



# Weald of Kent Grammar School

## School Attendance Policy – June 2017

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### Statement of Intent

Weald of Kent Grammar School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

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

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Weald of Kent Grammar School.

### Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour. All parents and students are required to sign the Home/School Agreement confirming they will comply with the school's expectations concerning attendance and punctuality.

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

Students are expected to arrive at school in time for registration, which is taken at 8.45am (afternoon registration takes place at 1.25pm, except on Thursdays when registers are taken at 1.35pm). All pupils that arrive late must report to Student Services where they will be required to sign in and confirm the reason for their lateness.

### The Role of the School Staff

At Weald of Kent Grammar School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Senior Assistant Headteacher, Development has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

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

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date.
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call, text message and email.

- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes).
- Parents are informed of the child's attendance figure on each interim and full report and it is always available to view on the school's VLE system Go4Schools.

**Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance**

- 95 - 100% attendance – the Attendance Officer to monitor attendance and notify the Head of Year of any concerns. The Head of Year to contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents.
- Where the level of absence has not improved, or it has fallen below 90% and/or there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

While an attendance rate of 90% appears to be a high figure, the impact on a student's learning is severely disrupted and this can be evidenced by quantifying the percentage into the number of days and lessons missed (see the table below).

<b>Attendance % during one school year</b>	<b>Equals days absent</b>	<b>Which is approximately weeks absent</b>	<b>Which means this number of lessons missed</b>
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

**Children Missing Education**

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

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

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

## Lateness

At Weald of Kent Grammar School the register is taken at 8.45am and 1.25pm (1.35pm on Thursdays at the start of Period 4). Pupils arriving after these times must report to Student Services where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.30am and 1.30pm (1.40pm on Thursdays during Period 4). Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Where students frequently arrive late to school a suitable sanction will be applied by the Head of Year. Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice as these absences from registration are not authorised. Parents will be informed in writing of persistent lateness.

## Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

**Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:**

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions (50 days) leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets 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(s) will be issued (one per parent per child).
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings.

## Authorising Absence

The decision to authorise an absence lies with the school, not the parent.

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

**If no explanation for an absence is received, absences will not be authorised.**

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

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

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

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

### **Planned Absences**

Absences due to appointments (medical or otherwise) must be requested in advance and in writing and must be confirmed by way of an appointment card or letter. The decision whether to authorise an absence for an appointment lies with the school, not the parent and absences will not be authorised without sufficient evidence being provided.

### **Absence Due To Illness**

While it is accepted that some absence during the school year may occur due to illness, continuous absence may be deemed excessive and will require further medical evidence in order to enable the school to authorise future absences for this reason. Therefore, absences due to illness that last longer than 3 consecutive school days will require confirmation from a medical practitioner that medical assistance and/or advice has been sought, failure to provide this will mean the absence may not be authorised and subsequent action via the Local Authority may be taken.

### **Local Authority Action may include:**

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

### **Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance**

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

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

### **Exceptional circumstances could include:**

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced that 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 family member or person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a family member or 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.

<b>Author/s:</b>	Sarah Forde	<b>Date:</b>	July 2017
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	July 2020	<b>Link Governor/s:</b>	Sheila Viola Julia Wilson
<b>Ratified:</b>	..... July 2017 Strategy		

**Appendix 1 Late letter (Code L)**

**Appendix 2 Late letter (Code U)**

**Appendix 3 Absence Letter**

**Appendix 4 School Attendance Meeting Letter**

**Appendix 5 School Letter Warning re: Penalty Notice Referral**

**Appendix 6 Unauthorised absence confirmation of PN request**

**Appendix 7a Response to Leave Request (Not Authorising)**

**Appendix 7b Response to Leave Request submitted retrospectively (Not Authorising)**

**Appendix 8 Unauthorised leave confirmation of PN request**

**Appendix 9 School letter where they believe a holiday was taken**

**Appendix 10 Traveller Attendance letter**

**Appendix 11 Traveller Absence due to travelling**

**Appendix 12 School Referral Pathway**

## Appendix 1

Dear

**Re «forename» «surname»**

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been arriving late at school. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code L):

«dates of lates»

Total lates before registration closed: «number of half day sessions»

At Weald of Kent Grammar School the register is taken at 8.45am and at 1.25pm (1.35pm on Thursdays).

A pupil's lateness will seriously disrupt their learning and can be embarrassing for your child.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve punctuality. If we can help in any way, perhaps via our School Nurse or Family Liaison Officer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year

## Appendix 2

Dear

**Re «forename» «surname»**

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has arrived after the register has been closed. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code U):

«dates of lates »

Total lates after registration closed: «number of half day sessions»

At our school the register is taken at 8.45am and is closed at 9.30am for the morning session and taken again at 1.25pm (1.35pm on Thursdays) and closed at 1.30pm (1.40pm on Thursdays) for the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked 'U' which records the absence as unauthorised for that session.

Arriving after the register has closed is seriously disrupting your child's learning and is impacting on their overall attendance.

Persistent late arrival may lead to a referral for a Penalty Notice or a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for further action and possible prosecution.

If «forename» continues to arrive late after the register has closed we will contact you to arrange a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year

### Appendix 3

Dear

**Re «forename» «surname»**

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been absent from school. I attach for your information a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was absent.

A pupil's absence can seriously disrupt their learning, not only do they miss out on teaching while they are away but they are less prepared for future lessons when they return.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve «forename»'s attendance. If we can help in any way, perhaps via our School Nurse or Family Liaison Officer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year

## Appendix 4

Dear

**Re: «forename» «surname»**

Despite previous notifications, I note with concern that your child's attendance at school has made no significant improvement. «forename»'s attendance at school is currently «% attendance» which means «he/she» has missed «total authorised absences» half day sessions for authorised absence and «total unauthorised absences» half day sessions for unauthorised absence. This will have an impact on your child's education which we cannot ignore.

As there has been no improvement in «forename»'s attendance, I must advise you that further absences from school as a result of illness may require medical evidence (e.g. copy of a prescription, Doctors/Dentist appointment card). If medical evidence is not provided when required, further absences will be marked as unauthorised.

I am inviting you to attend a School Attendance Meeting. It is important that you and «forename» attend this meeting for us to explore the issues around poor attendance. The meeting will be attended by the Head of Year and the Attendance Officer. I would be grateful if you could contact me so that a mutually convenient time can be arranged.

If you do not attend this meeting and «forename»'s absence continues to deteriorate, a referral may be made to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for further action and possible prosecution.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year

## Appendix 5

Dear

Re «**forename**» «**surname**»

At Weald of Kent Grammar School we consider attendance of utmost importance and I am therefore bringing this information to your attention.

Our monitoring process has shown that «forename» has been absent from school for a total of «total unauthorised absences» unauthorised half day sessions. I refer you to legislation regarding Penalty Notices.

*'As from 2005, Kent Local Authority (LA) introduced Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school of at least 10 sessions (5 days) during any 100 possible school sessions.'* A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

*On receipt of the Notice, the penalty will be £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the LA.*

Please note this is a warning letter that a Penalty Notice could be requested if a total of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) are reached.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me.

If further unauthorised absence occurs you will be contacted and invited in for a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

**M E Johnson**  
Headteacher

## Appendix 6

Dear

**Re «forename» «surname»**

With reference to our letter dated ....., «forename» has now reached a total of «total unauthorised absences» half day sessions of unauthorised absence. As a result we will now be requesting a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.

A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

Yours sincerely

**M E Johnson**  
Headteacher

## Appendix 7a

Dear

**Request for leave during Term-Time**  
**For the attention of the parents of «forename» «surname»**

I have received your request to take «forename» out of school for a family holiday between ..... and ....., a total of ..... school sessions.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- each case will be judged on its merits
- my decision is final
- leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

I have considered your request but I am writing to confirm that on this occasion the leave will not be authorised. If you decide to take «forename» out of school I will be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely

**M E Johnson**  
Headteacher

## Appendix 7b

Dear

**Request for leave during Term-Time**  
**For the attention of the parents of «forename» «surname»**

You failed to apply in advance for permission for «forename» to be absent from school.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- each case will be judged on its merits
- my decision is final
- leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

As stated above, I am unable to authorise leave retrospectively and I will be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely

**M E Johnson**  
Headteacher

## Appendix 8

Dear

**Name: «forename» «surname» DOB: «date\_of\_birth»**

With reference to our letter dated ....., the leave of absence taken between ..... and ..... has now been recorded as Unauthorised Absence and as a result a Penalty Notice has been requested.

A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

Yours sincerely

**M E Johnson**  
Headteacher

## Appendix 9

Dear

**Re «forename» «surname»**

You failed to apply in advance for permission for «forename» to be absent from school.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence, except in exceptional circumstances. ***(State why you are treating this absence as a family holiday and/or why there are no exceptional circumstances)***

Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

I am unable to authorise leave retrospectively therefore this absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Where a child has 10 unauthorised sessions within 100 school sessions a Penalty Notice may be issued.

The Penalty Notice gives you the opportunity to pay a penalty instead of being prosecuted for failing to secure your child's regular attendance at school. The amount of the penalty is £120 per parent, per child, but if payment is made by you within 21 days of receipt of this Notice it will be £60 per parent, per child. If you pay this penalty within the time limits, no further action will be taken against you in connection with the offence, i.e. your liability for the offence will be discharged.

Yours sincerely

**M E Johnson**  
Headteacher

## Appendix 10

Dear

**Traveller Absence**  
**«forename» «surname»**

I am writing to say how concerned I am over the number of times «forename» has been absent from school. This academic year «forename» has missed «total authorised absences» authorised half day sessions and «total unauthorised absences» unauthorised half day sessions achieving an overall attendance rate of «% attendance»%.

Traveller children have to attend school for 380 sessions (190 days) each year, which is the same for all children and you are at risk of being referred to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer if «forename»'s attendance falls below 90%. I am unable to authorise any absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances or if you will be travelling for occupational purposes and agree this with the school in advance.

If you would like to speak to me about «forename»'s attendance, please telephone the school to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

**M E Johnson**  
Head Teacher

## Appendix 11

Dear

### **Traveller Absence**

**«forename» «surname»**

Thank you for contacting me to say that «forename» will be absent from school from ..... as you will be travelling due to your work.

The law allows me to authorise «forename»'s absence if your trade or business means that you have to travel from place to place. However, you have not let me know when «forename» is likely to return to school. Unless you contact me during the next 10 school days to confirm a date, I will refer «forename» to the Local Authority as a Child Missing Education.

After 20 days absence, there may be grounds to take «forename»'s name off the school roll and you will have to re-apply for a school place when you return.

Yours sincerely

**M E Johnson**

Headteacher

### Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

