




# Attendance Policy

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<b>Approved by</b>	The Principal	<b>Signed</b>	
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## **DSTC Attendance Policy: Aims**

The DSTC Attendance Policy aims to establish clear expectations around student attendance and how the school and parents/carers are responsible for supporting that.

Regular school attendance is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. If a child is absent for 1 day of school per week they will miss an equivalent of two years of their school life. Research shows that 90% of young people with absence rates below 85% fail to achieve five or more good grades of GCSE and around one third achieve no GCSEs at all.

**We expect students to attend school every day that the school is open to them, unless due to illness or exceptional circumstances. They should be on the school site by 8.35am as lessons and registration starts at 8.40am.**

All staff at Dartford Science and Technology College (DSTC) recognise that regular school attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them, becoming resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. DSTC works collaboratively with families and the Local Authority to identify the reasons for unsatisfactory attendance, supporting the child to try and resolve any difficulties. Our expectation is that students should have at least 95% attendance to school across a year

## **Reporting a child absent**

If a child is absent on a school day, parents are expected to email or phone the school attendance officer using [Attendance@dstc.kent.sch.uk](mailto:Attendance@dstc.kent.sch.uk) or 01322 224 309 and select option 1. Absences should be reported every day, by 8.40am. Parents and carers must always clearly state the reason for their child's absence.

## **Statutory Obligations**

- Parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.
- Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the student was: present; absent; present at approved educational activity; or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

### **Categorising absence**

Absence can only be authorised by the Principal and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the student's absence has been received. Parents must advise the school by telephone or email on the **first day of absence** (first day calling) and provide the school with an expected date of return.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

- **Illness:** Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the Principal to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc. Parents and Carers must always report illness, even if it is common, such as a cough or cold.
- **Medical/Dental Appointments:** Parents should, where possible, make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, students must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show evidence of the appointment to the attendance officer.
- **Other Authorised Circumstances:** This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, e.g. serious family illness or bereavement.
- **Suspension** (No alternative provision made): Suspension from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The school will make arrangements for work to be sent home where a student is excluded for more than one day.
- **Compassionate Circumstances:** Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the Principal. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted or if it is not. If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrates court.
- **Religious Observance:** DSTC acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration (by written request) of authorised absence. Such absence will be authorised up to a maximum of two days annually.
- **Traveller Absence** It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible. To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 100 days) in a year. This is only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.
- **Late Arrival:** Students should start to move into the DSTC school building from 8.30am. Registration begins at 8.40am (the start of Period 1), and students arriving

after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 9.00am and students arriving after the close of register will be recorded as unauthorised. This will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate. On arrival after the close of register (9.00am), students must immediately report to Reception to ensure that they sign in for school. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided; for example, attendance at a medical appointment or closure of the Dartford Crossing. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the student has arrived late without justifiable cause.

- **Unauthorised absence:** Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation or medical evidence and that it has been accepted as such by the Principal.

### **Lateness to school**

Students should be on time to school each day throughout the school year. Any anticipated lateness to school should be reported to the Attendance Officer by 8.40am, by the parent/ carer, similarly to absence. If a student is late to school for any reason, they will be marked late (L) on the morning register and the number of minutes late will be recorded. As previously stated, the register will close at 9.00am and students arriving after the close of register will be recorded as unauthorised. This will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

Repeat lateness is regarded as a pattern of behaviour. The child will be supported by the Attendance Officer, Pastoral Lead, or a Senior Leader where appropriate, to discuss strategies for coming to school on time. In addition, repeat lateness could result in one or more of the following outcomes:

- If a student is late once in a week, their name will be recorded by the Attendance Officer.
- If a student is late twice in a week, they will receive a break time detention
- If a student is persistently late, they will receive a lunchtime RSL detention. Persistent lateness means being late 3 or more times in a week, or multiple instances of regular lateness over a half term.
- Where there is no improvement in severe lateness, parents and carers of the student will receive a letter and risk a local authority Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) due to significant instances of unauthorised absence.

### **Deletions from the school Roll**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, students can be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The student has ceased to be of compulsory school age.
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed.
- The student has transferred between schools.
- The student has been withdrawn to be educated outside the school system.

- The student is in custody for more than four months.
- The student has 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and the school has tried to locate the student without success.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

DSTC believes that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, Governors, parents/carers, students, Kent County Council and the wider school community.

### **General Responsibilities**

#### **The Governing Body will:**

- Ensure that there is a named member of the SLT to lead on attendance (Mr M Allen, Assistant Vice Principal).
- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to students and their parents, taking an active role in attendance improvement, supporting DSTC to prioritise attendance, and working together with leaders to set whole school cultures around attendance
- The Governing body will hold the Principal to account for their delegated responsibilities and for compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements. They will review progress and provide challenge where required. The Governors 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.
- Regularly review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.
- Support 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.
- Support Looked After and Previously Looked After Children (LAC and PLAC) by Designating a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.
- Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Monitor the students attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Learning Enrichment and Curriculum (LCE) Governors meetings.
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time.
- Ensure that the College has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

**DSTC School, SLT, Raising Standards Leaders (RSL), the DSL, with the support of the Attendance Office (AO) and Pastoral Leaders (PL) will:**

- Ensure that there is a named member of the SLT to lead on attendance (Mr M Allen, Assistant Vice Principal).
- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents, developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers. The Senior Leader for Attendance and Attendance Officer will ensure all school based staff complete their attendance responsibilities in line with the school's policies and procedures.
- Work to form positive relationships with students and parents to support high attendance.
- Reward excellent attendance to school (above 95%) with House Points, certificates or letters home where appropriate. Students may be mentioned in a DSTC Celebration Assembly with their Year Group.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed regularly.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site are implemented.
- Ensure that attendance data is collected, monitored and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence. This includes data to support cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and are able to address attendance issues, whilst using robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Return school attendance data to the Department for Education as required and on time.
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the QP (Quality of Provision) Governors subgroup.
- Support pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent, working with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, we will 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.
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support students and their families, including working with the Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS) Attendance Officer for Kent County Council (KCC) where appropriate and necessary.
- Continue to support persistently absent pupils (10% or more sessions missed) and put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, DSTC will

hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, DSTC will work with the local authority on legal intervention. Where there are safeguarding concerns, DSTC may intensify support through statutory children's social care. DSTC will also work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

- For severely absent pupils (50% or more sessions missed), DSTC will offer continued support as for persistently absent pupils and agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.
- For pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance, DSTC will maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance. We will allocate 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.
- DSTC will support pupils with a social worker, understanding the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced and how this can have an impact on attendance. We will continue to maintain a culture of high aspiration for this cohort. We can 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. DSTC will 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.
- DSTC will have high expectations for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, including attendance. We will offer expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked after pupils. This will be in partnership with the local authority Virtual School Head to develop and deliver high quality Personal Education Plans for looked after children that support good attendance. We will 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.
- The DSL will confirm with the Admissions Officer when it is appropriate to take a student off roll or Electively Home Educate. Taking safeguarding circumstances into account ensures that safeguarding informs decision making.
- The DSL will review all holiday applications from a safeguarding perspective.
- Ensure that all the aims above are shared with and reinforced by all relevant school staff.

**DSTC requests that parents and carers will:**

- Ensure that their child attends school everyday that it is open to them, unless they are unable due to illness or exceptional circumstances.
- Provide medical evidence to support medical absences when requested by the Attendance Officer
- Instill the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment, working with the school and local authority to support their child's good attendance to school.
- Contact DSTC if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the

expected date of return.

- Proactively engage with the formal support offered if their child is persistently absent or severely absent – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.
- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance around any/all medical conditions
- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance for pupils with a social worker.
- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand the child's barriers to attendance – including the development of Personal Education Plans, for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children in their care on roll at DSTC
- Strive to make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties that could impact on their attendance.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Attend any arranged meetings to discuss their child's attendance to school.
- Not take their child out of school during term-time for unsanctioned periods of leave, including but not limited to weddings or holidays.

**Kent County Council (KCC) will:**

- 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 (KPAS) 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.
- Support pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent by holding 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, taking an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners.
- Support pupils who are persistently absent pupils (10% or more sessions missed) by continuing support for persistent absence, working jointly with the school to provide formal support options. Where there are safeguarding concerns, KCC will work jointly 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).
- Support pupils who are Severely absent (50% or more sessions missed) with all services making 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. KCC will 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 pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance, working closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joint support for families. KCC will 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 school whenever 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 and provide expert advice and information on the education of previously looked-after pupils to schools and parents – including their attendance.

### **How we use data to support attendance improvements**

DSTC analyses attendance data at least termly (6 times a year) to identify students who need additional support with their attendance. DSTC considers:

- The whole school picture
- Individual students
- Groups of students, including FS, SEN, Pupil premium, CiC, EAL and students from a traveller background.

DSTC compares attendance figures with the local and national picture using tools available to us.

This data is shared with staff at in-school inclusion meetings, where strategies to support students and families are discussed. Pastoral Leads, Raising Standards Leaders, The Safeguarding officer, SEND specialists and the DSTC Attendance Officer may be present at these meetings.

DSTC uses an "Attendance Improvement Plan" to support and map whole-school strategies to further improve attendance for all students.

## **Support for students and parents**

DSTC recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make the school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

DSTC also recognises that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), those with physical or mental health needs, those claiming Free School Meals (FSM) or those who may have done so in the past 6 years (Pupil Premium - PP) and Children in Care (CiC).

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Form Tutor, Attendance Officer and Pastoral Lead conversations
- Meetings with parents and students to support attendance or lateness
- Referrals to support agencies e.g. Early Help or SALUS
- Pastoral Support Plans (PSP)
- Reward systems (certificates, letters and House Points)
- Support from the SEND team where appropriate.
- Formal meetings with the local authority where appropriate

Support offered to families will be child centered and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents or carers and students. Where parents or carers fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, DSTC will consider the use of legal sanctions.

## **Legal Basis**

***The following information regarding penalty notices is taken directly from the 'KCC Penalty Notice Code of Conduct Aug 2024'.***

Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the Education Act 1996. They can only be issued in relation to pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, pupil referral units, academy schools, AP academies, and certain off-site places as set out in section 444A(1)(b).

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (and subsequent amendments) set out how penalty notices for school absence must be used.

A penalty notice can only be requested by an authorised officer: that is, a headteacher or a deputy or assistant head authorised by them. Kent County Council is the issuing authority.

The national framework for penalty notices is published in statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'. It provides further national guidance on the operation of penalty notice schemes for school absence in England.

The education-related provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 apply to all parents who fall within the definition set out in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996. This defines 'parent' as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although they are not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is a parent in education law.

Under this code of conduct, a penalty notice can be issued to each parent believed to be liable for the offence or offences.

#### **Rationale:**

Research published by the Department for Education in May 2022 found pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

- Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.
- Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and often the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

Where difficulties arise with school attendance, professionals should take a 'support first' approach in line with the DfE's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, only resorting to legal enforcement when necessary. The aim is that the need for legal enforcement is reduced by taking a supportive approach to tackle the barriers to attendance and intervening early before absence becomes entrenched.

The national framework for penalty notices is based on the principles that penalty notices should only be used in cases where:

- support is not appropriate (e.g. a term time holiday) or where support has been provided and not engaged with or not worked, and
- they are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance for that particular child.

**A penalty notice for absence may be appropriate when:**

1) The national threshold has been met - when a school becomes aware that the national threshold has been met, they must consider whether a penalty notice can and should be issued or not. The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- Code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday or unauthorised leave of absence.
- Code O (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies)
- Code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

2) If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. Kent County Council will consider applying for summons for prosecution in the Magistrates' Court for such cases.

3) For the purpose of the escalation process, previous penalty notices include those not paid (including where prosecution was taken forward if the parent pleaded or was found guilty) but not those which were withdrawn.

4) A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a suspension or permanent exclusion. The school must have notified the parents of the days the pupil must not be present in a public place. This type of penalty notice is 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 offenses for non-attendance.

**Key considerations prior to the issue of a Penalty Notice for school absence**

DSTC will make the following considerations before issuing (or requesting that another authorised officer issues) a penalty notice to ensure consistency of approach:

- Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would one of the other legal

interventions be more appropriate?

- Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010?
- Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given Kent County Council would be accepting responsibility for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment?
- In cases where support is appropriate, consider on a case-by-case basis: Has sufficient support already been provided? Sufficient support will usually include: Correspondence and telephone calls with parents, inviting parents to a meeting to discuss attendance and supportive intervention to improve attendance? This may include support from KCC services, health services, and partners in the voluntary and community sectors (VCS)

If the answer to the above questions is 'yes', then a penalty notice (or a notice to improve in cases where support is appropriate) will usually be issued. In cases where support is not appropriate (for example, for holidays in term time), DSTC will consider on a case by case basis:

### **Notice to improve**

A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

**Kent schools will issue a notice to improve for parentally-condoned absence and unauthorised absence.**

**It will not be necessary to issue a notice to improve for term time holidays or leave of absence.**

The Notice to Improve must include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences (a copy of the registration certificate should be included).
- The date range in which 10 or more unauthorised absences occurred.
- The benefits of regular attendance and parents' duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- Details of the support provided so far.
- Opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with.
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period.
- A clear timeframe for the 20 school day improvement period detailing to and from dates.
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like.

At the end of an unsatisfactory monitoring period, schools may request a penalty notice to

be issued if this is considered this is the best course of action to improve attendance. The referral should include evidence of support offered by the school prior to issuing the notice to improve. The notice to improve must comply with Department for Education requirements.

Kent County Council (as the issuing authority) will issue a penalty notice if all aspects of the Code of Conduct have been met and as the independent prosecutor, will check reasoning on whether a penalty notice should be issued or not, including whether sufficient support has been provided before issuing a penalty notice.

Kent County Council has stringent systems in place to record penalty notices issued in relation to each child to ensure that no more than 2 in 3 years are issued.

### **Payment of Penalty Notice fines**

Arrangements for payment will be detailed within the Penalty Notice.

The first penalty notice issued to the parent for a child will be charged at £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid between days 22 and 28.

Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first offence, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable within 28 days. There is no reduced sum available in this instance.

Part payments or payment plans are not acceptable and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice. Payment after the deadline may be accepted in exceptional circumstances. In this situation, the higher amount of £160 is usually payable and must be paid immediately and in full.

When paying a penalty notice fine, parents are essentially agreeing to an out of court settlement in respect of the unauthorised absences to which the notice refers. Payment in full against the penalty notice discharges the parent's legal responsibility for the period of unauthorised absence outlined in the Notice and the parent cannot be subsequently prosecuted for that period.

Any revenues collected through the system must be ring-fenced to administer the penalty notice system and prosecute for the original offence in cases of non-payment. If a surplus remains after the system has been administered and any non-payers have been prosecuted, this can be spent on the local authority's attendance support offer.

When a third or subsequent period of unauthorised absence occurs during a 3 rolling year period and the school wish legal action to be considered, a penalty notice request should be made as usual including supporting documentation. Information regarding previous penalty notices should be provided if known.

Kent County Council will not issue a penalty notice but will contact the Headteacher to request additional evidence. The matter will be considered for prosecution via the Single Justice Procedure. This process is only to be used for absence due to term-time holidays or unauthorised leave of absence. For instances where 2 penalty notices have been issued within a 3 year period for parentally condoned absence or persistent lateness after the

register has closed, the school must consult with Kent PRU and Attendance Service.

Kent County Council will inform the school when penalty notices are withdrawn. If prosecution is being considered following non-payment, Kent County Council will contact the school for pre-prosecution checks.

**If the school is not contacted following a penalty notice request, an assumption can be made that the penalty notice has been issued and paid. If schools wish to enquire about penalty notices, they should email [attendance.enforcement@kent.gov.uk](mailto:attendance.enforcement@kent.gov.uk) ensuring Penalty Notice status request is inserted in the title of their email.**

Where pupils move between local authority areas, Kent County Council can be contacted at [crossborder.penaltynotice@kent.gov.uk](mailto:crossborder.penaltynotice@kent.gov.uk) to find out if penalty notices have been issued previously.

Where pupils attend school in Kent but live in a different local authority, Kent County Council will liaise with the home Local Authority in cases where a penalty notice is being considered and support is appropriate, and that support is being provided by the home Local Authority.

#### Contact Details

Ms J Sangster - Principal	<a href="mailto:office@dstc.kent.sch.uk">office@dstc.kent.sch.uk</a> - Emails FAO Miss J Sangster Tel: 01322 224309
Mr M Allen - Assistant Vice Principal with delegated responsibility for Attendance	<a href="mailto:office@dstc.kent.sch.uk">office@dstc.kent.sch.uk</a> - Emails FAO Mr M Allen Tel: 01322 224309
Mrs E Hills - Attendance Officer	<a href="mailto:Attendance@dstc.kent.sch.uk">Attendance@dstc.kent.sch.uk</a> Tel: 01322 224309 <i>Year 7-11 absence: option 1</i> <i>Year 12 &amp; 13 absence: option 2</i>

## **Attendance Codes**

### **Present Codes**

- / 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)**

- 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
- 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**

- 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

## **Working together to improve school attendance**

“Working together to improve school attendance” is a comprehensive document around school attendance for you and your child.

At the end of the document, you can find a list of other relevant legislation and guidance that you may find supportive:

[Working together to improve school attendance](#)