'They will soar on wings like eagles …'
Isaiah 40:31

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AQUILA Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust

Common Trust Policy, Use as Published

Trust Attendance policy

Date adopted by Trust Board: October 2022

Reviewed July 2026

Date of next Review: July 2027

This policy outlines our approach to promoting excellent attendance and punctuality, in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance: Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2022

Guidance updated (updated August 2026).

Version	Date	Author	Change Description
V4	29.7.25	JAJ	Mandatory data sharing, KPAS, EHE section, attendance codes,
	4/12/25	JAJ	Revision to appendix 3– change of some codings
	29/7/26	JAJ	Revision in light of updated national guidance

1. Our Aim

Key Principles Underpinning this Policy

- Regular school attendance is a legal requirement and fundamental to pupil progress and wellbeing. [gov.uk]
- Schools must maintain accurate attendance records and follow statutory processes. [legislation.gov.uk]
- Poor attendance may indicate safeguarding concerns and must be addressed promptly. [gov.uk]
- Effective attendance practice requires partnership working between schools, families and external agencies. [gov.uk]

We aspire for all pupils to achieve 100% attendance wherever possible and support all pupils to achieve the highest attendance they can. We believe that regular attendance is the key to enabling children to gain the greatest benefit from their education and reach their full potential. Regular attendance is defined as **attending school on time every day when the school is open, unless there is an unavoidable reason for not doing so**.
Improving attendance is everyone's business. The foundation of good attendance is that an Aquila school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and where they are keen and ready to learn.

We recognise that some pupils find it harder to attend school. Therefore, at all stages our schools will work with pupils and parents to remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. We will actively promote this ethos throughout our school communities and encourage our schools to support pupils to achieve 100% attendance. Where this expectation is not met, we will work with schools to identify and address the barriers that prevent regular attendance.

We know that a good attendance policy and effective practices for improvement will involve interaction with the curriculum, behaviour, anti-bullying measures, special educational needs support, pastoral care and mental health and well-being work. Improvement will require concentrated effort from all teaching and non-teaching staff, governors, Aquila, the local authority and parents.

Research shows children and young people who attend school at least 96% of the time (i.e. they attend for 184 days or only miss 6 days of school a year) are more likely to achieve good results. Studies of attendance show a clear correlation between attendance and achievement, which continue throughout primary and secondary school. Good attendance develops the essential life skills necessary for young people to be responsible and successful citizens and is important for personal, social and emotional development and self-esteem.

Parents, please ensure that you and your child/children support your school's rules about attendance.

We explain about different types of absence in this policy which has been written with the Trust values of aspire and nurture at its heart

2. The Law.

This policy is underpinned by:

- The Education Act 1996

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)

- DfE Statutory Guidance (2024)

- Local authority protocols

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. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Daily data sharing with the DfE is now mandatory for all state-funded schools from September 2024, which all of our schools undertake. This supports early intervention and national and local monitoring.

3. Working Together to Improve Attendance.

All partners, all teaching and non-teaching staff, governors, Aquila, the local authority, pupils and parents, should work together to improve attendance following these stages.

EXPECT. Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

MONITOR. Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND. When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents so we listen and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT. Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help referral or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT. Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

4. Expect.

Aquila schools will promote the benefits of good attendance, set high expectations for every pupil and communicate these expectations clearly. **We have set out the roles and responsibilities that we expect different stakeholders to be responsible for in each school.**

a. School Leaders

- Monitor attendance daily and act swiftly on concerns.

- Use the Attend package to swiftly identify trends and trigger points and notify parents that attendance is dropping below what is expected

- Ensure accurate coding and timely data submission.

- Use the DfE toolkit to communicate effectively with families.

-Report absences and sickness to the DFE and Local Authority.

-Ensure staff receive adequate training on attendance.

b. Parents/Carers

- Ensure children attend school regularly and punctually.

- Inform the school of absences promptly and provide evidence where required.

c. Local Authority

- Work in partnership with schools to address persistent absence.

- Issue penalty notices where appropriate.

We believe that good attendance is a learned behaviour just as poor attendance can become a hard to break habit. As such, it is an essential part of the school culture and all staff have a role to play in promoting the importance of good attendance. Additionally in Sandwich Infant School, the designated senior leader with responsibility for championing and improving attendance is Leanne Bennett (The Senior Attendance Champion). Their contact details are leanne.bennett@sandwich-infant.kent.sch.uk. The Governor overseeing attendance is Phillip Buckley.

To help focus on good attendance the school will:

- Build strong relationships with families to understand and overcome barriers to attendance
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture, promoting the benefits of high attendance
- Celebrate and reward students who achieve our expectations of a high level of attendance and those who have shown sustained improvement
- Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality and communicate these regularly.
- Share attendance information with parents and students focusing on the link between attendance and achievement.
- Promote high attendance and punctuality through displays, assemblies, class discussion; always reinforcing the link between attendance and achievement
- Communicate attendance matters to parents via My Child at School (MCAS); Attend, telephone; email; letter and through the school website.
- Continue to support families and children to attend school every day and on time.
- Publish this policy on the school website and share with all parents
- Ensure new parents are made aware of the school expectations
- Share information with other schools, the local authority and other partners where attendance is a concern

5. Monitor.

Admission and attendance registers will be kept up to date. The information for both admissions and attendance is held in Bromcom and monitored through the Attend package.

Pupils are to arrive to school via the school gates between 8:30 am and 8:40 am. The attendance registers will be completed in both morning and afternoon sessions. The registers will be taken in the morning at 8:40 am and in the afternoon at 1:00 pm. Pupils are expected to attend every day that the school is open unless they are unwell or there are exceptional circumstances. Children that arrive after 8:45 am will be marked as a late (L) and will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U) if they arrive after 9:00 am. The school day ends at 3:10 pm and all pupils are required to be present until the school day ends.

If a pupil is absent, parents are expected to contact the school through the My Child at School App, via direct contact with the school office by phoning 01304 612228 or emailing the school office at office@sandwich-infant.kent.sch.uk. Parents must give a reason for the absence that will be recorded on Bromcom.

Leaders at both school and Trust level will monitor attendance data, including attendance for different groups of pupils and cohorts. This will be done using Bromcom as our MIS and Attend as our monitoring system. Where levels of attendance fall below acceptable levels, investigation at individual level will be undertaken, with the aim of quickly working with parents and external agencies to re-establish clear expectations and improve attendance before achievement and well-being of pupils is negatively affected.

Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK

6. Listen and Understand.

We recognise that children may experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships. However, these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly. We will work alongside pupils and parents to try to overcome these anxieties. In many cases, attendance will help with the underlying issue as a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in the future.

Where a child does not attend school, for whatever reason, the school will contact parents/carers to highlight this. Where there are genuine reasons for the absences and attendance is shown to be improving, the school will continue to monitor and review the attendance for the rest of the academic year and the start of the next.

Our school is inclusive and has embedded practices to support the inclusion and attendance of all our pupils. This includes being trauma informed to support those pupils and families affected by trauma. Poor attendance is a habit, so early support, possibly with the involvement of external agencies, will be sought promptly.

School and parents will discuss barriers to attendance and plan targeted supportive actions to increase attendance. Aquila schools work hard to build strong respectful relationships with parents and these discussions will ensure the best placed person in the school team works with and supports the family and pupil to return to good attendance levels. A record of any meetings will be taken and parents will be asked to sign these to show they have a commitment to the agreed actions.

Actions: The thresholds below are indicative. Professional judgement will be applied in every case and individual circumstances will always be considered.

Attendance %	Actions to take
100 %	Termly letter home to celebrate perfect attendance
99.9-96 %	This attendance is within the ideal range. Termly letters are sent home to celebrate strong attendance. Class teacher to celebrate in class, and is made aware by SLT of class data and trends.
95.99-95 %	This is the trigger point to alert parents that attendance is becoming a concern, and at this point, there should be informal interventions by the class teacher to discuss attendance with the child and parents. Attendance discussed at internal Pupil Progress Meetings
95 – 92 %	Attendance concerns letter and/or phone call sent to make parents aware that attendance is dropping and becoming a concern. Monitoring period commences for given time period with updates reported to parents. Governors made aware of data and actions to date.
92-91.9 %	Attendance is a concern and parents invited to formal attendance meeting. New monitoring period commences with formal action plan. The school may require appropriate evidence to support future illness absences where there are concerns regarding the authenticity or frequency of absence. Attendance governor involvement.
Below 90%	Notice to improve letter (Penalty notice warning letter) sent. Your child is now persistently absent from school. Invited in for meeting with attendance office, SLT. Referral to KPAS.
	Further absence will trigger a penalty notice for persistent absence. where a child has of 10 or more sessions (5 or more days) of unauthorised absences within a rolling 10-school-week period.

Visits to the family home may be made in order to discuss attendance matters. In some cases, if no improvement is made and there are not sufficient reasons for the absences, further legal action may be taken by Kent County Council in accordance with the Education Act 1996.

As part of our duty to safeguard pupils, schools will consider whether the patterns of attendance may indicate a safeguarding concern. School Attendance is part of our safeguarding duty. If a pupil is absent for two days or more without explanation, a home visit may be made. Where there are safeguarding concerns about a child's welfare or whereabouts, the school may request support from police or other safeguarding agencies. This is in line with KCSIE 2026 and CME statutory guidance.

Where a pupil is absent due to illness for 15 consecutive school days or more, or is expected to miss that amount of education, the school will make the required notification to the local authority and consider whether alternative provision duties may apply.

The flowchart below shows specific actions at the trigger points identified in the previous table.

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Attendance Procedure Flow Chart –Sandwich Infant School

Day to Day Absence
Notify school via MCAS app by **09:30 am** with reason for absence. If no messaged received an automated message is sent. *If a pupil is absent for two days or more without explanation, a home visit may be made and Police Welfare Checks can be requested. This is in line with KCSIE 2025 and CME statutory guidance.*

Stage 1
*Attendance is below **96%***
Pastoral letter advising parents that attendance needs to improve.

Does child's attendance improve?

Yes → No further action. Child's attendance is monitored in line with school policy

No → **Stage 2**
*Attendance is below **90%***
Parents invited to attend a meeting with Class teacher. Follow-up letter with agreed actions.

Does child's attendance improve?

Yes → No further action. Child's attendance is monitored in line with school policy

No → **Stage 3**
*Attendance is below **85%***
Parent invited in for meeting with the Class teacher and SLT. Follow-up letter with targets set.

Does child's attendance improve?

Yes → No further action. Child's attendance is monitored in line with school policy

No → **Stage 4**
*Attendance is below **80%***
Referral made to Kent Attendance Service – attendance is monitored weekly.

Does child's attendance improve?

Yes → On going support. Child's attendance is monitored in line with school policy.

No → **Stage 5**
*Attendance is below **60%***
Notice to Improve is issued. Followed by 3 week monitoring.

Does child's attendance improve?

Yes → On going support. Child's attendance is monitored in line with school policy

No → **Stage 6**
*Attendance is below **50%***
Penalty Notice Issued and Referral to Children's Social Services.

Does child's attendance improve?

Yes → On going support. Child's attendance is monitored in line with school policy

How will school help?
Live attendance figures can be seen on the MCAS app. If you are worried about your child's attendance, we can help, some examples of support we can offer are: removal of specific in school barriers to attendance, create an action plan, reduced hours in school, School Nurse referral, CAMHs referral and/or Early Help referral.

10 Week DFE Penalty
Having 10 unauthorised absences (unauthorised holiday (G), unauthorised absence (O) or late arrivals (U) within a 10 week period, these do not need to be consecutive and result in financial penalty.

For more details, view our Attendance policy:
https://www.sandwich-infant.kent.sch.uk/page/?title=Policies&pid=16

7. Facilitate support.

Following investigation of pupil or parent concerns, it may be necessary to make changes or adaptations to school systems and routines for the individual pupil to ensure the return to good attendance. This may be temporary, until the habit of good attendance is achieved.

Strategies will vary from case to case but may include:-

- Collecting the pupil from home- Where appropriate and risk assessed, arrangements may be made to support pupils in attending school, including accompanied transitions.
- Welfare time to discuss concerns in school
- Removal of specific in school barriers to attendance
- Create an attendance action plan

8. Formalise support.

When there is no improvement to attendance and pupils are at risk of persistent absence or pupils and parents are not engaging with the voluntary support, further formal action will be taken. Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school (equivalent to one day a fortnight across the full school year or 19 days absence)

This will begin with meetings in school as in the flowchart below to discuss and understand the barriers to attendance and agree interventions and actions to address them. This may include referral to services and organisations that provide support. A record of this meeting will be taken and parents will be asked to sign these to show they have a commitment to the agreed actions. If the child becomes persistently absent support may include one to one tuition or an attendance contract. Depending on the nature of the issue, and level of diagnosed SEN need, the school may apply for an EHCP. If the needs are wider and a whole family response is required, the school will encourage a voluntary early help assessment.

During this stage, it may also be appropriate to engage the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team (in Kent these come from the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance service - KPAS) in meetings that will clearly explain both the support on offer but also the legal implications and consequences of persistent and severe absence (missing 50% or 95 days or more of school) on the pupil.

If parents refuse to engage with this support, the school will consider whether this an indication of a safeguarding issue and will seek advice under our legal obligations in Keeping Children Safe in Education. Severe absence may indicate neglect or wider safeguarding concerns and will always be considered through the school's safeguarding procedures

Where a child is absent from school for 10 days or more and no contact has been made by the parents to confirm the reason and the expected date of return (including where children have been granted leave for Exceptional Circumstances and have failed to return on the agreed date), the school will consider them to be missing. A referral will be made to the local authority which could result in their removal from school registers and a re-application will need to be made for another school place. Absence alone does not permit removal from roll. Removal can only occur where one of the statutory grounds in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 is met. Schools will follow the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 before deleting any pupil from roll

If the school has any concerns regarding the safety of a missing child prior to the 10-day period, a referral may also be made to the relevant safeguarding services.

9. Enforce.

This is the final stage of the process flow chart.

Prevention – of poor attendance through celebration and reward for good attendance so that all pupils develop good patterns of attendance. Using data rigorously to pick up increasing levels of absence before it becomes a regular pattern. Using support and good attendance management to help families re-establish good attendance levels.

Voluntary support – early intervention to help parents and pupils overcome difficulties in establishing good attendance habits

Early intervention – to agree an action plan for pupils with higher levels of absence.

Enforce – work with the local authority on legal routes to ensure good attendance is re-established.

Where the supportive approach has not improved attendance, enforcement is the final stage where there are consequences to continued persistent or severe absence or rules about holidays in term time have been broken.

There are several options open at this stage and the family circumstances will be considered by the school, trust and local authority to be certain there will be a change in parental behaviour. See **Appendix 1.**

10. Children with medical conditions and SEND.

We recognise that these pupils may face greater challenges, however, their right to an education is the same as any other pupil so our attendance ambition is the same. Attendance concerns relating to pupils with SEND or medical needs will be considered alongside any reasonable adjustments and support required under the Equality Act 2010.

We will ensure these pupils have access to support in school. Our aim is be inclusive for these pupils without condoning poorer attendance.

In very exceptional circumstances schools may agree to a temporary part time timetable as a solution or part of a re-integration package. This will be strictly monitored and in place for the shortest time possible with clear review dates and parental agreement, and the local authority will be informed through the official online notification routes. A Pastoral Support Programme or other agreement will be time limited with the aim of the pupil returning to full attendance either at school or in an alternative provision.

11. Elective Home Education (EHE)

Aquila schools recognise that parents have the right to educate their children at home rather than at school. However, this decision must be made with full understanding of the responsibilities and implications involved.

Where a parent expresses an intention to withdraw their child from school to electively home educate, the school will:

- **Hold a meeting** with the parent to discuss the reasons for the decision and ensure it is being made in the child's best interests.
- **Inform the local authority** immediately, as required by law, to enable them to carry out their statutory duties in relation to EHE.
- **Complete a CME (Children Missing Education) referral** if there are any safeguarding concerns or if the withdrawal appears to be a response to unresolved issues at school (e.g. bullying, unmet SEND needs).
- **Record the withdrawal formally** and remove the pupil from the school roll only once written confirmation has been received from the parent.
- **Provide information** to the parent about the responsibilities involved in EHE and signpost them to local authority support and guidance.

The school will not seek to persuade or discourage parents from choosing EHE but will ensure that the decision is informed and that the child's welfare remains paramount. If the school believes that the decision to home educate may place the child at risk of harm or neglect, a safeguarding referral will be made in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)*.

12: Sharing data.

Aquila schools share data with the DFE and local authority and will engage in meetings with the local authority through the regular Targeting Support Meetings.

In addition, schools will notify the local authority when a pupil is added to or deleted from the admissions register. This must be notified within 5 days of a child starting school, other than into youngest school year group on the normal date of admission, and before the pupil is deleted from the register, except on transfer to the next stage of education at the usual time.

13: The Role of Governance.

Local Governors and the Trust Board have a duty to monitor attendance to ensure actions are effective and to challenge trends. Governors/trustees should regularly review attendance data, challenge trends and assure themselves that leaders fulfil statutory duties.

Aquila will also support schools through sharing of good practice at regular meetings of the designated attendance leaders. All schools will appoint a governor to focus on attendance. In Sandwich Infant School this is Phillip Buckley.

If attendance is an issue in a school, the Trust and governors will work with the school leaders to develop a comprehensive attendance action plan, which will be evaluated and reviewed regularly.

Attendance data from Bromcom will be reported at every governing body and trust board meeting.

14: The Role of the Local Authority.

Individual pupils' barriers to attendance often go far beyond the school gates. Persistent absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues in a pupil's life, and barriers to attendance are often specific to local contexts. The local authority, statutory safeguarding partners and other local partners therefore have a crucial role in supporting pupils to overcome those barriers and ensuring all pupils can access the full-time education to which they are entitled. Local authorities are facilitators of wider support needed by individual families and schools to overcome barriers in the short term. They are also strategic leaders that work across a geographical area to remove barriers in the longer term.

Aquila schools will engage with the local authority (KPAS), attend Targeting Support Meetings, encourage multidisciplinary support for families and provide evidence if legal intervention by the local authority is needed.

15: Children with a Social Worker

Aquila schools recognise that children with a social worker are particularly vulnerable to poor attendance and may face additional barriers to regular school attendance. These pupils are entitled to the same high expectations for attendance as their peers.

To support improved attendance for these pupils, Aquila schools will:

- Work closely with the child's social worker and other professionals involved in their care to identify and address barriers to attendance.
- Ensure that attendance is regularly monitored and discussed as part of multi-agency planning and review meetings.
- Notify the social worker of any unexplained absences or patterns of concern promptly, in line with safeguarding procedures.
- Engage the **Virtual School Head (VSH)** for children with a social worker, who has a statutory role in promoting the educational outcomes of these pupils. The VSH will be consulted and involved in strategies to improve attendance, including attendance action plans and support packages.
- Ensure that designated safeguarding leads and attendance champions are aware of which pupils have a social worker and understand their responsibilities in supporting these pupils' attendance.

This approach aligns with the expectations set out in *Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2026)* and *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)*.

Appendix 1: Formal or Legal Enforcement Processes.

Where all voluntary support options have been unsuccessful, or are not appropriate (e.g. an authorised holiday in term) the school with liaise with the local authority's Attendance Support Team, early help or social workers (if applicable) to take forward legal intervention so the LA can formalise support and/ or enforce attendance. All LAs are expected to understand and make use of formal support options including attendance contracts and education supervision orders.

LAs are expected by the DfE to issue Notices to Improve and penalty notices in line with the National Framework where absence was unauthorised and support has not been engaged with or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence e.g. e an unauthorised holiday in term time. The decision to issue a Penalty Notice rests with Kent County Council.

There are five types of formal and or legal process that can be followed if enforcement is needed to ensure the pupil receives their entitlement to a suitable education and parents comply with their duty to ensure the pupil attends the school at which they are registered.

1. **An attendance contract.**
   This is a formal written agreement between the parents and either the school or local authority to provide a more formal route to secure engagement with support. A meeting will be arranged to explain the purpose and benefits of the attendance contract. Parents will be asked to outline their view on their child's attendance, the underlying issues and how they believe these can be addressed. If a parent fails to attend a meeting without good reason or notification, further attempts to make contact and arrange another meeting will be made, but all attempts at support will be recorded.

   The contract will describe the requirements on parents, details of the support from the school and local authority. Support may include provision of a lead practitioner, signposting to local authority, including health services or the voluntary sector, including foodbanks or formal parenting programmes. A contract will generally be agreed for between 3 and 12 months. The contract will conclude with a statement by the parent that they will abide by the requirements. This statement will be signed by the parents. All parties will have a copy of the contract.

   If a parent does not comply with the contract, the lead practitioner will make contact, seek an explanation and either review the contract if the parent is not at fault or issue a written warning that they are not satisfied with the explanation and stating that the contract will be terminated and another course of action pursued. A copy of this letter will be kept on file.

   If there is no response to the warning or the non-compliance continues, a final meeting will be called to determine whether a different legal intervention is required. The decision and reasons will be formally recorded.

2. **Education supervision orders (ESO).**
   An ESO will be used when voluntary support is not effective and this approach will be beneficial to parents and pupils, This approach may be used if there are safeguarding concerns, but generally the s.17 Child in Need or s.47 Child Protection Plans will be used.

   The Local authority must fully consider using an ESO before moving to prosecution.

   An ESO is made through the Family or High Court and gives the local authority a formal role in advising, helping and directing parents to ensure the pupil receives a suitable full time education. The order initially lasts for a year but extensions can be granted within the last three months for up to three years.

   If it is decided that an ESO is appropriate, the local authority should notify parents in writing and set up a meeting to discuss with the parents. The local authority will write to parents and may combine an ESO with the service of an application notice. An officer of the local authority will be chosen as supervisor of the order and Aquila schools will work with this person to provide support.

   Review meetings should be held every three months.

In the case of non-compliance with an ESO, parents may be guilty of an offence and on conviction may be liable to a fine of up to £1,000.

3. **Attendance prosecution.**

Where a child of compulsory school age fails to attend the school where they are registered regularly, parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. Prosecution is generally the last resort where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed. Only the local authority can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs, including the preparation of court documentation.

Local authorities have the power to prosecute:

- Parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order issued by the local authority to require a parent to get their child registered at a named school (under section 443 of the Education Act 1996). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
- Parents who fail to secure their child's regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences: section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence my result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision (under sections 444 and 444ZA). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000), or if the parent is found to have known the child was not attending regularly and failed to ensure that they did so, a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who persistently fail to comply with directions under an Education Supervision Order (under Schedule 3 to the Children Act 1989) or breach a Parenting Order or directions under the order (under section 375 of the Sentencing Act 2020). These may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
- In deciding whether or not to prosecute, the Local authority should take into account the level of engagement from parents, including response to warnings and whether a safeguarding plan (Child in Need or Child Protection Plan) is appropriate. (In line with KCSIE 2026 and CME statutory guidance)
- The 1996 Act also sets out the circumstances in which a pupil has not failed to attend school regularly and therefore the parent has not committed an offence under section 444(1) or (1A) of the Act (the statutory defences). These are:
    - The parent proves the pupil was prevented from attending by their ill health or any unavoidable cause, including exclusion.
    - The pupil has been granted leave of absence by the school or, in the case of alternative provision, by a person authorised to do so.
    - The absence was on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong.
    - The parent proves the local authority were under a duty to provide transport to the school and have failed to do so.
    - If the child has no fixed abode and the parent can prove that their trade / business requires them to travel, and the child has attended school as regularly as the nature of the trade or business permits, and (if the child is 6 or over) the child has attended school for at least 200 sessions during the preceding 12 months up to and including the date on which the proceedings were instituted.

Statutory defences are possible from other types of provision but not generally in a maintained school.

The local authority must bring the case to court within 6 months of the alleged offence and provide the parent with a formal written notification, explaining the process and possible consequences. An application to the Magistrates Court will be made and the local authority will serve the summons to the parent. If the parent is found guilty a fine or a community order or parenting order may be issued.

4. **Parenting orders.**
   These may be imposed by the Court following conviction for non-attendance alongside a fine and/ or community order. Parents do not need to agree prior to the order being made which specifies the responsible officer and require the parent to comply with the arrangements in the order. Non-compliance could lead to a fine of up to level 3, currently £1,000.

5. **Fixed penalty notices.**
   These are served on parents as an alternative to prosecution, where they have failed to ensure their child of compulsory school age attends school regularly and the absence is not authorised and constitutes an offence. They can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence. They are intended to prevent the need for court action and are intended to change parental behaviour.

   Fixed penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 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. All schools and the police must send copies of fixed penalty notices issued to the local authority.

   Fixed penalty notices 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 fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion the days that the child must not be present in a public place.

Appendix 2: Types of absences

Every instance of absence has to be classified by the school (not by parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. All reasons for absences are fully investigated and if no reason is given, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Authorised absences (approved absences) - Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, like illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time. Absences due to illness/appointments need to be reported to the school via telephone/email/MCAS no later than 09:30 am on each day of absence.

Illness- In most cases, absences for illness reported following the school's procedure will be authorised, unless there is a reason to believe that the illness is not genuine, or if there is persistent sickness absences that are affecting a child's attendance and education. In these cases, the school reserves the right to request supporting medical evidence for the period of illness. This can be in the form of a medical appointment card or a prescription issued on the day of absence. Only in rare cases will the school request a letter from a GP or medical practitioner.

Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the Parent/Carer on the first day of absence may not be authorised and will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the Parent/Carer.

It is school policy that where a child has been sent home from school or absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea, they must not return to school until 48 hours after the last episode to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.

Medical/Dental Appointments- Wherever possible, medical and dental appointments should be made out of school time. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the absences may be authorised providing that we are informed of the absences following the school's procedure.

The child should be absent for as short a period of time as possible. All absences for medical or dental appointments must be supported by providing the school office with sight of or a copy of the appointment card or letter – only then will be absence be authorised.

Exclusion- When a child is excluded from attending school for a fixed period of time, this is counted as authorised absence.

Religious Observance- Aquila acknowledges the multi-faith nature of school communities and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence for religious observance. One day will be granted as authorised absence for religious observance of festivals such as Eid, and any additional days taken may be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. The school must still be notified of the absence by 9.30am on these occasions.

Exceptional Circumstances- Only the Headteacher can approve absences from school classed as Exceptional Circumstances. Examples of such absences may include family bereavement and service personnel returning from a deployment where leave will not fall in a school holiday. There is no automatic right to take a holiday in term time. Schools will never authorise holidays which fall in SATs week or at the start of a new academic year, as research shows poor attendance in the first key days of a new year are closely linked to persistent absence through the year. The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance

For an absence to be recorded as Exceptional Circumstances, it must be requested in writing in advance by a parent the child normally lives with. Parents must write to the Headteacher outlining the following: -

- The reason their child will be absent from school during term-time and why it should be classed as Exceptional Circumstances.
- Why the absence is unavoidable
- The dates of the intended absence and the reason

The Head Teacher will then review the request, taking into account: -

- The circumstances of the request and purpose of the absence the length of the proposed leave
- The child's current and previous attendance record – No holiday will be authorised if the proposed leave will take the pupil's absence to 10% 19 days off for any reason (i.e. persistent absence)
- Their ability to catch up on missed schooling.
- Proximity to SATs tests or other school exams
- The child's educational needs and general welfare
- Previous term-time holiday / absences due to Exceptional Circumstances taken in the current and previous academic years.

Only the school can approve or decline a request and make the decision as to whether the absence be authorised. Retrospective requests will not be considered and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If permission for the absence is not given and the child is still absent, it will be recorded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be requested from Kent County Council. (See Kent County Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

Leave of absence: - All schools can grant leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent with permission. There are very specific circumstances laid out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These are:-

- Taking part in regulated performance or employment abroad. This must be in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace of body of persons approved (BOPA)
- Attending an interview
- Study leave (does not apply to Aquila schools)
- A temporary, time limited part-time timetable. This must be agreed by the school and the parent the child normally lives with. It is used in exceptional circumstances, with agreed dates and times when the pupil will attend school. (See DfE guidance paragraphs 223–225 on part-time timetables)
- Education off site. The school can allow pupils to be absent for the following reasons;-
  - To attend an offsite approved educational activity
  - For pupils who are dual registered to attend their other school
  - To attend provision arranged by the local authority e.g. alternative provision or as part of an EHCP
  - To participate in an approved sporting activity
  - To attend a visit or trip arranged by the school

Unauthorised Absences

Holidays during term time- Absences due to family holidays which have not been designated by the Head Teacher as 'Exceptional Circumstances' will be recorded in the register as unauthorised. Requests for holidays during term time need to be submitted via email to the school as detailed above (see 'exceptional circumstances'). All requests for holidays during term time will be responded to in writing by the school giving details of whether or not a Penalty Notice will be issued for the absence. The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday in term time to be an exceptional circumstance

Absences for unsatisfactory reasons- These absences will be recorded as unauthorised: -

- A child or family member's birthday
- Attending a wedding or other celebration –
- Closure of a sibling's school or class (for example because of exceptional circumstances or strike action)
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Unable to get up in the morning
- Arriving to school late after registers close at 8:45 am.
- A sibling is ill
- Confusion over school dates
- Not having a complete school uniform

Penalty Notices Kent County Council may issue Penalty Notices where a child has of 10 or more sessions (5 or more days) of unauthorised absences within a rolling 10-school-week period.

This includes absences due to lateness after the registers have closed, unauthorised absences due to non-reporting or illnesses where supporting medical evidence has been requested but not supplied. Sandwich Infant School may request that a Penalty Notice is issued to the parent/s for the absences. In requesting and issuing Penalty Notices, the school will follow Kent County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices. More information on Penalty Notices can be found on the Kent County Council website.

Lateness A pupil arriving late can seriously disrupt their own and others' learning. Registers are taken in the classroom before 8:45 am, children arriving after these times will be recorded as late and must report to the School Office to sign in. Registers close completely at 9.00 am, children arriving after this time without good reason such as a medical appointment, dentist or another previously agreed reason, will be marked on the register as having an unauthorised absence for the whole morning. In such cases, the school will inform Parents/Carers of the decision and explain the possible consequences of continued unauthorised absence due to persistent lateness. Children who have at least 10 absences in the register due to unauthorised lateness within any 10 week period may be subject to a

Penalty Notice being requested from Kent County Council. Where lateness is frequent and persistent, Sandwich Infant School reserves the right to unauthorise the absence for arrival after 9.00 am and the penalty notice procedure will take place. Sandwich Infant School will contact families that are persistently late to offer support and guidance throughout this process.

Children missing in education Where a child is absent from school for 10 days or more and no contact has been made by the parents to confirm the reason and the expected date of return (including where children have been granted leave for Exceptional Circumstances and have failed to return on the agreed date), the school will consider them to be missing. The child will be referred to the Education Welfare Service which could result in their removal from Sandwich Infant school registers and a re-application will need to be made for another school place. If the school has any concerns regarding the safety of a missing child prior to the 10-day period, a referral may also be made to the Education Welfare Service.

Attendance Support Sandwich Infant School offers varied support for children or families that are having difficulties with attendance or persistent lateness. A list of Family Support Services can be found on the website, or the matter can be discussed with a member of the school team.

Appendix 3 Updated Attendance Codes

Attendance Codes

AQUILA Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust

Mark	Type	Description
#	Cancelled	Planned whole or partial school closure - not counted in possible attendances
/	Present	Present at the school when attendance register begins to be taken
?	Missing Mark	Precreation Mark
\	Present	Present (PM)
B	Educational Activity	Attending a place for any other approved educational activity
C0	Authorised Absent	Absent with leave for exceptional circumstances
C1	Authorised Absent	Absent with leave for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance
C2	Authorised Absent	Absent with leave, of compulsory school age and temporary reduced timetable does not require them to attend
E	Authorised Absent	Excluded (no alternative provision made)
G	Unauthorised Absent	Absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday
I	Authorised Absent	Unable to attend because of sickness
K	Educational Activity	Attending a place, other than the school or another school at which they are a registered pupil, for educational provision arranged by LA
L	Present	Absent from the school when attendance register begins to be taken but attends before the taking of the register has ended
M	Authorised Absent	Absent with leave for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
N	Unauthorised Absent	Absent - circumstances not yet established
O	Unauthorised Absent	Absent - other circumstances
P	Educational Activity	Attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity
Q	Cancelled	Unable to attend because of lack of access arrangements by LA to facilitate their attendance
R	Authorised Absent	Day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs
U	Unauthorised Absent	Absent for registration - arrived in school after registration closed
V	Educational Activity	Attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a visit or trip
X	Cancelled	Absent with leave, not of compulsory school age and timetable does not require them to attend
Y1	Cancelled	Unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of pupil's home and transport to and from school normally provided is not available
Y2	Cancelled	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national, or international emergency

Parents sent N code message at 10am to update the MCAS app

Keep pupils as N code until we know why they are absent.

N code watchlist set up to identify unknown absences.

Appendix 4 – Formal Guidance informing this policy.

This policy is informed by the following legislation and statutory guidance:

Legislation

- **Education Act 1996**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56
  - States that if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil fails to attend regularly, the parent may be guilty of an offence.
- **Education Acts 1996 and 2002**
- **Children and Young Persons Acts 1933 and 1963**
- **Children Act 1989**
- **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**
- **Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003**
- **Education and Inspections Act 2006**

- **Sentencing Act 2020**
- **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006**
- **Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007**
- **Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended)**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208
    - Requires schools to maintain accurate attendance and admission registers and defines when pupils may be removed from roll. [legislation.gov.uk]

Statutory and Government Guidance

- **Working Together to Improve School Attendance (May 2022, updated July 2026)**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance
    - Sets out national expectations for attendance management, early intervention and multi-agency working. [gov.uk]
- **Parental Responsibility Measures for Attendance and Behaviour**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-attendance-and-behaviour
- **Children Missing Education**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2
    - Establishes safeguarding duties and highlights that absence can be an indicator of risk or harm. [gov.uk]
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children
- **Elective Home Education**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education
- **Alternative Provision: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision
- **Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion
- **Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions
- **Ensuring a Good Education for Children Who Cannot Attend School Because of Health Needs**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school
- **Promoting and Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools and Colleges**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoples-emotional-health-and-wellbeing
- **Preventing and Tackling Bullying**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying
- **Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

- **Providing Remote Education**
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/providing-remote-education-guidance-for-schools