

Marden Primary
ATTENDANCE POLICY

Statement of Intent

- Marden Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all of 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. Marden Primary School actively promotes 100% attendance for all of our pupils and we reward good attendance and punctuality.
- We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role, and a legal responsibility to ensure good attendance and we promise to identify, investigate and work in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and other agencies to resolve attendance problems.

Parental Responsibility

The responsibility for ensuring children attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents. To this end, it is desirable that parents should be the first line of contact whenever the child is absent from school.

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

The Role of the School Staff

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

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class Teachers or their Teaching Assistants complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance register twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006) Teachers or their assistants mark pupils present, absent or late. The Class Teacher notifies the Headteacher or Family Liaison Officer of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the School Secretary (Attendance Officer) to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents/carers are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call.
- Where there has been no communication, an Explanation of Absence Form is sent to parents/carers for completion.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes)
- Parents informed of child's attendance figures at the end of Term 2, Term 4 and Term 6

Frequent absence is a cause for concern. The school nursing team are very helpful and can normally clarify whether ongoing absence is justified. **It is the school who authorises absence, not the parent/carer.**

At Marden Primary School pupils are expected to arrive between 8:30 and 8:45 when the pupil entrance gate closes. All pupils arriving after this time should report to the school office where they should sign the late book.

Any pupils arriving after 9:15am will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Persistent lateness may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

Timeline of School Action for Poor Attendance

- 95% - 100% attendance - class teacher to investigate and notify the Headteacher of concerns. The Headteacher will contact parent if appropriate.
- 90% - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents or carers - consider Penalty Notice or Early Help referral.
- Below 90% attendance - Where absences have not been authorised consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer and a referral to PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service may be considered.

Authorised/Non Authorised Absence

- The legal responsibility for ensuring pupils attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents/carers.
- It is essential that parents/carers should be the first line of contact whenever the student is absent from school.
- It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to contact the school whenever a student is absent and on the first day of absence.
- It is the school who authorises the absence, not the parent/carer.
- Absence is either authorised, such as in the case of illness (see HPA Guidance on Infection Control) or of religious observance, or unauthorised, when there is no reason given for such absence or when it is considered that the explanation is vague or inappropriate.

Lateness

- Pupils are expected to be in school by 8.45am any pupil arriving after this time will need to be signed into the late book, held at the school office, by their parent/carer.
- The Register will officially close at 9.15am if a child arrives after this time they will be marked as arriving after the register has closed this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Pupils arriving after the pupil entrance gate has closed should report to the school office.
- Parents/Carers need to record the name of their child and reason for being late in the late book which is kept at the school office.
- Monitoring of this book will take place regularly and lateness reports will be sent by the school where appropriate.
- A letter will be sent for further lateness warning that the school is concerned and will be referring the matter to the School Liaison Officer (SLO) If lateness is a persistent problem a meeting will be arranged at school with the parent, Headteacher and/or School Liaison Officer

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the PRU, 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 have failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (CTF) has been requested by another school.

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 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.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any 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.

Attendance Process

1. Parents telephone the school on the first day of absence with appropriate and precise reasons for a pupil absence.
2. The designated person (school secretary) enters details into the register or computer in cases where the schools are computerised.
3. The designated person enters an absence mark in the register for the duration of the absence.
4. On receipt of a note from the parent, the designated person enters the appropriate code in the register.
5. When appropriate, Teachers raise any concerns with the designated person.
6. The designated person takes appropriate action when absence is a concern and contacts the parents to discuss attendance issues.
7. Referral is made to the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service if issues cannot be resolved.