

**Kent County Council
Inclusion and Attendance Service
Integrated Children's Services**

**Castle Hill School
Attendance Policy**

Revised January 2020

Castle Hill CP School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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

In accordance with Department for Education (DfE) advice to schools, Castle Hill CP School will:

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

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

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

Principles

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

Aims

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

Promoting Attendance

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

Castle Hill CP School will:

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

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time, 8.45am. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of any child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and sometimes puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

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

We expect parents to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality, with their child aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Keep absences to a minimum
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time, 8.45am each day
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address
- Telephone Castle Hill CP School when their child is unable to attend on the first day of the absence and each day thereafter with the reason for this. Parents should also let the Castle Hill CP School know if their child is going to be late eg if a car breaks down or an urgent appointment has been made
- Provide a written explanation for the absence when their child returns to school
- Parents should provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician, if asked to do so. Whenever possible all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours unless an emergency has arisen
- Contact the school at the earliest opportunity if their child is experiencing any difficulties and the school will do everything possible to resolve the issues

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

We expect pupils to:

- Attend every day unless they are too ill, or the absence has been authorised by the school
- Arrive at school on time, 8.45am
- Go to registration and all lessons on time

The Role of School Staff

At Castle Hill CP School there is a whole school approach to ensuring excellent school attendance with some staff having specific responsibilities.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for school attendance.

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

It is the responsibility of Mrs L Powis, Attendance Officer, to ensure:

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

Lateness

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.45am. All pupils who arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late in the register (registration code L).

The register will close at 9.15am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration and this will count as an unauthorised absence (registration code U).

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

Absence

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

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

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

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. 'poorly' or 'unwell'
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (see Appendix 1)

The Headteacher may authorise other absences in 'exceptional circumstances' but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. The principles for defining 'exceptional' are: rare, significant, unavoidable and short. An absence might be considered unavoidable if the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. Once a child has been absent without permission, the absence cannot be authorised retrospectively.

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

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

Children Missing Education

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

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

Penalty Notices

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

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

- Parentally condoned absence
- Unauthorised leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term-time
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion

A Penalty Notice may be issued when a pupil has been absent for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation. (see Appendix 1)

Castle Hill CP School asks that parents fully support this policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education.

This policy will be reviewed as necessary

School Attendance - Change to Penalty Notice Fines

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19th August 2024.

Per Parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

National Threshold

There will be a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England; 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

Therefore a 5 day holiday would meet the national threshold.

The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence, including; late after the registers have closed and unauthorised absence (no reason and/or no evidence given for an absence).

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days
- Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days

Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

- The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case will be presented at a Magistrate's Court. Prosecution can result in a criminal record and fines of up to £2,500
 - Cases found guilty in a Magistrate's Court can show on a parent's future DBS certificate stating 'failure to safeguard a child's education'
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Regular attendance is essential for your child's academic progress and overall development. If your child's attendance becomes a concern, the school will consider appropriate support to help improve it. We encourage all parents to collaborate with school to address attendance issues. However, if all support efforts are exhausted and there is no engagement from parents/carers, a penalty notice may be issued.

Thank you for your cooperation.