

The Discovery School



Attendance Policy

Rationale

The Discovery 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.

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

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at our school.

Parental Responsibility

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

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

Pupils are expected to arrive by «Time»am. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

The Role of the School Staff

At our school there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

Mrs Gaynor Priddis has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues on behalf of the Headteacher.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed termly of the child's attendance figure

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Local Authority Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate.

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Lateness

At The Discovery School the school gates are open between 8.40 and 8.50 a.m. Registration is at 8.55 am and closed at 9.00 a.m. Pupils arriving after 8.50 a.m. must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.00 am and 1.15 pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U'). This will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents and could provide for a referral to the Local Authority where action could be taken.

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

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

Unauthorised Absence

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

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

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

Local Authority Action may include:-

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

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

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

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Exceptional circumstances for authorising leave could include:

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

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

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

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

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

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

The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

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

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

Policy Agreed: 21st September 2020
Next review date: July 2021

Attendance Policy

CoVID-19 Addendum (September 2020)

From the start of the autumn term 2020, pupil attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance (as set out in this policy document) will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Exceptions:

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19):

Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)

Pupils who have symptoms should self-isolate and get a test. Confirmation of the test can be provided to the school to allow the school to record this (Code Y) on to the pupil's attendance record and the pupil's overall attendance will not be negatively impacted.

If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school. Parents are not required to show proof of a negative test results and pupils should return to school without delay. If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. Confirmation of a positive test result can be provided to the school to ensure that the school take all appropriate steps in response to that result and additionally to allow the pupil's absence from school to be authorised (Code I).

If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test. Confirmation of the test can be provided to the school. If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school. If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms. The school should be notified of the positive test result to allow the school to consider if they need to take any further action.

Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)

Pupils may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19). The NHS test and trace guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 14 days if they have had recent close contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Again this confirmation can be provided to the school to allow this to be recorded on to the pupil's attendance record and the pupil's overall attendance will not be negatively impacted

In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in the school community, the local health protection team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with the person that has tested positive when they were infectious.

Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only:

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

If in future, rates of the disease rise in local areas, children still on the shielding list (or family members still on the shielding list) from that area, and that area only, may be contacted by the government and advised to stay at home and shield during the period where rates remain high. Families will receive a letter if they are required to shield again that parents will be able to share with the school.

Where a member of the pupil's household is clinically vulnerable, the above is also applicable. As shielding has been paused since 01 August 2020, the pupil should return to school as expected. The school will have additional measures in place as per Government's guidance to schools.

Lateness:

Schools are currently required to operate staggered arrival times at schools to facilitate social distancing at busy times. Therefore, whilst government protective measures for schools are in place, the following shall apply to lateness:

At The Discovery School the school gates are open between 8:15 and 9:00 a.m. Registration officially closes at 9.05 a.m. Each year group will be provided with a 15-minute arrival time slot. Pupils are expected to be in class and ready to learn by the end of the 15-minute slot. A fire register will be taken in each class at the end of the 15-minute slot.

Any pupils arriving after 9:00 a.m. must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L'). Pupils arriving after the register has closed at 9:05 a.m. will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U'). This will count as an unauthorised absence. Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents and could provide for a referral to the Local Authority where action could be taken.

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

