



LOCATION: SCHOOL HANDBOOK, SECTION I, DOCUMENT 26

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date policy created: January 1997

Date reviewed: May 2026

Reviewed By: Vicky Aspin

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Date of next review: Summer 2027

I. Introduction

This policy sets out the systems and procedures at Abbey Court School for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance. We encourage the whole school community to be involved with systems and procedures. The policy is closely linked to our Partnership with Parents (School Handbook, Section I, Policy No 10) and Home School Agreement Policies, which should be read in conjunction with it. We have considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This Policy represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable and achieved by many of our children. The Department for Education and Medway Council set out a target of 96% for all pupils. We strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents. Recognising the needs of our pupils, we therefore expect attendance to be a minimum of 90%. It sets out the principles, procedures and practices the school will undertake. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor Attendance and Punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance. The DfE guidance [Working Together Improve School Attendance August 2024](#) reflects the new National Framework and states that improving attendance is everyone's business. It states that attendance is the essential foundation for positive outcomes for all pupils, including their safeguarding and welfare.

Key Contacts

Parent Reporting School Absence
Email: office@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk

Main School Office: Tel: 01634 338220

School Attendance Lead:
Email: office@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk

Lynne Barnes: Tel: 01634 338220

Designated Safeguarding Lead:
Email: confidential@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk

Vicky Aspin: Tel: 01634 338220

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is the parents /carers' 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 whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at a school.

Excellent attendance enables pupils to be part of the school community and develop a sense of belonging. This further supports each pupil's development socially, morally and ethically, enhancing personal wellbeing.

If attendance over the school year is...	...a pupil will miss this many days:
100%	0
95%	10
90%	19
85%	29
80%	39
75%	49
70%	58

2. Aim

The aim of the policy is to ensure the regular attendance of all pupils to ensure that they receive their legal entitlement and can benefit from full-time education and their school experience. This includes attainment, well-being, social development, wider life chances, which offer the best opportunity for their needs to be identified and support provided.

3. Objectives

Where we have concerns about the attendance of a pupil, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this and to seek further support, such as Early Help. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support, such as through an attendance contract. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. Where there are no genuine reasons given for absences, parents may be asked to meet the Attendance Officer to discuss the matter.

To ensure the regular attendance of pupils, we will:

- i) provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued.

- ii) ensure parents are aware of the school's expectation of attendance to be at least 96% and raise awareness that attendance is a high priority, through parent/carer meetings, our school newsletter and other communications. (National statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 96%)
- iii) work with families in a supportive way to remove any in-school barriers and to explain what good attendance looks like and why it is so important.
- iv) implement comprehensive registration procedures and processes which are set out and reinforced in staff induction/training and team meetings
- v) ensure attendance is monitored by Senior Leaders (Attendance Champion) in the School, using the school's system, i.e. SIMS, and all absences are rigorously followed up (this includes lateness)
- vi) report all unexplained absences to the Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies (AASSA) at Medway Council.
- vii) Liaise with the Local Authority (LA) and other relevant agencies as needed for those children whose health needs do not allow them to attend school full-time.

For the purpose of this policy, a parent means:

- all-natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- all those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- those who have day-to-day care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

We expect parents to:

- Provide the school with up-to-date contact telephone numbers, email addresses and changes of address when they occur.
- Provide details of at least three contacts for emergency use.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child, aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Understand the importance of ensuring regular communication and updates to the school.
- Notify the School by telephone when their child is unable to attend, on the first day of the absence, giving the reason for the absence. Where absence continues after the first day, continue to notify the school by telephone or email.
- Where transport is provided, liaise directly with Transport regarding any transport issues, as the School is not responsible for transport arrangements.
- Keep the School well informed in cases of lengthy absence of more than a few days. Parents/carers are encouraged to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a child's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision of whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the Headteacher.
- Whenever possible, all appointments should be made outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor, or optician before the arranged appointment, unless an emergency situation has arisen; this could be a letter/appointment card.
- The NHS has produced a helpful guide for parents regarding childhood illness and school: [Is my child too ill for school?](#)
- Let the School know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down, or if an urgent appointment has been made.
- Provide written explanations of any absence and medical evidence for whole-day appointments as well as medical evidence for persistent absence from school due to alleged illness.

- The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances which are explained by parents/carers.
- Only request a leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance. The decision about whether any leave of absence is authorised or not rests with the Headteacher.
- Parents should make a request to the Headteacher for a Leave of Absence they believe is 'Exceptional' by completing and returning the Exceptional Leave of Absence Request form, which is available from the school. This should be submitted as soon as possible, at least 14 days before the absence, in order for the Headteacher to have time to consider this. You may be required to provide additional evidence to support your request. Although such absence may be authorised, it is better that we know your child is safe rather than missing. If we have any concerns regarding possible safeguarding risks, we will follow the necessary protocols (please refer to the school's Safeguarding Policy for more information).
- In accordance with statutory guidance, the school must report to Medway Local Authority when a pupil has been absent for 10 consecutive school days without explanation and also when a pupil has accrued 15 days of absence due to medical reasons. Attendance Data is shared via approved DfE/Medway Council systems.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the Headteacher creates an offence in law.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances include:

- Going shopping with parents, Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Sibling unwell
- Staying at home because other members of the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are 'exceptional' circumstances that have been approved by the Headteacher
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (after the close of registration)
- Truancy
- Death of a pet

Reduced Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education.

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary/reduced timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents them from attending full-time education, a reduced timetable is considered as part of a reintegration package. ([Working Together to Improve School Attendance August 2024](#)). Our school will submit a signed reduced timetable agreement to Medway Local Authority (LA) reducedtimetables@medway.gov.uk in line with Medway LA Reduced Timetable Policy.

A reduced timetable would only be considered for the shortest time necessary. This can only be agreed by the Headteacher, who will consider each case individually. Where this has been agreed, this will be set out through the Reduced Timetable agreement, which will be shared with the Local Authority. There will generally be a clear expectation to return to full-time as quickly as possible, and this will be

reviewed regularly and at the end of the Term/, approximately 6-8 weekly intervals, in discussion with the parent. In this case, it will be recorded as an authorised absence.

Staff with specialist attendance responsibilities will receive training to include the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data and any additional training that would be beneficial to support pupils experiencing attendance challenges.

4. Registration

- 4.1 The register is taken twice a day, between the registration period of 9.00 am-9.20 am for the morning and at 1.15 pm for the afternoon session.

The class teacher takes registration electronically via the SIMS database (should the system be inaccessible, then the teacher will take a handwritten register of attendance and ensure this is immediately taken to the office). A registration sheet is printed and taken to the office following both morning and afternoon registrations. Cut-off times for the class teacher to complete the register are 9.20 am and 1.20 pm. In the event of a fire evacuation, the printouts will be collected and used by the fire warden to confirm which pupils are present.

- 4.2 The register will show whether the pupil is present, absent or engaged in an off-site activity.
- 4.3 Absences for all pupils of compulsory school age show whether the absence is one where: the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be out of school or HAS ACCEPTED an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for absence. Any absence which is either not approved or remains unexplained within the 5 days of the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- 4.4 All other absences will be recorded as unauthorised and may be referred to the school's Attendance Officer (AO).
- 4.5 Where a pupil does not travel on transport because they are not placed on the bus by a parent/carer, this will be treated as a school absence, and parents must follow the school's absence reporting procedures.

NB Parents may not authorise any absence; only the Headteacher may do this. All absences are treated as unauthorised until the school agrees and accepts an explanation as satisfactory. It is up to the parent to make a request to the Headteacher or provide an explanation for the Headteacher to consider.

- 4.5 Registers are legal records, and we will keep every entry in attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date of entry.
- 4.6 Pupils will be entered on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed with, or been notified by the parent, that the pupil will attend school
- 4.7 Attendance is recorded when a pupil is physically present on the school site and received by school staff. Use of school transport alone does not constitute attendance.
- 4.8 At the end of the school day, responsibility for pupils transfers from school staff to the transport provider at the point of handover.

4.9 Registration codes used at Abbey Court are as follows:
(The school records data in the SIMS database.)

Codes are applied in accordance with guidance from Working Together to Improve School Attendance, August 2024 [Working Together to Improve Attendance August 2024](#)

/ = Present (AM) \ =

Present (PM)

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Code B: Educated at an off-site supervised educational activity approved by the school

Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances

Code CI: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.

Code C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school-age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

Code E: Suspended or permanently excluded, and no alternative provision made

Code G: Holiday not granted by the school

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment)

Code JI: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

Code M: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment

Code N: Reason for absence not yet established

Code O: Absent in other or unknown circumstances

Code Q: Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements

Code R: Religious observance

Code S: Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination.

Code T: Parent travelling for occupational purposes

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Code V: Residential trip organised by the school

Code W: Pupil in the final 2 years of compulsory education attends work experience

Code X: Non-compulsory school-age pupil not required to attend school.

Code YI: Unable to attend due to the transport normally provided not being available

Code Y2: Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel

Code Y3: Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Code Y4: Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed

Code Y5: Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Code Y6: Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

Code Y7: Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Code Z: Prospective pupil not on admission register

Code #: Planned whole school closure

Monitoring of Absence

Procedures for monitoring absence are as follows:

<u>Registration periods</u>	9.00 am – 9.20 am
	1.15 pm – 1.20 pm

(registration closes at 9.30 am and 1.20 pm)

- Where a pupil arrives outside of the registration period, and before it closes, they will be marked as 'Late' using the 'L' code. This means the school will accept the explanation given for the late arrival as valid and reasonable, e.g. a late bus, a car breakdown, a one-off family difficulty and no action will be taken. Where the school is notified by Transport that a pupil has not been collected, or there has been transport disruption, this information will be used to support attendance coding and safeguarding checks
- If a pupil continues to be late/is frequently late with the same or similar explanation, the school may speak or ask to meet with you to identify any issues that are causing your child to arrive late at school in order to provide support.
- If a pupil still arrives late, and there is no valid reason provided, the school may decide not to authorise the late arrival and enter an unauthorised late mark 'U'.

The school office will check registers on a daily basis and log all pupils where messages explaining absence have not been received from parents/carers. Telephone calls will be made to those parents in order to clarify, and a log. The process for this is as follows: -	
STEP 1	Clerical Officer to identify absent pupils from the completed register.
STEP 2	Checks to be undertaken to establish whether the absence is known (i.e. reported previously in the contact book as a medical appointment).
STEP 3	Telephone calls to be made to parents/carers of absent pupils where a call has not been received, from 9.30 am, requesting an explanation for the absence. Call attempts will be made to all available contact numbers.
STEP 4	Telephone call log to be updated with details of the call about pupil absence and the outcome of the conversation.
STEP 5	If a message is left, the call will be repeated if a return call has not been received within 2 hours, or by lunchtime. Calling from a school mobile phone and sending to the parent(s) email will also be attempted.
STEP 6	If no contact has been made with the family by lunchtime, the information will be passed to the Attendance Champion or Leadership Group. (If Social Workers have active involvement and interest, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will decide whether or not to advise them of the pupil's absence.)
STEP 7	If no explanation has been provided, office staff will issue a further request for information to parents, carers to enable the Headteacher to consider whether to authorise the absence.
STEP 8	Where no explanation can be gathered from telephone or email contact with parents or known family members, and the absence is 2 days or more, the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead will be notified. The Attendance Advisory Practitioner (AO) will be advised of any absences incurring more than 10 days.
STEP 9	On the basis of the outcome of Steps 1-8, the School will make a decision whether the Late (L) code or Unauthorised (U) code will be used.

Please see Appendix I for a visual step-by-step guide.

- 5.0 Each term, the AO will attend the school to meet with the Attendance Champion (Assistant Headteacher/Deputy Head Teacher) to discuss pupils whose attendance is under the school's expectation (without medical impact) or where there are cases of unauthorised absence. Percentage analysis of attendance is carried out prior to each visit to identify pupils for discussion. At the meeting, each pupil is reviewed, and a course of action is agreed between the AO and school with consideration of early help, attendance contract or social care involvement.
- 5.1 A follow-up discussion takes place at the next meeting to ensure there is an audit trail on actions until the attendance level improves and meets expectations. An agenda is set by the AO, and formal minutes are taken. A summary report is provided to the Headteacher/Governing Body. The AO also reviews school policy relating to attendance, receives the school's annual attendance returns and undertakes register checks at both sites.

6. Deleting pupils from the school roll

- 6.1 The school will seek advice from the LA (as appropriate) before removing a pupil from the school roll.
- 6.2 Whenever possible, the parents of a pupil moving to another area or school will advise the school of the name of the new school, the date they will start and new contact and address details. This will be confirmed with the receiving school. A Common Transfer File (CTF) will be sent or received to/from the new school to exchange information on the transferring pupil.
- 6.3 The AO and Child Missing in Education Officer (CME) will be advised, and a referral will be completed if parents:
 - move out of the area;
 - if a pupil has disappeared without explanation;
 - if the pupil has not returned to school on the agreed return date for the holiday taken in term time.
- 6.4 Whenever a pupil joins or leaves the school (outside of usual start/finish periods within the academic year), as part of an agreed Reduced Timetable, the school will submit the relevant 'Reduced Timetable' referral to the Local Authority and review this approximately every 6 weeks in accordance with the process.
- 6.5 Abbey Court School is an all-through school and therefore transitions within phases are tracked as part of an internal process. Pupils who are transitioning into a new school will be clearly tracked to ensure the safeguarding of these pupils. Once the school has ascertained the pupil has not arrived at their school (on the school roll), there is a clear process to report to the Local Authority's School Admissions Team. Once relevant investigations are made and the pupil is confirmed as not on roll, a referral will be made to the Children Missing Education Officer (CME – AASSA). The CME officer will liaise with social care and family solutions to ensure cross-directorate communication and the safeguarding of the pupil. The pupil will be tracked by the CME officer (AASSA) until the pupil is in receipt of education.

7. Collating and analysing attendance data

- 7.1 The School office is responsible for the collation and analysis of attendance data. This task is undertaken regularly and in accordance with Working Together to Improve Attendance, August 2024.
- 7.2 We routinely monitor attendance data, trends and patterns of absence as part of our standard procedures. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling. We recognise that both sudden and gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may be indicative of underlying safeguarding concerns.
In line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), the school will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding issues to the appropriate authorities in line with our Safeguarding Policy.
- 7.3 The Attendance Champion is alerted by the office staff of:
- any pupil who is absent
 - any pupil who has an unauthorised absence
 - any pupil who has authorised absence of more than one week's duration (e.g. has been sick for more than one week)
 - any pupil on an agreed reduced timetable
- 7.4 The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more of schooling across the school year, for whatever reason. For pupils who miss more than 50% of possible sessions, they are defined as 'severely absent (SA)'. The school will ensure data is routinely monitored to identify emerging attendance issues and will seek to offer support/prevent any pupil from becoming persistently or severely absent.
- 7.5 Senior staff will investigate and contextualise the data further (e.g., examine a pupil's previous attendance history, discuss the absence with classroom/nursing staff to verify illness, etc.). If parents repeatedly fail to provide satisfactory reasons for the absence, Senior Staff will make a referral to the AO. Patterns and trends of absence will also be reported to the AO.
- 7.6 The AO will then decide on the action to be taken, including legal action if appropriate.
- 7.7 The AO attends regular (termly) meetings at the school in order to follow up on previous pupils referred to AASSA, and to be made aware of any new concerns. The AO also supports the school in monitoring absences.
- 7.8 The Attendance Champion shall take advice from AASSA for any absences incurring more than **5** days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads will be notified for any absences incurring more than **10** days.
- 7.9 The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carers, then the Local Authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing education (CME). The school will facilitate all attempts to contact the

family through letters, via email, and by visiting the home address. Once notified, the AO from Medway LA will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

8. Leave of absence for holidays (Exceptional LOA)

The school may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there is an exceptional circumstance. Requests for holiday absences are dealt with on an individual basis and only after the parents have made a written request directly to the Headteacher. The school requires a period of notice of (14 days) to consider a request. The Headteacher will make the decision and notify the parents of whether the leave of absence (LOA) request is 'authorised or declined'.

8.1. Days of religious observance

This is an absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.

Our school will be sensitive to such requests, and parents are encouraged to give advance notice/make a request for exceptional leave by completing and submitting a form to the Headteacher via the school office.

8.2 Traveller child when the family is travelling

Our school will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil (mobile child) (*3) of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and the number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In such situations, the child will be dual registered at that school, and this school will remain their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as all other peers. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 (*3) "mobile child" means a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place;

8.3 Family Bereavements

Abbey Court School will respond sensitively to requests to attend funerals or associated events and have the discretion to authorise such absences.

8.4 Public performances, including film or TV work

The production company must have applied for a permit to perform, and the Local Authority will licence a pupil to take part in a public performance if all the necessary paperwork is submitted. Agreed participation should be treated as authorised absence.

9.0 Unauthorised absence

Should parents decide to take their child/children on a leave of absence, despite being informed that the absence will be unauthorised, the issuing of a Penalty Notice will be considered, and the Headteacher will issue a Penalty Notice warning letter to parents. The school will make a referral to the Local Authority with a request to issue a Penalty Notice. Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand.

Where a Notice to Improve is issued, it will be issued in line with processes set out in the Medway Local Authority Code of Conduct, in which the pupil attends school.

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 may be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate, and an authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate, but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

The Notice to Improve is expected to include:-

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences.
- 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 improvement period of between 3 and 6 weeks.
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like.

A penalty notice is an out-of-court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

Penalty notices must be issued in line with the [Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2024, as amended](#) and can only be issued by a headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police. They must also be issued in line with Medway Local Authority Code of Conduct.

See DfE's statutory guidance on [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) for more information

Penalty Notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent who holds parental responsibility for a child, and are applied individually for each child with irregular school attendance. For example, in the case of Penalty Notices: if two children have irregular attendance and both parents share responsibility, a total of four Penalty Notices would be issued—one per parent, per child.

Please note that Penalty Notices carry fixed amounts and payment deadlines. They cannot be paid in instalments.

Parents must pay £160 for each pupil within the household within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay within 28 days will lead to prosecution.

First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued, the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child, paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

Second Offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

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 may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Medway Local Authority will issue fixed penalty notices on behalf of the school in accordance with their Local Code of Conduct, which can be found on their website: [Medway Authority Code of Conduct](#)

10. Illness, medical and dental appointments.

It is noted that some pupils at Abbey Court may have high numbers of these appointments because of their complex medical needs. If a pupil is an irregular attendee, the parent/carer must provide the school with a copy of an appointment card/record or medical letter confirming the appointment. Office staff and class teachers will keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to the site via the class register and the signing-in/out system in case of an emergency. Class teachers must advise the office of any notes from parents in home-school contact books referring to appointments during the school day. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, senior staff will refer to the school nursing team, the school medical officer, the Attendance Advisory Practitioner and or the pupil's GP. All pupils receiving medical treatment on the school site are marked in the register as present.

11. Long-term sickness (authorised by medical personnel).

We support pupils who are absent for long-term medical reasons. Absences of 15 days or more are reported to the Local Authority. For example, we provide parents with advice on the delivery of a pupil's Individual Education Plan (IEP) targets at home, provide homework, promote access to our equipment, loan libraries and liaise with other supporting professionals, e.g. hospital schools/home tuition services.

12. Consequences of Poor Attendance /Punctuality

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

Issue of Notice to Improve or Penalty Notice Charge (refer to section 9 above)

In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

13. Children Missing Education (CME)

Our School will add and remove pupils from the admissions register in accordance with [Regulation 8 of the School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). A pupil's name may only be lawfully removed from the register if one of the specific conditions outlined in Regulation 9 applies.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil may be missing education or has potentially moved out of Medway Local Authority, we will consult with our Local Authority Attendance Officer within five school days. In line with safeguarding responsibilities, the school will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the pupil's whereabouts. These may include:

- Contacting other family members given as emergency contacts
- Conducting a home visit
- Contacting schools attended by siblings
- Liaising with the allocated social worker/keyworker, where the family is known to Social Care/Family Solutions/Early Help

If the pupil's location remains unknown, or it is confirmed that they have left Medway, the school will complete and submit a Children Missing Education (CME) referral form to the Local Authority Attendance Officer within ten school days.

This process is aligned with statutory safeguarding duties and reflects the expectations set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Improve School Attendance. It also supports [Medway LA Children Missing Education policy](#), and commitment to identifying, tracking, and supporting children missing education, ensuring that all pupils receive suitable education provision

Parents must inform the school in writing if they are planning to remove their child from Abbey Court School. Where this is because the family are moving to a different area, this must include the details of the new school the child is planning to attend, new telephone, email and address details. Because every child at Abbey Court School has an EHC Plan, parents are expected to notify the home Local Authority responsible for the EHC plan directly, and the school will also notify the Local Authority.

Where a parent is considering taking responsibility for their child's education (i.e. Elective Home Education), because the child has an EHCP which is maintained by the Local Authority, the parent must contact the Local Authority SEND team at seneducationteam@medway.gov.uk so that they can follow the statutory process, e.g. arrange for an Annual Review to be held and/or make a decision about the change to provision. School will inform the Local Authority Home Education team.

Non-starters

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to contact the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the Local Authority for further checks.

Abbey Court School is an all-through school and therefore transitions within phases are tracked as part of an internal process. Pupils who are transitioning into a new school will be clearly tracked to ensure the safeguarding of these pupils. Once the school has ascertained the pupil has not arrived at their school (on the school roll), there is a clear process to report to the Local Authority's School Admissions Team. Once relevant investigations are made and the pupil is confirmed as not on roll, a referral will be made to the Children Missing Education Officer (CME – AASSA). The CME officer will liaise with social care and family solutions to ensure cross-directorate communication and the

safeguarding of the pupil. The pupil will be tracked by the CME officer (AASSA) until the pupil is in receipt of education.

Vulnerable Children

Children who are In Care (CIC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with the highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Champion. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home. Any outside professionals who are also working with the children and family will also be notified of the absence (Social worker, AO, etc.). Children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible

14 Evaluation Monitoring and Review

- a. The AO will undertake a scrutiny of attendance to ensure practices are being followed appropriately and that:
 - absences are being rigorously followed up on
 - data is being effectively analysed
 - senior staff are taking the appropriate course of action in respect of non-attendance.
- b. This policy will be reviewed annually by the School Leadership Team in consultation with staff, Governors, parents and other involved professionals (e.g. nursing team/AO) to ensure the needs of pupils are being met. The policy will be deemed to be effective if attendance rates remain high. This will demonstrate that the policy supports regular attendance and ensures that non-attendance is dealt with efficiently and effectively.
- c. The policy will be reviewed in light of changes in DfE Legislation / Ofsted requirements / LA requirements.

Reference:

The Education Act 1996

The Children Act 1989

Supporting Guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance August 2024' and related legislation to which it refers, and replaces all previous guidance on school attendance

The Equality Act 2010

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration, England) Regulations 2024

The Education (Penalty Notices, England) Regulations 2024

