **£80** if paid within 21 days for a first offence in a 3 school year rolling period, and a flat rate of **£160** for a second offence in a 3 rolling school year period. All charges apply to each parent of each child. A third penalty notice cannot be issued in the same 3 school year rolling period.

There are **three** scenarios where a penalty notice can be requested by a school for the local authority to issue:

1. The pupil is absent on leave, unauthorised by the Headteacher (recorded as **code G** on the pupil's registration certificate) 10 or more sessions within 10 school weeks.
2. The pupil is absent from school and the sessions are unauthorised (recorded using code O on the pupil's registration certificate), and/or the pupil is late to school after the close of the register (recorded as **code U**) or a combination of code O, U and G within 10 school weeks. The school has set a 20 school day notice to improve period which has been unsuccessful.
3. The pupil is present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 school days of a suspension or permanent exclusion (recorded as **code E** on the pupil's registration certificate).

Penalty notices for pupils in a public place during an exclusion are not included in the National Framework and therefore not subject to the same considerations about support being provided or count towards the limit as part of the escalation process in the case of repeat offences for non-attendance. These penalty notices are charged at **£120** if paid within 28 days, reduced to **£60** if paid within 21 days.

All penalty notices will be issued by Kent County Council in line with its Education Penalty Notices [Code of Conduct \(from 19th August 2024\)](#) and [The Education \(Penalty notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#). A penalty notice **will only be issued** where:

- The school is **state** funded (independent schools cannot request penalty notices).
- The **Headteacher** has authorised the request (or a delegated member of the senior leadership team in the absence of the Headteacher).
- The pupil has a minimum of **10 school sessions** of unauthorised absence in a rolling **10 school week** period (this is the national threshold).
- The pupil is [compulsory school age](#) and:
 - In cases where the penalty notice request is for unauthorised leave of absence, at least 10 of the sessions of the leave of absence are recorded using Code G when the pupil was compulsory school age.
 - In cases of unauthorised absence, at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence have been recorded with Code O and/or U in a rolling 10 school week period and there has been at least one session of unauthorised absence in the 20 day notice to improve period set by the school, all whilst the pupil is compulsory school age.
- In cases of unauthorised absence, the school has sent a **Notice to improve** and included all the information set out in paragraph 188 of the [Working together to improve school attendance guidance](#), August 2024, and the **20 school day** notice to improve period has been completed.
- In line with the escalation process, there have not been **two previous penalty notices** issued already at the school or other schools in England within 3 schools years of the issue of the first penalty notice. A penalty notice is classed as issued where they were paid by the parent, or not paid and prosecution was taken forward and the parent pleaded or was found guilty. A withdrawn penalty notice does not count towards the escalation process.
- The school is confident there are no safeguarding concerns about the pupil (for example, the pupil has been continuously absent and they have not been seen by a professional or there is uncertainty about their whereabouts).
- The pupils attendance is lower than the expected target in the school's attendance policy, and the policy explains the national framework for PNs.
- The pupil is expected to attend full time (code **C2** is not being recorded on the pupil's registration certificate during the national threshold period).
- The pupil is currently known to Early Help or Children's Social Care and there are no concerns the work undertaken by the family practitioner to support an improvement in the pupil's attendance conflicts with the penalty notice.
- The pupil is not in the care of KCC or another local authority.

The school should only request a penalty notice (not including cases where support is not appropriate such as a holiday in term time) if:

- All available support has been provided and been unsuccessful and/or not engaged with.
- It is believed to be the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family and one of the other legal interventions (for example a request for attendance legal intervention via the [Digital Front Door](#)) would not be more appropriate.

- Any obligations under the [Equality Act 2010](#) such as where a pupil has a disability have been fully considered and met first.

As a third penalty notice for unauthorised absence (where codes O and/or U are used) cannot be requested within a 3 rolling school year period, schools are advised to speak to their named [KPAS Officer](#) to discuss other attendance legal interventions. Where a third period of unauthorised leave of absence (code G) occurs in the 3 rolling school year period a penalty notice should be requested but the case will instead be prosecuted using the **Single Justice Procedure (SJP)** as a third penalty notice cannot be issued under the new national framework.

If parents do not pay their fines then they may be prosecuted and this will be for the original offence of unauthorised absence and not failure to pay the penalty charge.

A school can request for the LA to issue a penalty notice [here](#) via the Digital Front Door on Kelsi. Parents can pay a penalty notice via this [link](#) on the kent.gov.uk website. More information about penalty notices can be found on Kelsi [here](#).

For pupils of compulsory school age and not registered at a school, KCC has the power under [section 443 of the Education Act 1996](#) to prosecute a parent through a **School Attendance Order (SAO)** for failing to register their child at a school. An SAO may be issued to the parent of a child in a number of scenarios, for example where KCC deems an elective home education (EHE) arrangement to be unsuitable, in which case the pupil is reclassified as a child missing education (CME) and transferred to the KPAS Courts team. A school will be contacted requesting a place is held for the pupil on its admissions register as the order requires a school to be named. The parent may approach a different school if they are able to secure a place. If the pupil becomes registered at a school before the SAO is issued to the parent, then it will discontinue. If the parent does not ensure their child is on a school roll within the specified timeframe the SAO will be issued by the KPAS Courts Team, and the parent will be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court which means they could receive a fine up to £1,000.

16. Expectations of Virtual School Kent (VSK): The Working together guidance highlights how good attendance at school also provides an additional safeguard for vulnerable pupils. Absence for pupils with a social worker, however, has been historically higher, with a quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker persistently absent compared to less than 10% of those who had never been in need. The Virtual School Kent (VSK) plays a key role by:

- ✓ Regularly **monitoring the attendance** of those children looked after by Kent LA.
- ✓ Strategically **championing the educational attendance** of Children with a Social Worker (CWSW), those who have had a social worker in the last 6 years (known as the Ever 6 CWSW cohort) as well as Previously Looked After Children (PLAC).
- ✓ Ensuring Social Workers and Schools set **aspirational targets** for attendance of pupils with a social worker in the area and put in place **personal education plans** for pupils looked-after.
- ✓ Providing **training for designated teachers** about their role in promoting the attendance of children who have ever needed a social worker.

- ✓ Securing regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide **advice and guidance** about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after, as well as those who have or have had a social worker.
- ✓ Working across the children's social care service to ensure all social workers recognise the **importance of good school attendance**, and that **attendance is built into every child in need plan or child protection plan** where it is a concern.

Information about the Virtual School Kent can be found on its website [here](#).

17. Register codes: All schools, except those where all the pupils are boarders, must keep an attendance register in accordance with the [School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024, regulation 10](#). **Regulation 10** sets out the contents of the attendance register and information can also be found in **Chapter 8** of the [Working together guidance](#).

All schools must record attendance accurately in the register and share the required information with DfE and local authorities. Accurate recording will enable schools to regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place. Accurate recording of attendance and absence codes is also essential where Kent County Council issues penalty notices to parents, or where parents are being prosecuted in the Magistrates Court as a copy of the pupil's registration certificate must be submitted as evidence of an offence. A case may be jeopardised if register codes used are not a true record of events that may have taken place with a pupil's absences.

All 'N' codes (Reason for absence not yet established) should be converted to the correct code within 5 school days. The attendance and absent codes must be applied to pupils not yet compulsory school age as well as those who are compulsory age. Codes should be entered on to the pupil's main attendance register at the two points in the school day the register is taken, even if schools record attendance for each lesson in cases of secondary schools. A range of new codes were published on 19th August and detailed on page 43 of this handbook. In summer 2024, the DfE published a [webinar](#) with an explanation of all codes (including new ones).

18. Part-time timetables (PTTs): These are sometimes known as *reduced timetables*, but officially known as part-time timetables in DfE guidance. PTTs may be used in cases of pupils re-integrating into school after a period of absence due to physical health and/or psychological health reasons, or when transitioning into a new school.

The DfE states in paragraph 66 of its Working together guidance that PTTs should **not** be used to manage behaviour.

Key considerations and requirements for schools when considering moving a pupil on to a PTT (some of which are included in the above guidance) include:

- ✓ **Parental consent** must be obtained as all pupils are entitled to a full-time education. If parents agree and wish their child to return to full time sooner than planned or with immediate effect this must be honoured even if the school believes

it is not in the child's best interests. Equally, school may refuse a parent's request for their child to be placed on to a part-time timetable. School may choose to move the pupil back to full-time at short notice if it is not proving an effective intervention.

- ✓ The timetable should be a **temporary** measure and for the **shortest time** possible.
- ✓ There should be a **regular review** with input from parents (and pupil where appropriate) using a **pastoral support plan** or similar framework to record details such as actions agreed etc to support the pupil returning to a full-time programme.
- ✓ As school is a protective factor for pupils, a **risk assessment** should be conducted to mitigate against potential safeguarding risks when they are absent. This may also include arrangements which become apparent, e.g. adult supervision, travel arrangements at alternative times of day and free school meals (where applicable). The DfE's [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(September 2024\)](#) guidance is a key document which to refer to promote the wellbeing of pupils missing school.
- ✓ If the pupil has an **EHCP, subject to a statutory children's social care plan and/or in the care of the LA** then the relevant KCC department(s) should be contacted for their input to ensure the child is safeguarded and there is compliance with any related statutory legislation. Schools may also wish to seek advice and guidance from professionals in the district's Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) and SEND Inclusion Advisers. The school can contact the KPAS Exclusion Intervention Adviser directly or complete the **Request Exclusion Intervention Advice** form on the [Digital Front Door](#) on Kelsi.
- ✓ Any sessions where the pupil is not required to be in school must be recorded on the register as **authorised absence** (code C2). For non-compulsory aged pupils who are part of a whole year transition (e.g., new reception pupils in September) code X (classed statistically as not a possible attendance) may be applied.
- ✓ **Inform KCC** of the part-time timetable details by completing the **Notify of a part-time timetable** form through the [Digital Front Door](#) on Kelsi.*

*There is currently *no statutory duty* on schools to notify the LA of any pupil who moves on to a part-time timetable, however KCC recommends it is good practice to do so to be able to identify the numbers of pupils countywide. Schools are required to report how many pupils are on a part-time timetable for the census three times per year.

Flexi-schooling does not fall under the description of a part-time timetable nor is it the same as elective home education. Flexi-schooling is where children who are educated at home most of the time may also be registered at school and attend school for part of the week – perhaps one day a week. It is generally therefore a more permanent arrangement than a PTT which should always be of the shortest duration possible. As flexi-schooling is a combination of school and home education, the child remains on roll of the school and is recorded as absent (code C) on those days they are educated at home. The parents must ensure that the child receives a suitable full-time education.

Schools are under no obligation to agree to such arrangements. If a school intends to consider flexi-schooling, it should have a formal flexi-schooling policy. Although not a part-time timetable, schools should notify KCC of a flexi-schooling arrangement by completing the Notify of a part-time timetable form through the [Digital Front Door](#) on Kelsi as above.

Further information can be found at [DfE Elective home education guidance for local authorities](#)

19. Suspensions and permanent exclusions: The most recent DfE guidance related to suspensions, permanent exclusions and pupil movement (September 2024) can be found [here](#). Reference to pupil movement (managed moves and off-site directions) is made in section 20 of this document. Schools, governing bodies / academy trustees and LAs **must** comply with specific requirements set out in the guidance including:

- ✓ The school **notifying parents and KCC** of any suspension (known in the past as fixed period/term exclusion) and permanent exclusion issued **without delay**. Schools must complete the Notify of a **suspension or permanent exclusion form** via the [Digital Front Door](#) on Kelsi which automatically goes to KPAS.*
- ✓ School notifying specific teams/professionals where applicable (e.g. **Social Worker or the Virtual School**) of any suspension or permanent exclusion. *If a permanent exclusion is cancelled (known in the past as withdrawn or rescinded), any days served by the pupil before the cancellation **must** be formally recorded and count towards the maximum 45 days of suspension permitted in an academic year.*
- ✓ School arranging **provision from day 6** onwards of any suspension which last longer than 5 days (this includes any consecutive suspensions) which may be less than 5 days each but bring the total days above 5).
- ✓ School and governors complying with key legislation and guidance including the [Equality Act 2010](#), the [SEND Code of Practice](#) where relevant, and [Keeping children safe in education](#) when suspending or permanently excluding a pupil.
- ✓ The Governing board/ Academy Trustees convening to consider reinstatement of:
 - Any pupil **permanently excluded**. The meeting must be within *15 school days* of the headteacher's notification.
 - Any pupil **suspended for more than 15 school days**. The meeting must be within *15 school days* of the headteacher's notification.
 - Any pupil **suspended for more than five school days** (or more than ten lunchtimes) in a term where parents have made representation. The meeting must be within *50 school days* of the notification of suspension.
 - Any pupil suspended or permanently excluded which would result in the pupil missing a **public examination** or national curriculum test. Governors (may be less than three) must make reasonable steps to meet before the exam.
- ✓ School inviting KPAS, the Virtual School and Social Services (where the pupil is known to Social Care or in the care of the LA or other LA) of any statutory meeting to consider an exclusion, or to any independent review. A copy of any decisions made in those meetings must be shared with KCC. In the best interests of the pupil, KCC recommends that any LA representative is invited to contribute and not solely to attend as an observer (see paragraph 104 of the DfE suspensions and permanent exclusions [guidance](#)).
- ✓ School ensuring there is a clear **behaviour policy** accessible to school, parents, and pupils (there may be a separate specific exclusion policy).
- ✓ School not using **part-time timetables** to manage a pupil's behaviour or to avoid suspensions or permanent exclusions.

**All suspension and permanent exclusion notifications are entered on to a KCC database. The KCC management information team subsequently run an internal monthly report detailing all suspensions and permanent exclusions issued countywide.*

Additional guidance for schools was published in February 2024 by the DfE; [Behaviour in Schools, Advice for headteachers and school staff](#).

Through the [Digital Front Door](#), a school can request a penalty notice be issued to any parent of a pupil of compulsory school age who is present in a public place during the first five days of a suspension or permanent exclusion. School must make it clear in writing to parent(s) the relevant dates when the suspension or permanent exclusion is issued. The charges, per parent, are £120 if paid within 28 days reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days.

In the case of a permanent exclusion of a **primary aged pupil**, KCC has a statutory duty under [Section 19](#) of the Education Act 1996 to arrange day 6 provision (most commonly via the KCC Education programme or other appropriate service), and KPAS will coordinate an In-Year Fair Access (IYFA) panel of local schools in line with the [Fair access protocol](#) to identify an onward school for the pupil. The exception is for pupils with an EHCP or in the care of KCC or other LA whereby other services will make arrangements instead and not through a Fair Access panel format. If a school is not identified at panel, for example due to all schools declining, KCC may seek a direction via the [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#).

In the case of a permanent exclusion of a **secondary aged pupil**, each district receives funding from KCC which is through either a delegated or devolved model depending on the way the district is set up (e.g., if there is a PRU). Therefore, although [Section 19](#) of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on LAs to make education arrangements, secondary schools are commissioned to provide day 6 provision, and longer-term education is arranged through the district In-Year Fair Access (IYFA) panels. Pupils with an EHCP or in the care of KCC or other LA are not placed via IYFA, and arrangements are made through the relevant departments.

For any pupil where KCC makes arrangements for their education, the school may record this using **code K** (attending education provision arranged by the local authority) which was introduced on 19th August 2024 and classified for statistical purposes as attending an approved educational activity. If a pupil attends an off-site provision such as a PRU they should be recorded by the excluding school using Code D (dual registration). This code is classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance to avoid double counting.

If a pupil is permanently excluded and governors decline to reinstate the pupil at the governing board panel meeting, then parent(s) may request an **independent review** within 15 school days of the notification of the decision to decline to reinstate the pupil. KCC Democratic Services will be responsible for organising an independent review panel (IRP) within **15 school days** of the parental request in the case of a permanent exclusion from an **LA maintained** school. Academies are responsible for making their own arrangements but may wish to request KCC Democratic Services to coordinate it (via appeals@kent.gov.uk). Panel members will still be independent of KCC to ensure

the process is impartial. There will be a charge to academies who request for KCC to organise a review.

Once all statutory processes have concluded for a permanent exclusion and the pupil is not reinstated, the school may complete the **Notify of a deletion from admissions register** form on the [Digital Front Door](#) on the Kelsi website, selecting ground **1(o)** for a pupil of compulsory school age or **3(e)** if the pupil is not of compulsory school age.

Every Kent school has a named KPAS Exclusion Intervention Adviser (EIA) to provide advice around exclusion processes and the DfE guidance. Schools can complete the **Request exclusion intervention advice** form via the [Digital Front Door](#) on Kelsi or contact them directly via phone or email. It is outside the remit of EIAs to be able to recommend, make a judgement on, or overrule a decision by a headteacher to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil. Advice and support from EIAs will be on a case-by-case basis and current work commitments, but may include:

- ✓ **Providing advice** on the DfE exclusion guidance and processes as well as behaviour policies.
- ✓ **Sharing ideas** as well as signposting to resources and services who may be able to support schools and pupils in promoting inclusion where behaviour is a concern.
- ✓ **Attending meetings** in schools with parents (and partner agencies where involved) about individual pupils experiencing suspensions at risk of permanent exclusion (parental agreement must be sought first).
- ✓ **Representing KCC** at statutory meetings in relation to suspensions and exclusions.
- ✓ **Delivering training** to governors and senior leaders on responsibilities in relation to exclusions set out in the DfE guidance (usually organised for a whole area and not bespoke for a single school or Trust).

In the case of pupils with SEN, the Exclusion Intervention Advisers are not responsible for assessing the quality of provision, or finding provision for pupils whose needs may be best met in specialist provision. They are also unable to expedite the statutory assessment process or make or overrule decisions by the KCC SEN department.

Exclusion Intervention Advisers represent KPAS at a range of forums such as the Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT), In Year Fair Access (IYFA) panels and District Contextual Safeguarding Meetings (DCSM).

KCC will always recommend compliance with the DfE [suspensions and permanent exclusion guidance](#). KCC holds template letters for notifying parents of a suspension or permanent exclusion which schools may request from their link Exclusion Intervention Adviser. Schools are advised to ensure their link EIAs name is on template letters, and to check any associated phone and emails details are accurate in case parents wish to contact them.

20. Managed moves and off-site directions: The DfE [Suspensions and permanent exclusions including pupil movement guidance](#) (August 2024) recommends headteachers consider a **managed move or off-site direction** for a pupil as a **preventative** measure to exclusion. Paragraph 33 states off-site direction may only be used to improve future behaviour and **not as a sanction or punishment** for past

misconduct. It should be a **temporary** intervention which may result in a return to the school or managed move to another mainstream school. Pupils subject to a managed move should not take priority over any pupil who has priority status for admission to the school as detailed in the [School Admissions Code 2021](#).

Governing bodies of maintained schools have the power to direct a pupil off-site for education to improve behaviour under [Section 29A](#) of the Education Act 2002. Academies can arrange off-site provision for similar purposes under their general powers, set out in its *Articles of Association*. The managed move process was changed by the DfE in September 2022, having previously been a dual registration agreement and temporary.

The differences between managed moves and off-site directions are summarised in the table below:

Move Type	Parental consent	Timeframe	Registration	Provision type
Managed move	Yes	Permanent	Single	School
Off-site direction	No	Temporary	Dual	School or Alternative Provision

The relevant KCC department should be informed before any managed move or direction off-site is initiated if the pupil has an **EHCP, subject to a statutory children's social care services plan and/or in the care of the LA** so any protective and risks factors are identified and addressed. This will also ensure compliance with any statutory legislation which may influence the suitability of the arrangement.

Schools should ensure that parents and pupils fully understand how a managed move or off-site direction works from the outset and how any direction will be monitored and reviewed. Schools may wish to seek advice and guidance from their link KPAS Exclusion Intervention Adviser, and can do this via the **Request exclusion intervention advice form** on the [Digital Front Door](#). All pupils referred to a PRU **must** be dual registered with a mainstream school. Schools can ask KCC for consent for a pupil to be single registered with a PRU by completing the **Request single registration at a PRU** form on the [Digital Front Door](#) if the pupil meets one or more criteria detailed on the first page of the form. If a school removes a pupil from roll to be single registered with a PRU without KCC consent, or for any other ground outside Regulation 9 of [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) this would constitute 'off rolling' and deemed unlawful.

There is no statutory duty on schools to notify KCC of a decision to initiate a managed move or off-site direction for a pupil, therefore there is no form on the Digital Front Door on Kelsi to do this. However, to be able to determine how many pupils are moving to other schools or in to PRUs, KCC's Management Information team continues to coordinate a **Countywide Key Stage 3&4 Inclusion Dashboard** on a termly basis to track the number of managed moves, successful directions (pupil has returned to school) and unsuccessful directions (pupil has not returned to school and moved on to another provision) in each district. KPAS Exclusion Intervention Advisers

will ask schools for this information in advance of the publication of each dashboard at relevant checkpoints across the academic year.

KCC does not intend to create a countywide managed move and/or off-site direction policy, but will continue to have regard to, and expect schools to have regard to, the [Alternative Provision statutory guidance for LAs, headteachers and governing bodies](#) published by the DfE in January 2013.

21. Children with medical needs: LAs have a statutory duty under [Section 19 of the Education Act 1996](#) to ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would not otherwise receive a suitable education. In Kent, [the Rosewood School](#) provides education for pupils who cannot attend school due to health reasons and who are known to senior medical professionals such as paediatricians and consultants. Kent County Council is undertaking some development work around its Section 19 duties, including a public consultation on its policy for children with medical needs. The outcome of any developments are not complete at the point this handbook was published but will be updated in due course. The DfE has three guidance documents related to children with medical conditions and schools attendance including [Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#) (Dec 2023), [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#) (Dec 2015) and [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#) (Feb 2023). The national campaign [Moments Matter, Attendance Counts](#) launched by the government in March 2023 continues to run and contains useful resources for schools, especially to promote attendance where absences are for minor health reasons.

22. Children Missing Education: Children Missing Education (CME) are children of **compulsory school age** who are **not registered pupils** at a school and are **not receiving suitable education otherwise** than at a school (e.g., elective home education). LAs have a duty under [section 436A of the Education Act 1996](#) to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in the circumstances outlined above. A pupil would **not** be classified as CME if they were a persistent or severe absentee in general unless there is continuous absence and indication or confirmation they have not returned or will not return to the area.

For safeguarding purposes, schools are advised to notify KCC of any non-compulsory aged child who may be CME so there is a record and KCC can follow up when they reach compulsory age. Updated CME guidance was published by the DfE in August 2024 and found [here](#). Schools have a legal duty to inform KCC of a child missing education and can do this through the **Notify of a Potential child missing education form** located on the [Digital Front Door](#). Schools should complete this form as soon as they become aware of one of the two scenarios below and have completed their own **reasonable enquiries**: In cases where schools intend to delete a pupil's name under any of the three grounds shown below, a CME referral should be made first.

If a school has a forwarding address for a pupil then a CME referral is not required and the deletion from admission register form can be completed automatically.

Ground 1(g) within [Regulation 9 of The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). The pupil no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school and:*

- ✓ The school does not have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again, and the pupil is not a boarder at the school.

* The DfE does not define reasonable distance because each case depends on the family situation and the geography of the area for example, the parent's ability to get the child to the school, a safe walking route or the accessibility of local transportation.

Pupils should not be deleted under this ground in cases where they are generally not attending school, either for authorised or unauthorised reasons. Schools are advised to contact their link [KPAS Officer](#) first for advice as other measures may be suitable such as a penalty notice or statutory attendance intervention.

Ground 1(h) within [Regulation 9 of The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). The pupil has been granted a leave of absence and:

- ✓ The pupil has not attended school within the ten school days immediately after the end of the period that the leave was granted for.
- ✓ The school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause, and
- ✓ The school and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances, but:
 - They have not succeeded, or;
 - They have succeeded but they agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, taking into account any reasonable steps that could be taken (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance.

Ground 1(i) within [Regulation 9 of The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). The pupil has been continuously absent from school for a period of 20 school days or more and:

- ✓ At no point during that period did any of the circumstances in regulation [10\(3\) Table 2 or 10\(4\) Table 3](#) other than the ones for codes G, N, or O apply.
- ✓ The school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause, and
- ✓ The school and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances, but:
 - They have not succeeded, or;
 - They have succeeded but they agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, taking into account any reasonable steps they could take (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance.

Reasonable enquiries entail contact with parents, reaching out to any emergency contacts, liaising with other schools where there are siblings (where applicable) and contacting any agencies to whom the family may be known. For safeguarding reasons, schools should conduct a **home visit** where there is no forwarding address and if there is uncertainty surrounding the family relocating. Each case should be judged on its own

merits and professional curiosity should always be applied. Schools should submit a CME referral as soon as enquiries have been completed, and within 10 school days of the last time the child attended school. Schools do not have to wait until 10th day of absence if the necessary information is available or investigations are already complete (whether the whereabouts of the pupil is known or not).

Once a CME referral is submitted, it will be directed to the KPAS area team based on which district the referring school is located. KPAS will follow up any lines of enquiry to identify the whereabouts of the pupil and confirm to school via email when investigations are complete and advise for the pupil's name to be deleted* under [Regulation 9](#) of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, through the [Digital Front Door](#) and selecting Ground 1(g), 1(h) or 1(i) on the form. In scenario 1(i) above, if the pupil is not compulsory school age then 3(c) must be selected. The register must be recorded up to the day the pupil is deleted, which means the deletion cannot be backdated to when the pupil last attended school or when a CME referral was submitted. Schools must keep pupils on roll until local authority investigations are complete, but **not** required to hold a pupil on roll until they have gone on to the admissions register of a new school in the area they have moved.

*If a pupil is known to **Social Care and/or has an EHCP and/or in the care of the LA**, then for safeguarding purposes the school should contact the relevant professional **before** deleting the pupil's name from the admissions register.

KCC's central CME team will continue with a range of lines of enquiry after the child is deleted from the school's roll to identify the location of a pupil (if unknown) and if they have been registered at a new school.

A notification of a potential CME does **not** replace safeguarding procedures which a school would follow if a child went missing and there are reasons to believe the child is a risk of immediate harm, in which case standard procedures with the relevant statutory authorities must be pursued by school without delay.

When a pupil is deleted from roll and the **next school is unknown**, the original school should create a common transfer file (CTF) using XXX for the destination LA and XXXX for the destination school. More details can be found on page 15 of [School to school \(S2S\) guide for schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) guidance.

Schools are **not** required to notify KCC of pupils who leave school at standard transition points such as Year 2, 6 or 11.

If the school later receives details of a forwarding address for the pupil or a school the pupil is now registered, details should be sent to cme@kent.gov.uk as the referral only rests with the KPAS Attendance Officer for the initial stage of the process.

If a practitioner not based in a school (e.g. Early Help worker) becomes aware of a child who has moved in to Kent without a school place the **Notify of a Potential child missing education** form should be completed on the [Digital Front Door](#) or email cme@kent.gov.uk

The DfE delivered a [webinar](#) for schools in June 2023 about the CME process and examples of good practice including joint work between schools and their LA.

23. Elective Home Education: Elective home education (EHE) falls under the bracket of education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) and describes a choice by parents to provide education for their children either at home, or in some other way, instead of sending them to school full-time. DfE guidance about EHE can be found [here](#). Kent County Council guidance for parents about EHE can be found [here](#). A factsheet about EHE was produced and is available for professionals [here](#) on the Kent Safeguarding Children multi-agency partnership (KSCMP).

KPAS does not have any direct involvement with pupils who are electively home educated as there is a designated EHE team made up EHE Support & Advice Officers within the Fair Access department in KCC who visit families to check the arrangements and signpost to resources and further information. If KCC deems an EHE arrangement is unsuitable it may decide to reclassify the child as a CME (child missing education) which may lead to KCC initiating a **School Attendance Order** (SAO) for the child to return to mainstream education. Parents may be prosecuted under [section 437 of the Education Act 1996](#) if they fail to make suitable arrangements for their child's education.

Schools have a statutory duty to notify the LA when a parent provides notification of their intention to electively home educate their child and can do this by completing the **Notify of a deletion from admissions register** form on the [Digital Front Door](#) on the Kelsi website. Schools should choose **ground (1f)** from the list of grounds for deletion which are detailed in [Regulation 9 of The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). Schools do not need to complete a Child Missing Education (CME) referral first and should ensure the pupil is not under a School Attendance Order. If unsure, email attendance.enforcement@kent.gov.uk.

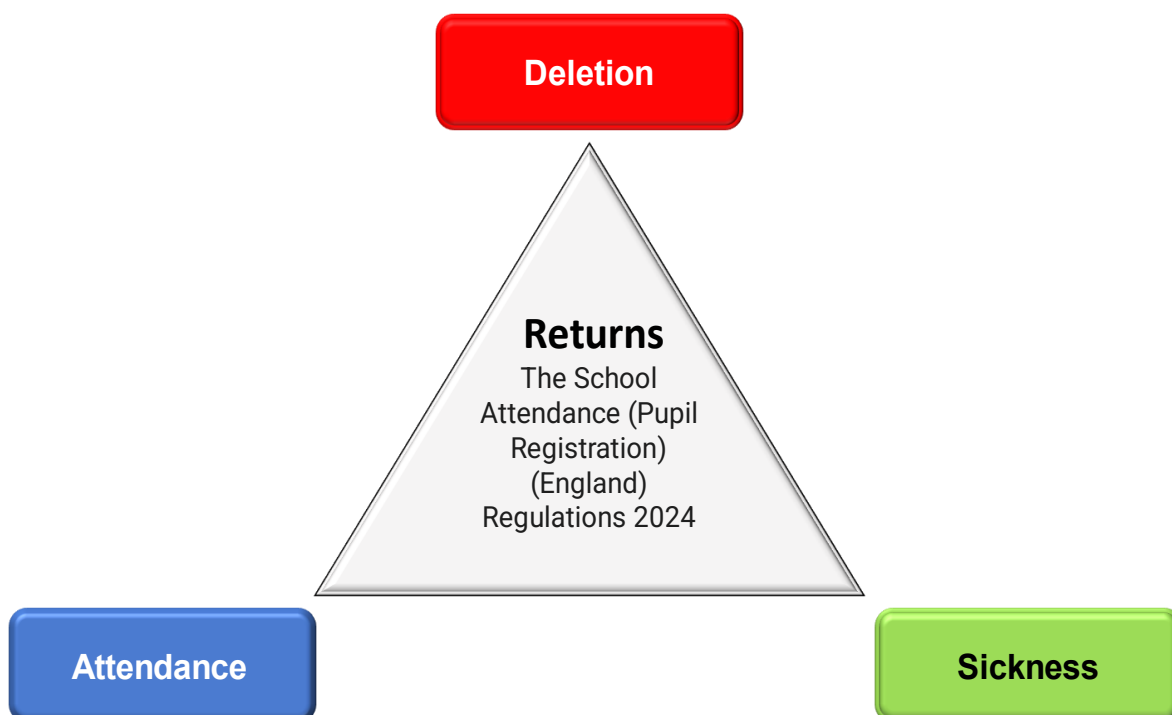
A pupil who is registered at a special school **cannot** be deleted from roll without agreement from the LA in accordance with paragraph 8.6 in this statutory [guidance](#). For any pupil who has an EHCP the school is advised to call an **early annual review** and invite parents and any relevant KCC practitioners to discuss the matter to ensure the arrangements for the pupil's continued education are suitable. In any other case the pupil's name **must** be deleted from the admissions register once notification is received from the parent and not held on roll due to any concerns the school may have, or due to a belief the parent may have made a rash decision and could change their mind. The only exception is if the notification from parent(s) does not state an intention to electively home educate (for example, the parent solely request for their child 'to be taken off roll.' Notification should ideally be in writing but verbal notification can be accepted.

For any queries from schools or parents, the Elective Home Education team can be contacted through educationatHome@kent.gov.uk or 03000 416969.

24. Statutory pupil returns: All schools are legally required to share information from their registers with Kent County Council, known as 'returns.' There are four types of returns including **new pupil** returns, **deletion** returns, **attendance** returns and **sickness**

returns. Information about returns can be found in **paragraph 49** of the [Working together guidance](#).

New pupil returns (i.e. notifying KCC when a pupil's name is added to the admissions register) are managed by the **KCC Admissions team** and KPAS has no direct role. All other types of returns must be made via the [Digital Front Door](#).



- **Deletion returns:** All schools have a statutory duty in accordance with [Regulation 9 of The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) to notify Kent County Council of any pupil's name being deleted from its admission register. This is irrespective of whether the pupil is compulsory school age or not. There are 15 grounds for deletion for compulsory aged pupil and 5 grounds for pupils not of compulsory school age. Appendix X in this handbook summarises the different grounds and more detailed context for each ground can be located in **Chapter 7** of the [Working together guidance](#) (paragraphs 222 to 281). Schools are able to notify KCC of any pupil being deleted from its admissions register via link number 4 on the [Digital Front Door](#) and the form will be automatically sent to the team(s) based on the ground for deletion selected as well as any other selections on the form (such as if the pupil has an EHCP). If a pupil is deleted for a reason not set out in Regulation 9, this would be classified as **off rolling** and deemed unlawful. If KCC becomes aware of a pupil deleted from roll for a reason not set out in legislation, or no notification has been received by KCC, then a KPAS Officer may contact the school to advise on process. This may result in a direction from the [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) to reinstate the pupil on to the school roll. Equally, schools must **not** hold pupils on roll if one of the grounds is met. The exception is for a **compulsory** aged pupil on the roll of a **special school** (for example where a parent wishes to electively home educate their child), in which case agreement **must** be sought from the relevant SEND team/department.

- **Attendance returns:** All schools have a statutory duty in accordance with [Regulation 13 of The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) to notify KCC of the full names and addresses of all **compulsory aged** pupils who are **continuously** absent for **at least 10 school days**, where 1 or a combination of the 4 unauthorised absent codes are recorded (**G, N, O and/or U**) – see section 7(b). In Kent we request schools to make returns through the [Digital Front Door](#) on a **termly** basis, and within **10 school days** of the new term (for example, returns should be made within 10 school days of term 2 for all pupils who meet the criteria during term 1). KCC will also collect additional details such as if the pupil is a **Child in Care**, has an **EHCP** or subject to a **CP plan** with Children's Social Care in order to triage if any action is required by KCC teams to address absences following contact with the school. However an attendance return does not automatically mean KCC will take any action. Schools **must** still complete an attendance return even if they notify KCC about a pupil's continuous absences for other reasons (for example, when intending to request a penalty notice). Equally, if for example a pupil meets Child Missing Education (CME) criteria, a CME referral must still be made even if the school has already made an attendance return. Details for more than one pupil can be recorded on the same form on the Digital Front Door (see [link number 3](#)).
- **Sickness returns:** All schools have a statutory duty in accordance with [Regulation 13 of The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) to notify KCC of the full names and addresses of all **compulsory aged** pupils where there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil:
 1. Will be unable to attend because of sickness for at least **15 consecutive school days**; or
 2. Will be, or will have been, unable to attend because of sickness for a total of at least **15 school days** during the school year, whether **consecutive or not**.

In any case, the pupil meets criteria for a sickness return if the absences are recorded using **code I** (illness, not medical or dental appointment) on the register. In Kent we request schools to make returns through the [Digital Front Door](#) using [link number 3](#) (Notify of an attendance or sickness return) and details for more than one pupil can be recorded on the same form. In cases in scenario 1 above, schools must complete a notification **without delay** there is reason to believe or confirmation (which may or may not include medical evidence) the pupil will be unable to attend in the next 15 or more days due to illness. Where scenario 2 applies, returns must be made within **10 school days** of the new term (for example, returns should be made **within 10 school days** of term 2 for all pupils who meet the criteria during term 1) but schools may wish to do this more frequently. Schools will **not** be expected to make a sickness return if it has already done so for that pupil in the same school year and relating to same continuous period of absence, nor in cases where there are concerns about the authenticity of the absences which result in them being recorded as **unauthorised**. KPAS will monitor sickness returns closely in order to identify if any pupils where KCC may have a statutory duty to make arrangements for their continued education in accordance with [section 19 of the Education Act 1996](#). KPAS Officers may contact the school to request additional information.

25. Data collection, analysis and sharing: The DfE *Working together to improve school attendance* guidance expects schools, governors/trustees, LAs and other partners to:

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. All schools should:

- ✓ Proactively and systematically analyse their data on a weekly, half-termly, termly, and yearly basis to **identify patterns of absence** for individual pupils at risk of persistent absence, and who are persistently absent or severely absent.
- ✓ Regularly identify **cohorts of pupils** more likely to be persistently or severely absent, such as those eligible for free school meals (FSM), have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) including medical conditions, have English as an additional language (EAL), Children in Care (CiC), Gypsy Roma & Traveller (GRT) and those pupils known to services such as children's social care. This could also include individual classes, year groups and other factors where patterns are emerging.
- ✓ Put **effective strategies** and targeted support in place for pupils and groups of pupils to help unblock barriers to their attendance following the analysis of the data.
- ✓ Ensuring staff have the relevant **training** on the running of key reports available on the electronic management information system the school uses.
- ✓ Ensure data is **communicated between all levels** at the school from operational level to senior leadership, including sharing at governing board meetings.
- ✓ Keep register codes **up to date and accurate** so reports enable effective analysis of data and subsequent interventions implemented are also targeted correctly.
- ✓ Include the school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most in its **attendance policy**.
- ✓ Benchmark attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against **local, regional, and national levels** to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- ✓ Work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to the pupil (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or the Police where there is extra-familial harm).
- ✓ Share attendance data for individual pupils from the registers with KPAS Officers at **Targeting support meetings** (TSMs). Schools may not be in a position or see it as appropriate to disclose the circumstances causing absence for some pupils which is highly sensitive and confidential where there is no role for KPAS.
- ✓ Register for the DfE data collection system [Share your daily attendance data](#) to enable KCC to access nearly live attendance and absent codes for each pupil.

Academy trustees / governing bodies play a crucial role at strategic level to:

- ✓ Regularly **review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends**, helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- ✓ Thoroughly examine **recent and historic trends** at a school level as well as **benchmarking** to comparator schools within the trust, local authority area, region and nationwide.
- ✓ Pay particular attention to attendance of pupil cohorts within their school(s) that have historically had poor attendance or face entrenched barriers to attendance.
- ✓ Work with school leaders to **set goals** or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those focus areas.

- ✓ Ensure **attendance training** is provided to staff with a specified attendance function in their role (e.g. administrative, pastoral / family support staff and senior leaders) which includes the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data.

KCC is expected to:

- ✓ Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a **strategic approach** to attendance that **prioritises** the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
- ✓ Use attendance data from all schools in the area to **identify the pupil cohorts, schools, and neighbourhoods/ towns** on which to focus efforts. This should include benchmarking against **neighbouring local authorities** (both geographic and statistical) and **regional and national averages** to identify patterns and trends of concern.
- ✓ Build effective **data sharing opportunities** with different partners as part of the overall data sharing/ governance arrangements in the local partnership to ensure a joined-up approach.



In KPAS our staff will:

- ✓ Receive regular **training** on information governance and GDPR.
- ✓ Ensure at Targeting support meetings (TSMs) that KPAS Officers **do not request or remove lists of names** of pupils, as KCC does not have the facility to store details on its systems, which are designed to hold data for individual pupils on each record. However, KPAS Officers may request cohort level data which does not identify individual pupil names.
- ✓ Expect schools to provide a **registration certificate** (attendance record with codes) from its system (for example SIMS, Bromcom, or Arbor) when requested for any pupil open as a statutory attendance referral or subject to a fixed penalty notice to determine next steps required by the relevant KPAS Officer or team.
- ✓ **Anonymise school names** when presenting data from KCC reports related to attendance and exclusions in forums such as LIFT Executive, unless all school leaders who own that data provide consent to share with members of those forums.
- ✓ Ensure permission from the document owner of any KCC reports is obtained before sharing information following any requests from schools.
- ✓ Encourage schools to have **sharing agreements** with each other where they wish to compare any data trends or patterns (for example with schools in the same geographical areas or having similar characteristics) rather than making requests to KCC. This may include cases where a school wishes to check the attendance of a sibling at another school.
- ✓ Seek advice from their line manager in cases schools **do not wish to share** pupil data at targeting support meetings where there is robust evidence of a role for KPAS to play in supporting the school in promoting a pupil's attendance.
- ✓ Share intelligence between KCC departments where appropriate to ensure a collaborative approach in promoting the attendance of pupils.
- ✓ Develop systems using local and DfE attendance data to ensure resources from KPAS are targeted where it is most needed in order to support schools where there may be emerging or ongoing challenges.

26. Appendices: The table below provides a summary of information from internal and external sources related to school attendance and relevant themes detailed throughout the handbook. Links to websites and web pages are included. The Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS) is not responsible for the content or accuracy of external websites. Documents and links may be subject to change in line with any updates to guidance, policies and legislation.

No	Title / description	Link
1	Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance: <i>Working together to improve school attendance</i> and <i>Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance</i> , August 2024	Web page
2	The Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS) Intervention Levels	See page 42 of this handbook
3	Information about KPAS, including KPAS Officer contacts, Digital Front Door and Penalty Notice Code of Conduct	Web page
4	Pupil attendance in schools data, including headline facts and figures generated on a weekly basis and derived from regular data automatically submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) by participating schools.	Web page
5	National data on a range of parental responsibility measures (including penalty notices, attendance case management, parenting orders, parenting contracts and education supervision orders).	Web page
6	Attendance guidance checklist for schools (created by KPAS).	Web page
7	Attendance policy checklist for schools (created by KPAS).	Web page
8	New attendance and absence codes (from 19 th August 2024)	See page 43 of this handbook
9	Grounds for deletion of pupil names from a school's admission register (compulsory and non-compulsory school age pupils)	See page 44 of this handbook
10	DfE webinars (pre-recorded and released in summer 2024) based on key themes from the Aug 2024 guidance and legislation: Working Together to Improve School Attendance: DfE guidance overview for schools	

	<u>The Senior Attendance Champion role: school senior lead for attendance</u> <u>School attendance register: attendance and absence codes</u> <u>Data Returns: sharing attendance information with local authorities and others</u> <u>Effective Targeting Support Meetings between school and LA</u> <u>National framework for penalty notices for school absence overview</u> <u>School admission register: deletion from the school roll</u>	
11	An update on attendance with Ofsted and the DfE	<u>Webinar</u>
12	Analysing absence and attendance data	<u>DfE Webinar</u>
13	Improving attendance: Good practice shared by schools and multi-academy trusts	<u>DfE Webinars</u>
14	Example Job Description for Senior Attendance Champion (SAC) in schools	<u>Web page</u>
15	Targeting support meetings: PIAS terms of reference and guidance	<u>Web page</u>
16	Improving attendance – Principles for success (written by The Education People)	<u>Web page</u>
17	<i>Moments Matter, Attendance Counts</i> government campaign	<u>Web page</u>
18	Child Law Advice: Includes useful information in the education section about a range of topics including attendance, exclusions, admissions, and home education.	<u>Web page</u>
19	Children Missing Education: Webinar for schools (June 2023)	<u>DfE Webinar</u>
20	Virtual School Kent (VSK): Website including information about the VSK Advisory Team (VSKAT).	<u>Web page</u>
21	The LADO Education Safeguarding Advisory Service (LESAS)	<u>Web page</u>

22	Attendance contracts (previously known as Parenting contracts): <i>Template, checklist and frequently asked questions guide for schools.</i>	<u>Web page</u>
23	Kent Support Levels guidance	<u>Kent Safeguarding Children multi-agency partnership (KSCMP)</u>
24	Information Advice & Support Kent (IASK) 	<u>IASK Web page</u>
25	Autism Education Trust 	<u>Autism Education Trust Web page</u>
26	Kent Facts and Figures related to different sectors of education (published annually by the KCC Management Information team).	<u>Web page</u>
27	Guide for parents on school attendance	<u>Web page</u>
28	KCC term dates	<u>Web page</u>

KENT PRU AND ATTENDANCE SERVICE (KPAS): INTERVENTION LEVELS

1. ANALYSE, IDENTIFY (ALL PUPILS)	2. FACILITATE SUPPORT (IDENTIFIED PUPILS)	3. FORMALISE SUPPORT (IDENTIFIED PUPILS)	4. LEGAL INTERVENTION (IDENTIFIED PUPILS)
<p><i>Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of absence at cohort and individual level.</i></p> <p><u>SCHOOL ROLE</u></p> <p>Address individual cases of pupils who are at risk of persistent absence, those who are persistently absent and those who are severely absent, rapidly using day to day processes including phone calls and letters. Request evidence for absences where appropriate.</p> <p>Use a <i>support first</i> approach focused on intensifying support rather than acceleration to punitive approaches as set out in the DfE Working together to improve school attendance guidance, August 2024.</p> <p><u>LA ROLE</u></p> <p>Facilitate Targeting Support Meetings (TSM's) with a priority to ensure there is a joint school and LA plan to help improve attendance of severely absent pupils.</p>	<p><i>View absence as a key indicator to identify challenges in or outside school. Apply a contextual approach to school attendance.</i></p> <p><u>SCHOOL ROLE</u></p> <p>Meet with family to listen and understand barriers to pupil's attendance. Consider home visit if family unable or unwilling to go on school site, or other forms of communication prove unsuccessful.</p> <p>Consider referral to Front Door where there is evidence and likelihood intensive support levels 3 or 4 may be met for Early Help or Social Care family assessments.</p> <p><u>LA ROLE</u></p> <p>Consider informal conversation with link KPAS Officer for advice on KCC or DfE guidance, although no direct involvement from KPAS at this stage.</p>	<p><i>Where unauthorised absence persists, and voluntary support not working or not being engaged with by parent(s).</i></p> <p><u>SCHOOL ROLE</u></p> <p>Facilitate an attendance contract, regularly reviewed with clear actions and support from any partner agencies.</p> <p>Invite KPAS Officer to formal attendance meeting in school with parent(s) and pupil (if appropriate) and led by Senior Attendance Champion, with school as lead professional unless other agency leading.</p> <p>Consider requesting a penalty notice (PN) in line with KCC's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct if deemed likely to have impact.</p> <p><u>LA ROLE</u></p> <p>KPAS Officer to join formal attendance meeting if case suitable to provide advice and outline potential legal interventions measures which may be initiated.</p> <p>KPAS Courts Team to issue penalty notice to parent(s) if raised by school and criteria met in Code of Conduct.</p>	<p><i>Where all resources exhausted, and support not engaged with. Last resort process to try to improve attendance.</i></p> <p><u>SCHOOL ROLE</u></p> <p>Consider making a request for statutory attendance intervention for persistent or severe absence which may lead to attendance prosecution in the Magistrates Court, or an education supervision order (ESO) being issued by the Family Court.</p> <p><u>LA ROLE</u></p> <p>KPAS Officer to lead statutory attendance investigation which will include Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) to jointly devise plan to try to improve the pupil's attendance as well as offer of PACE interview.</p> <p>If no improvement, KPAS Courts Team to apply to Family Court for the issuing of an education supervision order (ESO) or present case in Magistrates Court for prosecution under section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.</p>

New attendance and absent codes introduced from 19th August 2024

Code	Description	Comments
C1	Leave of absence for purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Please contact childemploymentandentertainment@kent.gov.uk if you would like further advice or to query the licence arrangements.
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable	For pupils not compulsory school age, Code X should be recorded
J1	Leave of absence for purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Schools should ask for evidence, e.g. interview invitation letter. Should be outside school hours preferably
Q	Unable to attend school because of a lack of access arrangements	Applies only to cases of pupils who have become eligible for LA transport but not yet in place
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	Can be used for staggered start at start of new school year for pupils/cohorts not expected in
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	This may for example be used when a pupil is permanently excluded and KCC has put a tutor in place whilst a longer-term provision is found
Y1 – Y6	See Working together guidance , paragraphs 373 to 389	All Y codes are classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance

Deletion from Admission Register

(Chapter 7 of DfE Working together attendance guidance 2024)

Compulsory school aged pupils			
Ground	Description	Ground	Description
1a	Registered at another school	1i	Continuously absent for at least 20 school days
1b	Admitted to school for nursery education	1j	Detained under a sentence of detention
1c	Registered at one or more other schools	1k	Pupil has died
1d	School attendance order amended by LA	1l	Over compulsory school age by next time school meets
1e	School attendance order revoked by LA	1m	Boarder at the school
1f	Education otherwise than at school	1n	Ceased to be a pupil at the school
1g	No longer lives reasonable distance from school	1o	Permanently excluded
1h	Leave of absence and not returned within 10 school days		

Non-compulsory school aged pupils	
Ground	Description
3a	Not a boarder and school has no reasonable grounds to believe they will attend again
3b	Boarder at the school and ceased to be a pupil at the school
3c	Continuously absent for at least 20 school days
3d	Pupil has died
3e	Permanently excluded