PRU, Inclusion & Attendance Service (PIAS)
Attendance Policy Checklist

The 2024 Department for Education 'working together to improve school attendance' guidance specifies that all schools should have a clear attendance policy which all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand.

KCC does not hold a countywide model or standardised attendance policy. An alternative, this checklist has been designed to allow school leaders to write, review and customise their school's attendance policy to align with the DfE guidance. Please refer to paragraphs 26 to 30 of the guidance or the DfE Webinar guide to attendance policies for schools Working Together to Improve School Attendance: DfE guidance overview for schools (youtube.com) for more information.

Section	Content	Covered
Aims and objectives	• Overall purpose of the policy • Policy aims	Yes/No
Roles and responsibilities (see Appendix 1)	• Kent County Council • Governing Board • Headteacher/Principal • Designated Senior Leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school • Attendance Officer or staff member with day to day responsibilities for attendance processes • Class teachers or form tutors • School admin or office staff • Parents and carers • Pupils	Yes/No
Attendance and punctuality expectations of pupils and parents	• Start and close of the day • Register closing times • Arrangements for students arriving late to school • Leave of absence requests • Informing the school of the reason for an unexpected absence	Yes/No
The name and contact details of the Headteacher and senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school	• Name • Email address • Telephone number	Yes/No
Contact details of who parents and pupils should contact regarding attendance support and issues	• Day to day - such as Attendance Officer, Form Tutor or Class Teacher • Detailed support - such as Head of Year or member of Pastoral team	Yes/No
The school's day to day	• First day calling	Yes/No

processes for managing attendance and absence	• Notification procedures for unplanned and planned absence • Processes to follow up on unexplained absence and how the school responds e.g. parent/carer to notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent such as sickness and contact the school on a daily basis for any subsequent days absence • How the school responds to ongoing punctuality issues • The school's approach to term-time leave of absence • How the school records attendance • Different types of absence, e.g. authorised or unauthorised • An explanation of absence and attendance codes from the DfE (see Chapter 8 of the [Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)](#)) and Appendix 2 below	
How the school promotes and incentivises good attendance	• Awards and rewards • Special assemblies	Yes/No

The school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most	• Termly (6 times per year) patterns of absence including:
	  ○ Whole school and individual pupil basis
	  ○ Groups e.g. FSM, SEN, PP, CiC, GRT, EAL
	  ○ Comparisons with national data [Share your daily school attendance data - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](#)
	• Share relevant attendance reports with key staff to aid discussions with families
	• Use data to understand the impact of interventions
		Yes/No

The school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence	• Definitions of persistent and severe absent:
	  ○ Persistent is where a pupil misses **10% or more** of school sessions
	  ○ Severe is where a pupil misses **50% or more** of school sessions
	• How access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance
	• When the school will formalise support in conjunction with the local authority
		Yes/No

Details of the national framework for penalty notices, and when you will seek fixed-penalty notices, notices to improve or other legal interventions for absence, and other sanctions (see [KCC Code of Conduct](#))	• This might be when support:
	  ○ Is not appropriate for the situation, such as an unauthorised holiday in term time
	  ○ Is not successful
	  ○ Is not engaged with
	• See Chapter 6 of the [Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)](#) for details about the new penalty notice framework.
		Yes/No

Any specific needs of certain pupils and pupil cohorts	• While leaders should apply the school's policy fairly and consistently, the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance should be considered, along with the schools' obligations under the:
	  ○ [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](#)
	  ○ [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
		Yes/No

Appendix 1 - Roles and Responsibilities

Kent County Council	**All pupils** - Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services. - Have a School Attendance Support Team (PIAS) that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance. - Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice. - Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice. **Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent** - Hold a regular conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so. - Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance. - If the issue persists, and there are multiple needs consider whether the threshold for early help is met and facilitate access where it is. Regardless, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner in cases where threshold is met and all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners. **Persistently absent pupils (10% or more sessions missed)** - Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: - Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including attendance contracts and education supervision orders. - Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. - Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort). **Severely absent pupils (50% or more sessions missed)** - Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and: - All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision. - Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans. **Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers** - Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools. **Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance** - Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health

	services, to ensure joined up support for families.
	○ 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.
	• **Support for pupils with a social worker (VSK - Virtual School Kent)**
	○ Ensure that all Children's Social Care practitioners, understand the importance of good attendance for pupil's educational progress, for their welfare and their wider development – and understand their role in improving it.
	○ Through the work of Virtual School Heads, they should:
	▪ Undertake systemic monitoring and data sharing of the attendance of children with a social worker in their area: developing and implementing targeted cohort level interventions to improve attendance.
	▪ Provide advice, challenge and training to schools on how to promote and secure good attendance for children with a social worker.
	▪ Develop whole system approaches, with social care, to support the attendance of children in need.
	• **Looked after and previously looked after children**
	○ Promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children – doing everything possible to minimise disruption to education when a pupil enters care.
	○ Appoint an expert Virtual School Head (VSH) who will:
	▪ Monitor, report on, and evaluate the education outcomes of looked after children, including their attendance, as if they attended a single schoolwhenever they live or are educated.
	▪ Ensure schools know when they have a pupil looked after by the authority on their role and that information is shared with the school on issues that may impact on their attendance.
	▪ Ensure that all looked-after pupils have high quality, up to date, effective Personal Education Plans developed in partnership with schools, social workers and carers – including, where necessary, clear interventions and use of pupil premium plus funding to support good attendance.
	▪ Provide expert advice and information on the education of previously looked-after pupils to schools and parents – including their attendance.
	• **Monitoring**
	○ DfE Regions Group monitors local authority efforts as part of regular interaction.
	○ Ofsted may consider the local area partnership's approach to improving attendance of children and young people with SEND as part of the SEND Area Inspection, and the local authority's approach to improving attendance for children with a social worker through inspecting local authority children's services.

Academy trustees or governing bodies	• **All pupils**
	    ○ Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.
	    ○ Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.

		o Use data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with other local schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed.
		o Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.
		• *Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent, persistently absent pupils, severely absent pupils, support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers, support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance and support for pupils with a social worker*
		   o Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.
		• *Looked after and previously looked after children (LAC and PLAC)*
		   o Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.
		   o Monitor and review attendance of the cohort and consider how school policies, including behaviour policies, are sensitive to their needs and support good attendance.
		• *Monitoring*
		   o DfE Regions Group considers multi academy trusts' efforts on attendance as part of decision making.
		   o Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections.

Schools		• *All pupils*
		   o Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand (this could be linked to your Home School Agreement).
		   o Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
		   o Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
		   o Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.
		   o Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.
		   o Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
		• *Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent*
		   o Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
		   o Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
		   o Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance and act as lead practitioner if attendance is the only issue and/or the local threshold for formal early help is not met.
		   o If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. If a case meets the local threshold for formal early help/family support, this includes conducting the early help assessment and acting as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.
		• *Persistently absent pupils (10% or more sessions missed)*
		   o Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

and:
- o Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.
- o Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- o Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.
- o Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.
- o Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

- **Severely absent pupils (50% or more sessions missed)**
  - o Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:
  - o Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.

- **Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers**
  - o Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.
  - o Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.

- **Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance**
  - o Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.
  - o Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.
  - o Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.
  - o Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.

- **Support for pupils with a social worker**
  - o Know who the pupils who have, or who have had, a social worker are.
  - o Understand how the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced, can have an impact on attendance – whilst maintaining a culture of high aspiration for the cohort.
  - o Provide additional academic support and make reasonable adjustments to help them, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there can be a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.
  - o Work in partnership with the local authority at a strategic and individual level, sharing data on attendance including, at an individual level, informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.

- **Looked after and previously looked after children**
  - o Have high expectations for the cohort – with expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked-after and

		previously looked-after pupils. ○ Work in partnership with the local authority Virtual School Head to develop and deliver high quality Personal Education Plans for lookedafter children that support good attendance. ○ Work directly with parents to develop good home-school links that support good attendance. For previously looked-after pupils this could include discussion on use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding managed by the school. • **Monitoring** ○ The school's Senior Attendance Champion will ensure all school based staff complete their attendance responsibilities in line with the school's policies and procedures. ○ The governing board or academy trust will hold the headteacher or executive leadership to account for their delegated responsibilities and for compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements. They will review progress and provide challenge when required. The board will help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most and ensure that school staff receive adequate training on attendance. ○ Ofsted will expect schools to do all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance as part of the behaviour and attitudes judgement. This includes, where attendance is not consistently at or above what could reasonably be expected, that schools have a strong understanding of the causes of absence (particularly for persistent and severe absence) and a clear strategy in place that takes account of those causes to improve attendance for all pupils.
Parents and carers		• **All pupils** ○ Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies. ○ Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness). ○ Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. ○ Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible. ○ Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. ○ Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support. • **Persistently absent pupils and severely absent pupils** ○ Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. ○ Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention. • **Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance and support for pupils with a social worker** ○ Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. ○ Proactively engage with the support offered. • **Looked after and previously looked after children**

		o Work with the school and local authority to help them understand the child's barriers to attendance – including the development of Personal Education Plans. o Proactively engage with the support offered.

Appendix 2 – Attendance and Absence Codes

For more detail about absence and attendance codes from the DfE (see Chapter 8 of the Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk))

Attendance Codes

Code	Definition
/	Present (am)
\	Present (pm)
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered at another school

Absence Codes (authorised and unauthorised)

Code	Definition
Authorised absence	
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Unauthorised absence	
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Arrived in school after registration closed

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

Code	Definition
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Administrative codes

Code	Definition
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure